

Waterworks



Route description

Enjoy the birdlife of this park following surfaced paths, which include a few steps and some hills.

Distance

1.5 miles 2.4 km.

Average Time

45 - 50 mins.

Access

By bus - Metro Services: 1A-H, 61 Cavehill Road.

By car - No parking in the park. Main pedestrian access from Cavehill and Antrim Roads.

Trail Route

This is a circular walk that can be started from any of the entrances to the Waterworks. This description begins at the Queen Mary's Gardens entrance on the corner of the Cavehill Road and the Antrim Road.

At the round flower bed keep to your left alongside the stream **(1)** and over the bridge. Climb both sets of steps, then turn right: notice the former gate keeper's house (now private). Continue along the tree lined avenue and alongside the lower pond, pausing to enjoy the birdlife and views of Cave Hill.

You can climb to the upper level pond via the steps straight ahead or the ramp to the left **(2)**.

The islands and green edges of this pond are home to a variety of wildlife.

Soon you will pass a small playground before passing over another bridge. The path winds its way around the upper pond. After circling the upper pond, a path off to the left returns you to the lower level.

On the north bank of the lower lake you will find another playground and seating. This area is dominated by the Waterworks Multi-sports facility (Tel 028 9075 4200).

From here it is a short walk back to the starting point.

Trail 20



History

The two ponds were constructed in the 1840s by engineer William Dargan to provide water for Belfast. The ponds were fed (and still are) by the Milewater Stream from Carr's Glen. The reservoirs, however, only served as a water supply for about twenty years. After that the site, then owned by the Water Commissioners, was used for recreation.

Band concerts and spectacular aquatic fireworks displays were staged, and throughout the first half of the 20th century rowing, diving, bathing and angling were all popular. The Waterworks was officially opened as a public park by Belfast Corporation in 1956.

Things of Interest

Lower Pond (1)

Many people come to feed the swans and ducks in this lower pond. The birds are quite tame and well used to humans.

Upper Pond (2)

In contrast with the lower pond, the upper lake is larger and 'wilder'. Many waterfowl overwinter on the lake – it is not unusual to see several hundred coot, pochard and tufted ducks. Other visitors include great-crested grebe,

goldeneye and cormorant. In summer moorhens and dabchicks breed where the lakeside reeds give some protection, ducks nest on the central islands, and swifts and martins skim over the water searching for flies.

Look out for

- yellow water lilies in summer by the edge of the upper pond.
- excellent views of Cave Hill and Belfast.
- great-crested grebes in wintertime.