

NOTES

River Walkham

The Walkham's source lies in the peat bogs at the centre of Dartmoor. All the way down from its early trickle it has supported hundreds of years of industrial and agricultural activity. Its identity is lost when it merges with the larger River Tavy at Doublewaters.

River Tavy

The Tavy starts life to the north of the Walkham and is reputedly the fastest rising river in the country. With its source in the centre of the northern part of Dartmoor, any rainfall on the Moor (which is not infrequent) results in torrents of water rushing down its narrow rocky course towards the sea.

Virtuous Lady Mine

This copper mine was opened in 1558 and was possibly named after Queen Elizabeth I. It was worked to a depth of 720 feet and employed up to 200 men at its most active.

It was closed initially in 1807 but reopened in the 1830s until 1870 when it finally stopped working.

WILDLIFE

Birds

As you set off from the car park in spring and summer look out for the Skylark, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Meadow Pipit, Linnet and the Stonechat that perches on the tallest gorse bush. High in the sky you might see Buzzard circling on thermals looking for prey, alive or dead, and Swallows and Housemartins competing aerobatically.

In the woods there are Jay, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit and Goldcrest together with the three species of Woodpecker. Other summer visitors include Blackcap and Pied Flycatcher.

As you walk by the river watch out for Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Mallard and Grey Heron. If you are observant (and lucky!) you might glimpse the electric blue of a Kingfisher.

Trees

The wooded area consists of beech, birch, rowan, hazel, alder, hawthorn, ash but it is the oak that predominates. Here, it is the Pedunculate Oak as opposed to the other most common native specie, the Sessile Oak.

All these varieties of trees currently provide a rich habitat for the wildlife but in the past they were also a valuable source of building material and fuel for the many mines in the area.

Roe deer

The roe deer is becoming more numerous in the wooded areas around the edge of the Moor. If you are lucky you may see their white hindquarters as they run away.

Fish

Both rivers are fished for salmon and brown trout.



Walk No.2

DOUBLE WATERS FROM DOWNLANE



Distance

2½ miles (4km)

Time

About 1 ¾ hours

Description

This walk over the north-western corner of Roborough Down takes you down to Double Waters in the heavily wooded valley where the Walkham and Tavy rivers meet on their journey from Dartmoor to flow into the Tamar and on into Plymouth Sound and the sea.

Difficulties?

Generally easy. Grassy paths and surfaced tracks with one uphill stretch.

Toilets, refreshments None

Starting point

A surfaced parking area immediately on the right after the cattle grid leading onto the Down.



Return over the footbridge and turn right on the track to resume your journey downstream. Between the track and the river you will note that little vegetation grows on the spoil heaps that form the riverbank. This is due to the minerals in the waste from the **Virtuous Lady Mine** that was worked here in the past.

¼ mile after leaving Double Waters the track reaches Tavy Cottage, a house formerly belonging to the captain (manager) of the Virtuous Lady Mine. It then climbs rapidly from the valley out of the trees and onto the open Down.

Continue along the track until you see a narrow, grassy path on your left contouring around the steep valley slope heading towards some trees on the skyline. Walk along this level path towards the trees. (The path starts just after a pole where the power lines alongside the track join up with lines running from the valley on your left. If you cannot find the path, do not worry. Continue uphill along the track and turn left before the hedge along a wide track going gradually downhill to the trees.) When you reach the trees at a wall corner take the narrow path that goes through the trees running parallel to the wall field boundary and to the right of the wide track. Continue along the path that climbs gradually out of the trees to meet the metalled road and your starting point.

Walk directions Start walking downhill along the metalled road past the sign “No vehicles beyond this point” and continue either on the road or along the parallel green paths on the right. The road surface becomes much rougher after ¾ mile when you reach the drive to a private house, “Bucktor”. Continue along the track as it descends to the bottom of the river valley.

¼ mile after Bucktor the track reaches Double Waters, the junction of the rivers **Walkham** and **Tavy**. A footbridge over the Walkham gives access to a suitable picnic spot on the bank of the Tavy.