

Spring 2022 : Issue 158

Yorkshire **DALES** review



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Friends of the
DALES
YORKSHIRE DALES SOCIETY

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Pen-y-ghent.
Photo courtesy of Hilary Fenten

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Greenwashing. Pavel Constantin

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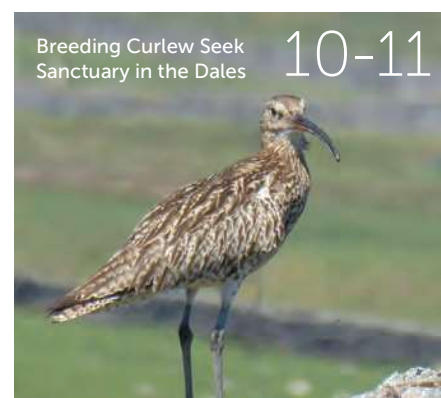
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Fighting for the Right to Roam

Friends of the Dales President Amy-Jane Beer is also an active campaigner for universal access to nature. She explains why she has joined forces with other environmentalists to lobby for greater social inclusivity.

The *People's Manifesto for Wildlife* (PMW) was an independent report prepared by 20 environmental thinkers at the invitation of Chris Packham, himself a vocal advocate for nature, in 2018. It was launched at the People's Walk for Wildlife, when some 10,000 activists marched from Hyde Park to Downing Street on 22 September 2018.

While the march engaged the support of over 70 NGOs, from the 1,000,000-member RSPB and Wildlife Trusts to the Hunt Saboteurs Association, the British Bryological Society and the British Beekeepers Association, all 20 manifesto contributors were independent and thus able to collaborate with a level of flexibility that is almost impossible for membership organisations or political parties to achieve. A fully referenced version of the manifesto is available online at <http://www.chrispackham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Manifesto-long-version-2.pdf>

Our aims were unequivocally political, but with no party-political bias, and our policy ideas ranged from common sense to controversial and were offered freely to government, to all political parties, communities, NGOs and business organisations in the hope that they would be borrowed, added to and expanded on. The manifesto 'ministries' covered

broad themes of farming, rewilding, marine conservation, education and culture, urban spaces, uplands, trees, social inclusivity, young people, diversity, overseas conservation and the law and narrower ones such as pesticides, lead ammunition, hedgerows, wildlife crime and welfare.

My contribution, as Minister for Social Inclusivity and Access to Nature, asserted first and foremost that access to diverse nature should be recognised as a human right. Allied to this right, I believe, is a right to fight for nature and to express an opinion about it, and if the naturally diverse opinions of a society are to be considered, representation matters.

I made a number of further proposals including subsidised (preferably renationalised) public transport links to areas of natural wonder across the UK; supplementary nature health prescriptions for conditions as diverse as anxiety, depression, obesity, heart disease and diabetes; voluntary full- or part-time eco-community service for all; and the creation of a network of neighbourhood nature ambassadors to inform, inspire and encourage social integration in their communities and connect local initiatives with nationwide conservation networks.

The reaction to the manifesto was predictably positive from the environmental lobby and cautious from government. There was some hostility from farming and Highland interests, not least because Chris Packham is a controversial figure in some circles. This was a shame because most conservationists recognise farmers are an essential part of

the solutions the whole planet needs. The dichotomy between 'town vs country' is one of the most damaging in society, and nowhere more so than in debates over conservation and access to nature. Farming and conservation sectors both need public support – but people will not support what they do not understand or care for, and they will not understand or care for what they don't know.

Four years on, some of our proposals have become mainstream. Social justice has taken rightful place in some of the largest movements of our time. A proposal for a GCSE in Natural History is awaiting final approval from the Department for Education. The youth climate movement has achieved astonishing global engagement and, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic has given millions opportunity to experience the solace and health benefits of time spent in green and blue spaces. In England specifically, it has also highlighted the absurd inequality of land rights and seen the emergence of a major new land rights and access campaign, with which I began working in 2021.

Right to Roam (www.righttoroam.org.uk) was founded by Nick Hayes (author of *The Book of Trespass* and *The Trespasser's Companion*, out in April) and Guy Shrubsole (author of *Who Owns England?*), with an ambition to reconnect people to nature and challenge the laws that exclude us from 92% of land area and 97% of rivers. Vast areas of this land were once common, and perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the landed classes is the spell their enclosures have cast over our collective mindset so that we accept exclusion as normal. I'd heartily recommend reading Nick's and Guy's books for an insight into how we were robbed, and maybe even joining one of the trespass events lined up for 2022. We are focussing particularly on rivers, woods, downland and green belt – places close to centres of population.

