

Yorkshire **DALES** review

Summer 2021 : Issue 155



Wild Life

.....
CAMPAIGN • PROTECT • ENJOY
.....

Friends of the
DALES
YORKSHIRE DALES SOCIETY
1981 Forty Years 2021

Front cover photo:
 Meadows path, Muker, Swaledale.
 Photo courtesy of Richard Walls
 Photography


Views expressed in the *Yorkshire Dales Review* are not necessarily those of Friends of the Dales.

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Dales and Bowland
 Community Interest Company:
www.dalesandbowland.com

Annual Membership

Individual	£25
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Affiliate Members (Group)	£40

Life Membership

Individual (Under 60)	£400
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Individual (Over 60)	£300
Joint (Over 60)	£450

Please Gift Aid your membership if you are eligible as we can benefit from additional income.



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David Hill has a strong professional and personal interest in biodiversity conservation. He was deputy chair of Natural England from 2011-16, is chairman of Plantlife and the Northern Upland Chain Nature Partnership, a board trustee of the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and a commissioner with the RSA Food, Farming and Countryside Commission. He and his wife have land under conservation in Nidderdale and Swaledale.

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Rewilding: Sensitivity, Seeds & Scythes



Richard Brown is a botanist, ecologist, seedsman and scythesman. A long-time promoter of wild flowers and meadow creation, he discovered the joy of scything 14 years ago, and is chair of the scythe association. He visits the Dales each year (Dales grassland being the best to mow) and offers scythe and grassland management courses and advice, particularly for wildlife and community groups. He works at Emorsgate Seeds, growing and promoting wildflower seeds.

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Wetland Wonders



Lyndon Marquis is the communications officer for Yorkshire Peat Partnership, an umbrella organisation led by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, restoring peatlands in the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and northern parts of the South Pennines.

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An Endless Cycle



Kevin Armstrong is a Yorkshireman and member of Friends of the Dales who grabs the chance to walk, run and cycle in the national park whenever he can. He works for UnLtd, the foundation for social entrepreneurs.

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Mapping with the App

Whilst out and about this summer you might like to try out the new iNaturalist app promoted by UK National Parks. The app is designed to help anyone map and record plants and animals – but especially in national parks. UK National Parks hopes the growing database of wildlife records will help it in its collective effort to enhance the country's precious landscapes and support strong biodiverse ecosystems. The app is available via Google Play or the Apple App Store, or go to www.nationalparks.uk/look-wild. We've downloaded the app onto our work mobiles so we can test it ourselves.



Emerald Damselfly beside the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, June 2021.
Photo courtesy of Ann Shadrake



An early-blooming wildflower verge in Hetton.
Photo courtesy of Rachel Kirwin

Trials for New Verge Cutting Regime

We are starting to see some success with our campaign promoting a 'cut less, cut later' message for roadside verges to encourage wildlife to regenerate.

North Yorkshire County Council has agreed three trial sites – covering eight miles of verges – in Craven, where it will cut only narrow strips this year. We hope it will build on this by reducing the frequency of cuts in 2022.

We have also heard back from several of the parish councils and meetings we contacted. The parishes of Lawkland, Melmerby, Middleton, Hetton-cum-Bordley, Crosby Garrett and Wray already have a biodiverse approach to verge management, which they will promote further. Several other parish councils and meetings have promised to table the initiative for discussion at their next meetings.

Here are some great hashtags to use if you want to spread the word: [#LetitBloomJune](#) and [#KneeHighJuly](#)

No Mow May

Many verges in and around Haworth and Oxenhope were left unmown as part of *No Mow May*.



Photo courtesy of Tony Smith



Red Squirrel.
Photo courtesy of the Woodland Trust


WOODLAND TRUST

Snaizeholme Appeal - Can You Help?

