

# The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

## Crawton Bay-RSPB Fowlsheugh Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

This short cliff-top walk is nonetheless a special experience, especially in the late spring and summer seabird breeding season when 130,000 guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes, fulmars and puffins return from a winter spent at sea to congregate on 60 m high cliffs.

Duration: 1.5 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 1.5 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** There is a request bus stop at the start of the access road to Crawton (Stagecoach Stonehaven to Johnshaven route). This will add about 3 km to the route. Check timetables. Free parking at the start/end of walk is limited to 12 spaces. Arrive early!

**Length:** 3.880 km / 2.43 mi

**Height Gain:** 151 meter.

**Height Loss:** 151 meter.

**Max Height:** 52 meter.

**Min Height:** 13 meter.

**Surface:** Moderate. Mostly narrow cliff-top paths. May be muddy after rain, and the long grass falling on to the path can be very wet. After rain, wear waterproof trousers or shorts! Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to stepped paths.

**Child Friendly:** Yes, but ensure children are closely supervised near cliff edges.

**Difficulty:** Easy.

**Dog Friendly:** Yes, on lead on public roads and near farm animals. Maintain close control near cliff edges.

**Refreshments:** A variety of options in Stonehaven.



### Description

This is a short cliff-top walk that will provide an exhilarating experience at any time of year. During the seabird breeding season, the sights, sounds (and smells) provided by a diverse mass of sea-birds can be intoxicating! Running for around 3 km along the coast, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds manages the Fowlsheugh Reserve as part of a wider Special Protection Area designated for its number of seabirds. The area encompasses two Sites of Special Scientific Interest: the main one, Fowlsheugh SSSI, is a 1.8 km length of sheer 30 to 60-metre cliffs, with a narrow strip of cliff-top grasslands; the second, a section of the cliff at the southern end, is included within Crawton Bay SSSI. The spectacular cliffs at Fowlsheugh are packed with more than 130,000 breeding seabirds during the spring and summer months. These include guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes, herring gulls, shags, fulmars and even some puffins. Grey seals and dolphins are sometimes spotted offshore, too. In the summer months the cliff-top grassland is a carpet of wild flowers and billowing grasses, home to linnets, meadow pipets and skylarks. There are a number of useful information boards throughout the route, and there is a small shelter near the end of the main trail which overlooks one of the principal breeding ledges (where the small community of puffins may be spotted). The cliffs are mostly composed of basalt and conglomerates of Old Red Sandstone, which form a rock face characterised by innumerable holes and ledges, providing ideal sites for cliff nesting seabirds. After returning from the main cliff-top section, the final section of the route heads down to the stony beach at Crawton Bay by a cliff-top path, diverting to view the impressive Crawton Burn waterfall along the way. The former fishing community of Crawton is nowadays comprised of a just a few premium cottage conversions, the original village having been abandoned in 1927. In its heyday, 30 men fished from 12 boats and the village had its own fish merchant.



## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at RSPB Fowlsheugh Reserve car-park

(56.91125; -2.20014)

Start the walk from the RSPB Reserve parking spaces on the access road to Crawton, close to the first house in the little settlement. Walk downhill on the tarred road.



### (2) Go left to enter the Reserve at the gate

(56.91001; -2.19954)

After about 150 m, leave the tarred road on your left side and enter the gate into the Reserve beside the information board. Now follow the path up to and along the cliff-top, walking in a westerly direction. There are a number of useful information boards and informal vantage points for bird-watching. Please take extreme care and avoid the edge of the cliffs. Keep children and dogs under close supervision at all times. (144 m)



### (3) Pass the RSPB Shelter

(56.91849; -2.20009)

After more than 1.1 km you will arrive at the RSPB Shelter building where you will find more information about the Reserve. By the bench outside the shelter is a good spot for spotting Puffins during the Summer breeding season. They can typically be seen around the large cave on the cliff-side, opposite. When you are ready, pass by the Shelter to follow the path for a short distance to the end of the RSPB trail. (1.3 km)



### (4) Turning point on cliff-top walk

(56.91912; -2.20039)

In about 85 m from the Shelter you will have arrived at the end of the official RSPB trail. There is a bench on the cliff-top near here. When you are ready, re-trace your steps along the path to the entrance gate to the Reserve. (1.4 km)



### (5) Exit the Reserve and turn left

(56.91012; -2.19950)

After more than 1.1 km, exit the RSPB Reserve at the gate you first entered it. Now, turn left and walk downhill in the tarred road, with houses on the right side, for a short distance. (2.5 km)



### (6) Go left for cliff-top path

(56.90924; -2.19965)

In about 100 m, go left between gateposts (with small arrow signs) onto the cliff-top path, walking downhill with a small field on your right side. (2.6 km)



### (7) Left at field corner for waterfall viewpoint

(56.90919; -2.19847)

In another 100 m, or so, at the corner of the field, veer left onto a path that goes down then up to a cliff-top vantage point for the Crawton Burn waterfall.



