

Natural England announces major extension to the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve to mark World Wetlands Day

Press release

Natural England, in collaboration with the Carstairs Countryside Trust (CCT) has announced today multiple extensions to the internationally important Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve (NNR) near York.



The Lower Derwent Valley is an internationally important shelter for breeding and wintering birds.

Coinciding with World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2021, the extensions will increase the NNR by almost a third from 466 hectares to 602 hectares.

Ian Carstairs OBE, who founded CCT in 1989 as a rapid response organisation for conservation, was delighted that the Trust could support the government's national drive to protect and build back nature:

The Trustees of CCT are pleased to work with Natural England to extend the NNR to benefit society and wildlife, especially as so many people seek the comfort of the natural world in these difficult times. At the same time, we are able to help to protect this vulnerable refuge from which nature can be rebuilt back across the countryside.

The Lower Derwent Valley, with its ancient traditionally-farmed hay meadows, is of international importance. The reserve and surrounding privately owned and farmed meadows, known as Ings, stretch for some 12 miles along the river Derwent and the Pocklington Canal. The reserve offers crucial areas of sanctuary and freedom from disturbance to large numbers of breeding and

wintering birds. Lying remarkably close, and partly within the City of York, its amazing wildlife spectacles can be enjoyed throughout the year around the Valley at key visitor locations including at North Duffield, Wheldrake and Thorganby.

Describing the Lower Derwent Valley as a unique historic landscape, Natural England's Senior National Nature Reserve Manager, Craig Ralston emphasised the international significance of the area and the privilege of having such an exceptional and easily accessible area for those living on its doorstep.

Craig said:

Not only does the Lower Derwent Valley support immense wildlife interest, but it stores and slows winter flood water, locks away carbon and provides agricultural crops and livelihoods. "With the extension of the NNR we are balancing the provision of sanctuary areas for some of our most threatened wildlife whilst also providing areas where the public can responsibly visit and enjoy the spectacles without disturbance. This really is a special day."

Further information

- World Wetlands Day is celebrated annually on 2 February. It aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and planet. It celebrates all the benefits wetlands bring – from biodiversity, flood storage and reduction, food and jobs, clean water and access to health environments for recreation
- An additional 143.5 hectares of land is now classed as a National Nature Reserve and is formed of 22 parcels of land situated in the parishes of Catton, Sutton upon Derwent, Wheldrake, Thornton, Allerthorpe, Bielby, Melbourne, Thorganby, Cottingwith, North Duffield, Ellerton and Bubwith in North Yorkshire and Humberside.
- The Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve is made up of a series of flood meadows, pastures and woodlands. The reserve supports a rich diversity of plant species and outstanding populations of breeding and wintering birds. In light of this, the reserve has been declared a [Special Protection Area](#) and a [Ramsar](#) site, and parts of the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve are managed by the [Yorkshire Wildlife Trust](#) and the Carstairs Countryside Trust.

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