The Woodland Trust is raising funds to help it acquire 550 acres of land at Snaizeholme in Wensleydale, which it will replant with native trees and regenerate. Its overarching aim is to create a vibrant new woodland for wildlife, including red squirrels and rare woodland birds, which will eventually become open to the public. To find out more or to donate visit www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

Strength in Numbers

Renowned ethologist and conservationist Dr Jane Goodall DBE has won the 2021 Templeton Prize for harnessing the powers of the sciences to explore the deepest questions of the universe and human existence.

In *The Guardian* (20 May 2021) Dr Goodall said, 'If you feel that you're alone in picking up pieces of plastic trash, or eating less meat, or walking or cycling instead of driving a car, then you might feel it doesn't make any difference. But there's a growing awareness, partly elevated by this pandemic, of the fact that we really need a new relationship with the natural world.'



Our volunteers collecting tree guards in 2020

Woodland Clean-up

As part of our campaign against single-use plastics in the Dales we are supporting the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust's Plastic Free Woodlands Project by promoting and signposting opportunities for volunteers to help private woodland owners in the Dales collect plastic tree tubes for onward recycling. Its next collection event will be hosted at the iconic Snaizeholme on Thursday July 22. Volunteers will help bag tubes at the site as well as select those that can be re-used. A full briefing will be given on the day. The collection will start at 10am and all are welcome - but due to current restrictions there will be a maximum of 30 people allowed on the site. Any members wanting further details or to book, please email media@ydmtd.org

Tree Guard Campaign Takes Root Beyond Dales

Friends of the South Downs have followed our lead by launching their own campaign against plastic tree guards. We now hope that all the other national park societies are inspired by the work that we have done in the Dales. Together we can help to free some of the country's most iconic landscapes from the blight of polluting microplastics whilst protecting watercourses and reducing carbon emissions.

20
number of firms
producing 50%
of throwaway
plastic

We are particularly grateful to lifetime member Miles Rhodes for spreading the message further afield. As the Friends of the Dales ambassador in Northampton, he has succeeded in persuading the senior ranger at Sywell Country Park in Ecton to switch to using 100% sustainable Ezee tree guards made from recycled moulded fibre. The original plastic tubes will be reused.

Our chair, Bruce McLeod, is very optimistic that another alternative guard will soon be on the market after talking to Gary Hurlstone of Nexgen Tree Shelters. The new design is made mainly of wool and sales will support British sheep farmers. Trials have been promising and pre-orders by major tree planters have gone through the roof. Find out more at www.nexgen-ts.com

Summer Meet & Greet

Another strand of our campaign against single-use plastics is to spread the word about the danger of plastic litter being left in the fields of the Dales – and how dangerous a single item of plastic can be to farm animals, wildlife and river/marine life, either directly or as microplastic pollution. To further spread the word about this we will be trialling a summer 'meet and greet' at local beauty spots and along popular public rights of way.

Cattle at Malham Tarn with chewed plastic bottle. Photo courtesy of Ann Shadrake



Mark and Winston. Photo courtesy of Mark Corner

Share Your Snaps

A very big thank you to trustee Mark Corner, who has been posting amazing photos from his walks around the Dales on an almost daily basis for the last four years. Now our new Membership & Events Officer, Victoria Benn, is in post, Mark has stepped back from this voluntary role. We would particularly welcome your high-quality Dales photos with a brief caption to use on our Facebook and Instagram pages. Please contact Victoria at victoria.benn@friendsofthedailes.org.uk

Cleaning Up Our Act

Chair Bruce McLeod takes a look at how pollution has affected the natural world in the 40 years since the foundation of Friends of the Dales.

In 1970 a Yorkshire poet issued a typically blunt warning. In his essay *The Environmental Revolution* Ted Hughes decries our destructive relationship to nature: if we don't mend our ways, he warns, we're doomed. 'Conservation has become,' writes Hughes, 'the desperate duty of everybody.' Little did he know how comparatively good things were. Between 1970 and the present farmland birds have declined by 56%. It's estimated this represents a loss of at least 44 million birds.