National parks are a national resource, but no one should have to travel in order to walk among trees, listen to birdsong, or sit by or swim in a river. Wider access across the land will educate and inform a population, take pressure off honeypot sites and ensure receptive audiences when organisations like Friends of the Dales call for action.

Amy-Jane Beer



An impromptu trespass. Photo courtesy of Amy-Jane Beer

Access For Sale

Britain is undergoing a property boom. On a recent walk through the 'hidden village' of Thorpe, I discovered that an ancient section of enclosed lane, now blocked with building material, was not a registered right of way. It could soon be incorporated into a new barn conversion scheme.

In Thorpe most barns and outbuildings have been converted for retiree or weekend use or luxury holiday lets. Roadside verges and greens become lawns or parking places for BMWs. Gentrified villages not only make walkers feel unwelcome but many footpaths, village greens and public access areas could soon be under serious threat.

Colin Speakman, Vice President

Protecting Wildlife Corridors

Spring will soon be upon us, and with it renewed focus on our Roadside Verges Campaign ('Living Verges'). As the growing season gets underway, we'll be watching to see whether there have been any noticeable changes in the verge cutting regime as a result of our conversations with North Yorkshire County Council. Encouragingly, NYCC is now working on these issues with its own ecology team.

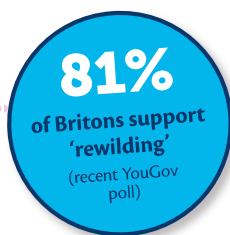
Last year, we gathered baseline data on the plant life of three 'trial' lengths of verge. We also made observations about when and how the verges were cut, and if there were any effects on the plants. We'll be doing the same this season, so that we can follow any changes over time. We'd welcome any photos of verges in the Dales, or any other information that could supplement our evidence.

Our campaign covers not just verges but any piece of village grassland, such as churchyards and village greens. There is potential to have a significant positive effect on biodiversity by making relatively small changes to the way these areas are managed, and the results don't have to look untidy.

Our trial verges (both sides of road) are Grassington to Hebden B6265 (1.7 miles); Horton to Selside B6479 (2 miles) and Ingleton to Ribbleshead B6255 (3.7 miles).

Visit www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/verges for downloadable guidelines to make your village more wildlife-friendly.

Anne Readshaw, volunteer



Changing Visitor Profile

In 2021 just over a quarter of visitors had never been to the Dales before, or had come for the first time earlier that year or in 2020.

- 14% were aged 25 to 34.
- Most (21%) of people surveyed came from West Yorkshire...
...but 37% of those on a first visit had travelled from London and the South East.
- One third did not use any information to plan their visit.
- 69% said that they had come to walk...
...and 48% said that being by water was one of the things they enjoyed.

Source: YDNPA snapshot visitor survey 2021

Where2Walk in a Wheelchair

Friends of the Dales business member Jonathan White is one of the driving forces behind a new charity helping disabled people enjoy the national park.

The Where2Walk owner initially joined forces with campaigner Debbie North and her late husband Andy to create a series of stile-free routes. Now Access the Dales, which was launched this month, provides all-terrain mobility vehicles for hire at outdoor locations.

For details of accessible walks, accommodation, pubs, places to eat and things to do visit www.access-the-dales.com

New Approaches to Tree Planting

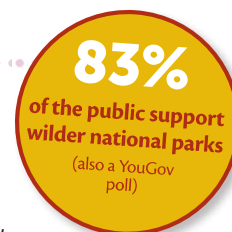
This winter the Sustainable Swaledale community group has planted over 2,500 trees at 12 different sites.

One landowner asked to trial a 'Miyawaki' or 'mini-forest', which encourages significantly faster growth, leading to greater biodiversity and carbon capture. Four hundred and fifty saplings were planted very densely at three trees per square metre. At another site they had symbiotic root fungi, which may allow them to share nutrients and information.

Although most trees were protected by standard Tubex guards, the group has also tried out two prototype Swaledale wool alternatives. Canes and biodegradable spirals were used where less protection was needed. One site relied only on rabbit-proof fencing. A trial of cactus tree guards, suitable for use with browsing cattle, is planned for an area of woodland pasture.

