

## King's Cave from Machrie road car park - Walk

Starting and finishing at the forestry car park on Machrie road NR898315, this walk takes you through a variety of habitats where you should see a range of wildlife in a couple of hours. The walk is on a rough track, parts are up hill and parts can be slippery after rain. Appropriate footwear should be worn. The walk can be done in reverse.

Around the car park look and listen for birds of the woodland edge such as Chaffinch and Coal Tit. Also scan the moor opposite for Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl.

Take the path on your right from the car park towards the ancient hut circles. Check the various display boards. As the path climbs along the woodland edge, it is a good area not only to see woodland birds like Siskin and Common Crossbill, but in the view across to Machrie Bay look out for hunting Buzzard and Kestrel. There is a convenient seat by the path to enjoy the view.

In early summer the fields on the right are a good place for Heath Spotted and Northern Marsh Orchids. At a number of places on the walk damp areas are rich in flowering plants like Purple Loose Strife and the yellow Bog Asphodel

At the top of the rise the path heads south with views over the sea. This is a good area for seabirds like Gannets, Eider and Red-breasted Merganser. Fulmars nest on the low cliffs. The path leads down a slope over a stile and onto the shore. Again check the damp places for flowering plants.

The walk along the pebble shore takes you past the historic King's Cave. Worth a look in to reflect on spiders. Black Guillemots also nest in this area. It is a good area for a picnic, keeping an eye on the sea for divers like the Great Northern Divers, as well as otters and seals

Heading south past the King's Cave, by the track there is a sign pointing back up the cliff edge to the car park. Follow the path up the slope onto the open moor land. With views back to the cliffs at Drumadoon this is another area to look for raptors like Buzzard, Hen Harrier and Kestrel as well as small birds like the Meadow Pipit and Stonechat.

As the path enters the wood walk quietly and listen for woodland birds, like the tiny Goldcrest, as well as keeping an eye out for Red Squirrel. From the path there is a good view over a man made lochan where wildfowl such as Teal and waders like Snipe can be seen. To avoid disturbing the birds do not leave the path.

Continue on the path from the lochan back to the car park.