We are all familiar with the mind-numbing statistics tracking the precipitous decline of biodiversity. Here's another one: 97% of species-rich grassland has been destroyed. I write 'destroyed' rather than 'lost' in order to highlight the fact that a good deal of the disappearance of our natural world has been wrought by conscious decisions — not lost in a fit of absent-mindedness.

Collateral Damage

Past government agricultural policies have on the whole led to an unsustainable intensification. Central to those policies is the invisible exterminator that most of us are familiar with, if not accept: the use of highly toxic chemicals to change the natural world to suit our purposes, even if just to attain a slug-free garden. That there are half as many lapwings as there were in 1970 is due to the wanton use of toxic chemicals as well as habitat loss.

Like peat, poisons are ubiquitous in horticulture (and I confess that my last bottle of Roundup® is sitting in my barn!). Ted Hughes was having none of it. The recent discovery of 250,000 barrels of DDT dumped off the coast of California would not have surprised him. Challenging a conservation delimited to the picturesque, he asks: 'What good is 1,000 miles of preserved coastline, when the sea is a stew of poisons and nuclear waste?' He also rails against slug pellets.

On the subject of slugs: when I moved to Otterburn some 25 years ago my garden had a large herd of slugs. Now I rarely see one. And I've never used pellets. I also recall driving from Coniston Cold to my house in midsummer, a route that follows a beck, and the windscreen becoming littered with insects. Where have the insects gone?

A recent study reveals that flying insects surveyed on nature reserves in Germany have declined by 76% in 27 years. Again, loss of habitat and pesticides are to blame.

Bans come and go but the agrochemical industry continues unabated: one of the worst and most widely used weedkillers, banned in Europe since 2007, is made in Yorkshire. It's called paraquat and exported for use around the world. Having been banned, neonicotinoids are back. Josie Cohen (of Pesticide Action Network UK) says that 'Some neonicotinoid insecticides are 10,000 times more toxic than DDT'. It has been recently reported that the toxic impact of pesticides on bees and other pollinators has doubled in a decade despite a fall in the amount of pesticide use.

Detoxifying the Environment

As Craig Bennett, Chief Executive of the Wildlife Trusts, says: 'How did we ever get to a stage where we thought it was a good idea to be using such chemicals? It is unbelievable. We need a real change in mindset.' As Bennett knows, it is not just a mindset that needs changing but the way our economic system works.

Whether we tax polluters under the polluter pays principle or radically reduce our dependence on chemical fixes (I think we should do both), it's clear we cannot keep pumping out pollutants – which must include the methane, silage effluent and ammonia produced by farming – in the quantities we currently are.

Hughes is right when he says that the crisis of a poisoned environment 'could be dealt with, as it should be dealt with, as a war... It would be a national investment on a grand scale. It is well known that if it is not done soon, the consequences will be a disaster worse than anything we suffered in the last war'.

Such a policy would mean radically re-forming the economy so that our designs on the natural world are not antithetical to a healthy planet. But Hughes is a realist: standing against a less exploitive relationship to the environment is the 'Developer' and 'behind him stands the whole army of madmen's ideas, and shareholders, impatient to cash in the world'.

To resist the ethos of cashing in the world is the goal of Friends of the Dales: it is, we recognise, our 'desperate duty'.

Bruce McLeod, Chair

56%
decline in
farmland birds
since 1970

97%
amount of species-
rich grassland
destroyed since
1930s

Natural Capital and the Future

Environment Bank Chair Professor David Hill takes a look at how we can put a value on work to protect habitats and species by seeing it as an economic asset.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are recognised as the two existential threats to our civilisation and the next few years will see a major transformation in how we use land so as to address these crises. The impacts on land use are liable to be even more significant in the uplands of Britain than in the lowlands because of the economic challenges in the former and the lack of scope for diversifying farm products.

In a post-Brexit world, difficulty accessing markets together with the rapid removal of the basic payment scheme (farm subsidy) will place substantial pressure on the farming and landholding sector. These pressures

could be ameliorated as new asset classes are developed to build climate resilience and restore biodiversity. But the farming sector hasn't yet fully responded to the inherent changes that it faces.