### (8) Crawton Burn waterfall viewpoint

(56.90951; -2.19786)

In 50 m, or so, you will have arrived at a cliff-top viewpoint for the impressive Crawton Burn waterfall, cascading over a 40 m cliff edge. When you are ready, re-trace your steps to Waypoint 7 and continue taking the path around the small field. (2.7 km)



### (9) Left and down path for Crawton Bay beach

(56.90835; -2.20065)

After 300 m, the path has gone around 3 sides of the small field and you will have ruins of old cottages on your right side. Go left and follow the path down to the stony beach at Crawton Bay. (3.0 km)



### (10) Crawton Bay beach

(56.90798; -2.20349)

In another 250 m, or so, you will have descended to the stony beach at Crawton Bay where there are towering cliffs above you and to your right, and (in summer) many nesting seabirds wheeling above your head. When you are ready, re-trace your steps up the path, back to Waypoint 9, beside the cottage ruins. (3.25 km)



### (11) Left at ruin gable end to pass Crawton houses

(56.90837; -2.20054)

After ascending back up the path from Crawton Bay beach, turn left at the ruined cottages to walk gently uphill with the modern cottage conversions on your left side. (3.5 km)



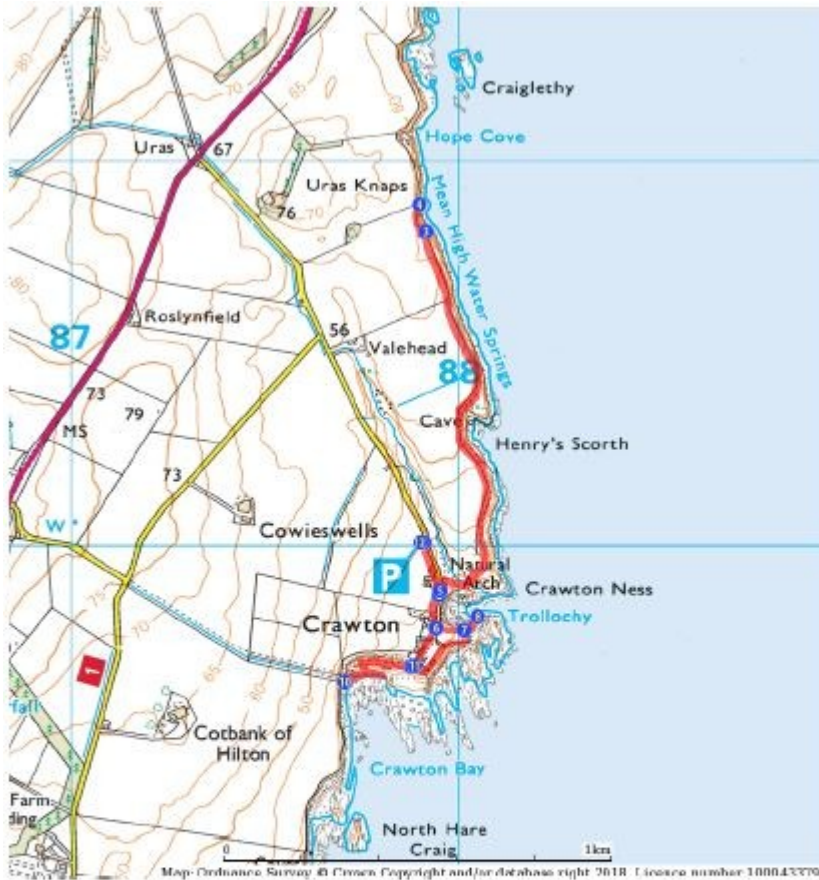
### (12) Finish walk back at the RSPB Reserve car-park

(56.91124; -2.20030)

In 400 m you will have returned to your start-point at the small RSPB car-park. (3.9 km)



# Route Map



## Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on AllTrails](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)