The group has also planted hedges and an outdoor classroom.

Margaret Feetham, Sustainable Swaledale



Advance Notice

We intend to hold the Friends of the Dales 2022 AGM at the Devonshire Institute, Grassington, on the morning of Saturday 24 September, followed by *From Peat to Paddling*, a conference looking at the journey of water from the moorlands and peatlands of the Yorkshire Dales to the country's first designated 'safe' river bathing site at Ilkley. Further information and details will be confirmed in the summer *Review*.



Protecting our Peatlands



Yorkshire Peat Partnership and Friends of the Dales volunteers.
Photo courtesy of Yorkshire Peat Partnership

The Dales have extensive areas of blanket bog, and peat underlies most of the upland moorland - that's 42% of the area of the national park. These peatlands are formed from natural accumulations of decaying plant material under waterlogged conditions. They create distinctive landscapes and support abundant wildlife of national and international importance like curlew and golden plover. Peatlands are multi-functioning, offering grazing and shooting along with open-air recreation - walking, riding, birdwatching.

We are now also more aware of how important they are for the quantities of carbon that a well-managed moorland can capture and store - it is estimated that a 30cm layer of peat stores at least the same amount of carbon as a tropical rainforest over the same area. But peatlands have suffered from decades of drainage, over-grazing, burning and air pollution.

We have recently published our policy on peatlands, which you can see at <https://friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/peatlands>

We want to see peatlands better protected, with degraded areas restored as a matter of urgency, so that they absorb rainwater and build up yet more peat - making them even more boggy. In this way they will capture more carbon, as well as slow down the flow of water off the moors, thus reducing flood risks downstream. We want to see significant reductions in moorland burning and, where tree cover is being considered, this should be done by natural regeneration, thus avoiding cultivation, which opens the peat up to oxidation and run-off.

There is a need for a wide and open discussion about these issues. To start this, we are holding a walk on Ilkley Moor on Saturday, 21 May to view the works being done by Moors of the Future to address peat protection. We will be looking at the installation of 'leaky dams', which slow run-off and enable vegetation, especially sphagnum, the main component of peat, to re-establish.

We are also in discussion with the Yorkshire Peat Partnership about its 'Eyes on the Bog' citizen science project, which will involve volunteers making regular visits to selected bogs to monitor their restoration. We will shortly be asking for volunteers to help with this - more details will come soon.

Then keep your eyes open for features in future issues of the *Review*, where we will highlight the many fascinating features of bogs - the flowers, the birds, the insects, the archaeology - and update you on progress with their restoration.

Nancy Stedman, volunteer member of policy and planning committee

Letters to the Editor



Looking at Landscape with Fresh Eyes

I was sorry to learn that there are some who regard the Howgill Fells as a desert (winter *Review* p16). Presumably they have similar regard for the moors and mountains of the rest of the Dales, the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands, or do all of the latter have redeeming features absent in the Howgills?

I would love, old bones permitting, to take them to the Howgills so that they can benefit from a road to Damascus experience. The view of the Howgills is splendid from all points of the compass: the way the M6 heading north burrows into Fell Head; the long fingers of the northern valleys and ridges; the short, steep valleys and ridges of the south-east; the dark and mysterious Carlin Gill; the 650-foot cascade of Cautley Spout; Cautley Crag, the finest corrie in Yorkshire, active only 12,500 years ago.

Well, it takes all sorts. Drop me in central London: now *there* is a desert.

Bernard Peel, Friends of the Dales volunteer

Drastic Action Needed

For years members have lamented two problems that I believe should now be addressed with urgency.

I call on Friends of the Dales to campaign in every way possible for a reduction in the number of second homes. We can live in only one home at a time. The Dales are becoming a collection of pleasantly antique buildings rather than a community of permanent residents. Every house that is not lived in by its owners for more than half of the year should bear a substantial levy of £10,000 or more per year payable to the national park authority. If this did not rapidly reduce the number of second homes, it could gradually be increased. At the very least the levy would provide much-needed income to cater for visitors.