Meanwhile, there is an escalation in interest from non-farming external operators, investors and philanthropists looking to develop new asset classes from the land. The key to success for future land managers (and existing farmers) will rely on them having the capacity, knowledge and interest to develop and service new markets and not being tied to current methods of land management. For many, this will be a bitter pill to swallow.

Putting a Financial Value on Nature

Alongside the major changes to the financing of farming and land management is the emphasis now being placed by investors on requiring businesses to reduce their impacts on the planet through corporate *natural capital accounting*. Natural capital, put simply, is the 'stock' of natural resources, the assets – soil, water, arable land, grassland, woodland, hedges, wetland and other habitats as well as the species that deliver economic benefits (ecosystem services) to people. The term has become increasingly important in land use policy, with the aim of making more visible

Photos courtesy of David Hill

Wildflower meadows create pictorial landscapes valued by visitors

of Land Management

the benefits we derive from the natural environment. Essentially, natural capital accounting is about a company's future value being directly linked to how it interacts with and uses the resources that nature provides.

As investors press for transparent disclosure of impacts on natural capital, companies will achieve their investment potentials only if they can demonstrate net zero or a gain in natural capital as part of their normal operations. Their future survival and growth will therefore rely on how they demonstrate to investors and fund managers that their business activities are truly sustainable. Natural capital initiatives on landholdings through which corporates can offset their own impacts represent a new market with which landowners and farmers should engage to generate the revenues of the future.

But to do this the economic value of nature has to be clearly visible.

Opportunities for Yorkshire Dales Farmers

The iconic upland landscapes of the national park provide a number of major opportunities for diversifying income through restoring and protecting natural capital. For example, improving landscape quality by regulating how farms operate, reducing plastic waste and the often damaging visual impact of farming activities, will drive a better tourist experience and higher revenues. Investment funding into landscape improvements at a farm level would provide incentivisation to keep farming 'tidy'.

Interest in peatland restoration using carbon offsetting is growing rapidly and will lock up water on the hill, mitigating flooding lower down the catchment. High nature value farming through the restoration of hay meadows, lower stocking densities and a major shift away from silage making lends itself to corporate natural capital investment through the environmental benefits it

delivers, providing value to low-impact and premium-quality farming. And broad-leaved woodland planting and restoration improves landscape quality, locks up carbon, reduces flood risk and substantially increases biodiversity. Finally, rewilding areas of the uplands will provide new revenue streams from nature-based tourism.

The balance between the lowlands and uplands of Britain, in terms of types of products grown, is going to change. Land managers in the uplands will need to focus on adding value to these iconic landscapes by restoring natural capital at scale and exploiting new markets around climate resilience and biodiversity restoration that society wants to see. It may be a hard transition but a rewarding one for those who come forward to lead a new generation of land managers.

Professor David Hill CBE
Chairman, Environment Bank Ltd



Black grouse are a species of high conservation importance in the Dales



Restoring species-rich meadows in the Dales can attract new revenues



The iconic curlew – the Dales holds a large proportion of the global population of this threatened bird



Rewilding:

Sensitivity, Seeds & Scythes

Scythe in Walden Dale (off Wensleydale). Photo courtesy of Richard Brown

The Dales landscape is the product of an intimate long-standing partnership between nature and rural farming communities. Sadly, in recent times this partnership between humans and nature has been sorely strained by industrial use of fertilisers and chemicals, and through nitrate pollution and climate change. The net result is that only a very few of the flower-rich meadows that were once the crowning jewels of the Dales remain.

For me re-evaluating and rebuilding our historically positive relationship with nature is the key to restoring balance in the countryside. This principle of 'working with the grain' in partnership with the designs of nature has underpinned the work I have done over the last 40 years promoting the use of wildflower seed for habitat creation and

restoration. In recent years this concept of giving back control to nature has become the foundation of the 'rewilding' movement.

Here I will describe three aspects of my approach to practical rewilding in a smaller garden or meadow under the subheadings: sensitivity, seeds and scythes.