The second necessity is to stop tourists coming by car, spending little money and causing congestion. The national park levy should be used to help build substantial park-and-ride facilities at the edges of the park and run electric buses frequently to many places within the park. No car or motorbike should be allowed beyond the park-and-ride facility unless it displays a resident's pass or a valid disabled person's permit. This would immediately increase the dwell-time of visitors and the amount of money they spend. There would be more healthy walking and cycling. It would enhance the beauty and peace of the countryside.

Only radical actions such as these will have any substantial effect on conserving our Dales for the future and on reducing global warming.

John D Anderson, Friends of the Dales member

This letter is the writer's personal view, and is not necessarily reflective of the views of Friends of the Dales.

See also articles on pp 18 and 19.

White Open Spaces?



A walk organised by Mosaic Outdoors and supported by The Great Outdoors on Kinder Scout. Photo courtesy of Rachel Sarah

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority volunteer and Churchill Fellow Mohammed Dhalech says we need to do more to make sure people of all ethnicities feel at home in the countryside.



When I began my outdoors journey working for the Youth Service in Gloucestershire back in the '80s, I noticed the limited engagement from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, either as users or working in the sector. This was when I started talking about underrepresentation. Work on inclusivity in the outdoors has been on the agenda since the '80s and a number of us, like Judy Ling Wong of Black Environment Network, have been active in this field since then.

In 2019 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published the *Landscapes Review* led by Julian Glover, which highlights:

'Many communities in modern Britain feel that these landscapes hold no relevance for them. The countryside is seen by both black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and white people as very much a "white" environment. If that is true today,

then the divide is only going to widen as society changes. Our countryside will end up being irrelevant to the country that actually exists.'

I believe that the three biggest challenges to the environmental and outdoor sectors from an inclusivity perspective are organisational culture, representation and racism. Unless we address these, we will not move forward.

Organisational Culture

Organisations need to start the journey to inclusivity, from governance and senior leadership through to volunteers. Inclusivity should be a core business activity, not a time-limited initiative based on short-term funding.

Glover points out the reluctance by landscape bodies to talk about diversity:

'And we have found interest, rather than a burning desire to change, when we have discussed diversity. It was rarely raised by those we met. This is unsurprising...the lack of diversity among those governing the bodies looking after our national landscapes is extremely narrow. They are almost all white, almost all male and many are retired. It is not surprising their priorities can seem alien to many.'

Representation

Many organisations in the sector look at representation only from the user/visitor perspective - 'access' in its narrowest definition - and place very little emphasis on inclusivity. Communities need to see themselves represented at all levels within the sector.

As Glover highlights in the *Landscapes Review*: 'National Park Authorities... shockingly, have only 0.9% representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic members.' From my own research, carried out in March 2021, I noticed that there is a very similar picture of underrepresentation in the national outdoor and environmental not-for-profit sector.

Racism

Individuals and organisations all have a responsibility to tackle racism in the sector and to call it out and act proactively to address it. Over the years many have not been proactive and have stayed silent.

To advance this work we all need to collaborate and work in equal partnership between communities and groups. Mosaic Outdoors and partners, including University of Cumbria, Outward Bound Trust, Institute for Outdoor Learning and Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, delivered a series of ten webinars on INclusivity in the OUTdoors during the 2021 lockdown. The report recommends a number of actions and a framework, and partners are looking at a follow-up for the sector. Recordings of the sessions and reports can be

Friends of the Dales want everyone from all backgrounds to value and enjoy the Dales. To succeed at this, it is imperative that the charity benefits from the lived experience of people in every community in every aspect of its work. Our 40th anniversary walk, which involved the Broughton Road Women's Group, is just one example of how inclusivity can widen enjoyment of the Dales, and we must take further strides to make the next chapter in our history the most impactful yet. The board is currently reviewing its rules in line with the latest recommended practice, which will catalyse greater inclusivity throughout the charity in the future.



found at www.outdoor-learning.org/Good-Practice/Good-Practice/Equality-Diversity-and-Inclusion/INclusivity-in-the-OUTdoors

A young person whom I invited to speak at one of the webinars said: 'It made me feel heard and the feedback was beautiful and made me feel as if there was hope for the future of representation because people were actually listening and having important and useful conversations around the topic.'

The sector must be more inclusive so that all communities can enjoy the landscapes peacefully and without experiencing racism. The sector needs to demonstrate leadership and commitment and work on this as part of its core business and not just as 'diversity washing' initiatives (A *Challenging Environment: Experiences of Ethnic Minority Environmental Professionals*, Institution of Environmental Sciences. February 2022). There has been more than enough research over the years: it is now time for real and demonstrable action and change. Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities need to

be round those tables where decisions are made and where our contributions and lived experiences are respected and valued. The journey really needed to start many years ago.

What I don't touch upon in this piece is the need to look at other specific areas such as volunteering, employment, conservation and climate change. These are all areas the sector needs to review and develop an inclusive approach in. This year we will be engaging with communities and promoting the message of enjoying the outdoors safely.

My vision for the future is of the sector at the forefront of inclusivity. This is an aspiration and may take many years but the pandemic has provided an opportunity to reset the way we think and do things. Let us take this opportunity and make a difference for future generations and the landscapes, which belong to us all.

Mohammed Dhalech

Where next for the Glover Review?
See Rick Cowley's update on page 19.

It's Time to Drive Change,

'A special area: drive with care' say the signs as you enter the national park, but is it really possible to care for the Dales with a car?

Last August saw the highest demand for car parking tickets in the Dales in over half a decade. With electric vehicle charging devices still largely absent in Yorkshire compared to other parts of the UK, we can legitimately fear that car pollution has been soaring in the national park too.

Swapping to alternative transport such as buses is a greener option that's regrettably there only for some, but where it's possible, it's worth it. According to the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), 2,000,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions could be avoided if everyone in the UK simply swapped one monthly journey by car to one by bus instead. And the environmental benefit of bussing is just the start.

The CPT says one coach could take up to a mile of cars off the road, reducing congestion for emergency services and those who genuinely need to drive. What's more, every fare helps to keep bus routes viable, enabling providers to be there for people who may not otherwise get to enjoy the benefits of nature at all.

The country's poorest communities are twice as likely to live in a neighbourhood without nature-rich spaces, which have been shown to boost mental and physical wellbeing and reduce mortality rates. White people are statistically more likely than some other ethnicities to have a car owner in their households. The evidence is clear: supporting public transport is a supremely effective way to help address social and health inequalities.

The Dales can be a special area for so many more people, boosting wellbeing, community cohesion and business too, but only if

the national park is sustainably accessible throughout. Right now it isn't – as the record car parking demand painfully shows – despite real progress in some parts.

Several words in the government's Levelling Up White Paper, Bus Back Better strategy and response to the Glover Review gave hope that public transport could get the investment it needs, but adequate funding and action has yet to follow despite requests from DalesBus, Friends of the Dales and many other influential associations. We still feel miles away from a future where swathes of the Dales are no longer mostly accessed by polluting private vehicles.

With dependable timetabled public transport provision under threat, it is necessary for us to review our transport policy and consider what more we can do to make the Dales sustainably accessible to all. Please take a look at the transport policy on our website and let

The Little White Bus, a community service covering upper Wensleydale and Swaledale. Photo courtesy of Ian Harrison



Not Cars

me know what changes you think Friends of the Dales should be driving forwards. For a bit of inspiration, consider a day out on DalesBus too. After all, bus drivers are the only people who can truly 'drive with care' in the Dales.

Kevin Armstrong, trustee for Friends of the Dales and Board Director for DalesBus (aka Dales and Bowland CIC).

Our transport policy is available at www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies Information about bus and train services into and around the Dales is available at www.dalesbus.org Timetable leaflets are also available in many libraries, visitor information centres and businesses in the Dales.

If you know anyone who might be willing to sponsor a DalesBus service to help keep it running, or if you would like to input into the charity's transport policy, email Kevin at k.h.armstrong@gmail.com



Photo courtesy of DalesBus



Who Pays?

The Yorkshire Dales could soon have access to a major new source of finance – but there may be some drawbacks. Sometimes specialist terminology can limit our understanding of environmental issues and make it difficult for us to decide where we stand on controversial subjects. Richard Boothman explores the concepts behind private sector finance for national parks and looks at the benefits – and possible difficulties.

In common with all the other national parks in the UK, the Yorkshire Dales are facing a funding gap as central government grants are reduced and costs increase. This funding gap may be as high as £300 million per year across all the national parks.

To help bridge the gap, National Parks Partnerships LLP (the arm of National Parks UK that allows it to work at a national level with a range of commercial, sustainability and philanthropic partners) has entered a joint venture with Palladium.

Palladium identifies itself as a worldwide company that 'mobilises private capital to address social issues, while generating a financial return for investors'. The joint venture is called Revere and its target is to raise £240 million by 2030 through the sale of ecosystem services.

Ecosystem services are the multitude of benefits that nature provides to society. Four major benefits have been identified:

Provisioning services - the material benefits we get from ecosystems such as the supply of food, water, fibres, wood and fuels.

Regulating services - the benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes. These include the regulation of air quality and soil fertility, control of floods or crop pollination.

Cultural services - the non-material benefits we gain from ecosystems. Examples include aesthetic and engineering inspiration, cultural identity and spiritual wellbeing.

Supporting services - necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services. For example, providing plants and animals with living spaces, allowing for diversity of species and maintaining genetic diversity.

Ecosystem services are provided by the natural world but in our managed landscapes, the degree to which nature can provide them depends on what we do with the land. The money raised by Revere will be used to pay landowners and land managers within the national parks to provide ecosystem services.

Contributions will come mainly from larger private sector organisations. Revere has secured funding from several companies including Estée Lauder Corporation and Gatwick Airport. They will pay for ecosystem services to help them reach their targets for minimising carbon dioxide emissions by **carbon offsetting** - a way of paying for others to reduce emissions or absorb carbon dioxide to compensate for your own emissions. This is done by planting trees to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, or by enhancing peatlands or soils, which can capture large quantities of carbon dioxide.

If managed in the right way, this additional funding coming into the national park **could** be a good thing. But we need to be aware of where the money is coming from. Institutions such as the National Gallery have been criticised for taking money from oil companies and it would be difficult for a national park to defend these organisations as a source of finance.

There are many potential issues that arise from this type of funding of our public bodies. Friends of the Dales are taking a lead in monitoring developments in relation to Revere and other similar funding streams. We will report further as the issue crystallises but meanwhile if you have any views, please get in touch.

Richard Boothman, volunteer member of policy & planning committee and business member (Ideostone)

Breeding Curlew Seek Sanctuary in the Dales



Photo courtesy of Ann Shadrake

The first sighting of spring is as eagerly awaited as early snowdrops or newborn lambs. The curlew is one of the Dales' most iconic species but when it returns after overwintering on the coast, it exchanges one set of environmental pressures for another. Ann Shadrake takes a look at why this much-loved bird is under threat and what can be done to help.

Is there still time to save curlew from extinction in Britain?

On a stormy day in mid-February this year, I got my first sight of returning curlew. About 100 were feeding and resting on a sodden field (aka the natural floodplain) beside the River Aire at Skipton. Gentle contact calls between female and male curlew could just be heard over the bypass traffic. Such calls help re-establish vital bonds, essential as curlew can live in faithful pairs for 20 years or more. I logged the sighting on a fantastic online map (Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership), which records curlew returning to the North to breed. But where have these curlew been all winter?

Coasts and estuaries provide winter refuges

Like many waders, curlew use our coasts for feeding and roosting through the winter, building up condition for the summer breeding season. The British wintering population is drawn from a vast area, with birds arriving from as far as Russia and Finland. Climate breakdown, coastal development, pollution and shooting disturbance contribute to a major decline in wintering curlew numbers. Recent research and ample anecdotal evidence is highlighting a very worrying increase in people flouting protections (signage and fencing) designed to leave birds in peace. Unfortunately some people even seem to encourage their dogs



Image courtesy of US Fish & Wildlife Service @USFWS Twitter 17.12.21



Even where you have a 'legal right to roam' please choose to put nature first. Stick to the obvious paths rather than following trods. Walkers, dogs and cyclists can scare adult birds off the nest, wasting hard-won energy and leaving eggs and chicks vulnerable.

Photo courtesy of Ann Shadrake

to run at resting waders, for 'exercise and fun'. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) reports that the number of curlew wintering in Britain has dropped by a shocking 14% in just eight years.





Photo courtesy of Ann Shadrake

Best practice is to always keep your dog under very close control (eg on a short lead) especially between March and August (open countryside) and September to March (shores and coasts). Extra rules apply in open access areas.

Why do curlew come to the Dales in spring?

Curlew leave the coasts and arrive in the Dales in very early spring, ready to set up breeding territories on our grasslands and moorlands. Curlew nest on the ground, so eggs and chicks are very vulnerable to predation by foxes, crows and gulls. Tussocky grassland with clumps of reeds or taller vegetation hides the nests and provides cover for the chicks. Almost immediately after hatching curlew chicks feed themselves; they need nearby open, soggy areas or wet 'scrapes' full of worms and small insects. Females gradually depart for the winter feeding grounds, leaving the males to guard the chicks until they fledge at around five weeks old. Teenage birds and their 'dads' then need quiet and open, damp grassland to continue feeding through the summer.

How threatened are curlew?

The NUCLNP, which covers the Dales and large areas of the Pennines, makes the concern crystal clear.

'...the curlew is one of the most pressing bird conservation priorities in the UK. The breeding population has nearly halved since the mid-1990s. In some places, there is a real possibility that they could disappear altogether in the next twenty years. The UK also has a global responsibility to take action as it is the third most important country in the world for breeding curlew. We are home to up to a quarter of the breeding population but numbers are dropping here faster than anywhere else in the world.'

Research by the BTO, quoted by Graham Appleton, shows that currently it takes four breeding pairs of curlew to produce just one surviving chick between them. In other words, the estimated 58,000 breeding pairs of curlew in Britain are producing only 14,500 chicks per year. That's 10,000 chicks too few every year – just to arrest the British decline in curlew numbers.

Why have breeding curlew numbers declined in the UK?

In Britain, we used to have a lot of the low-intensive grassland that curlews need to breed and feed on: like meadows and naturally wet pastures, with soggy or rough bits left uncut for months (due to poor growth) until a late cut maybe in August. But for a long time now, we have farmed very differently. We have switched to more arable farming and grassland managed more intensively, and more land has been lost to development. Early silage or hay cuts, often understandably preferred by upland farmers to 'get the crop in', can destroy nests. Poorly managed cutting risks cutting chicks to pieces - their natural instinct is to sit tight, not run away. Add high levels of natural predators and disturbance to the mix, and increased use and potency of agricultural chemicals, and the outcome for curlew is dire. A ray of hope is Farming in Protected Landscapes (to March 2024) which can offer funding to farmers for recording breeding success and improving habitat for curlew.

Space for Shorebirds offers an innovative Dog Ranger pledge – sign up and your dog becomes a wildlife ranger! Could Friends of the Dales take inspiration from this?

<http://spaceforshorebirds.co.uk>



How to help curlew

At a Curlew Action webinar, chaired by Mary Colwell, I heard the comment: 'We must intervene, or watch curlew go extinct in lowland England'. The same can be said for our uplands. We can all learn more about curlew, support those actively protecting curlew, change our own behaviour and raise awareness where we live or visit. Plenty of curlew (and other birds) is a good sign of a healthier, more biodiverse environment.

Enjoy the sight and sounds of curlew this year, summer or winter, and do send me your suggestions for helping their conservation.

Ann Shadrake, Executive Director



Curlew Action offers a huge range of resources and runs World Curlew Day on 21 April each year www.curlewaction.org. Could you put this poster up near where you live?

Further reading

Graham Appleton's *Wader Tales* – evidence-based blogs on curlew/waders - <https://wadertales.wordpress.com>

Mary Colwell (2018) *Curlew Moon*

A New People's Charter

The Open Spaces Society defends people's rights to enjoy village greens, commons and footpaths. General Secretary – and Friends of the Dales member – Kate Ashbrook gives her personal opinions on what needs to be done to make the national park more accessible.

On 29 May 2004 land with a right of public access on foot in the Yorkshire Dales increased from four per cent to 62 per cent of the national park – probably the biggest gain of any national park in England and Wales. This was thanks to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), which gave the public the right to walk on specially mapped mountain, moor, heath and down, and on registered common land. It was a great start but 20 years on there has been little progress in winning more access, and most of England remains out of bounds.

The Glover Report on national parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) rightly deplored the fact that many of our most beautiful places were off limits to horse riders, water users, cavers, wild campers etc. It expressed a hope that the government would look seriously at whether the levels of open access were adequate.

The government's response is well meaning but inadequate, referring to the forthcoming review of the open-access maps (which, if we are not astute, could lead to losses rather than gains in access).

The government places much weight on the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme to increase access. But this is limited, running only to March 2024, mostly for small projects and unlikely to provide permanent new access. We had hoped that the wider agricultural funding schemes would pay for new and better access, as promised repeatedly by ministers, but the reality is different with no assurance of new access land or paths being opened.

