



Primrose



Ramsons

Please follow the Countryside Code

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Further information:

North York Moors National Park:
www.northyorkmoors.org.uk

Find out more about the House and Gardens at:
www.duncombepark.com

Duncombe Park National Nature Reserve

Natural England, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1-2 Peaseholme Green, York YO1 7PX www.naturalengland.org.uk or by calling the Natural England switchboard on 0845 600 3078 (local rate)

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Duncombe Park National Nature Reserve





Pied flycatcher

Duncombe Park NNR

This National Nature Reserve covers 103 hectares of the Duncombe Park Estate on the outskirts of Helmsley in North Yorkshire. The parkland is in the River Rye valley and is home to many ancient trees. These reflect some of the conditions of the wild wood which covered the valley thousands of years ago.

The trees provide a home for rare invertebrates and fungi, and Duncombe Park is an important site for wood-feeding insects. Rot holes in the trees provide nest and roost sites for birds and bats. Birds found here all year round include three species of woodpecker, nuthatch and the elusive hawfinch.

The River Rye flows through the Reserve and this is home to many rare insects which support trout, otter and bird populations.

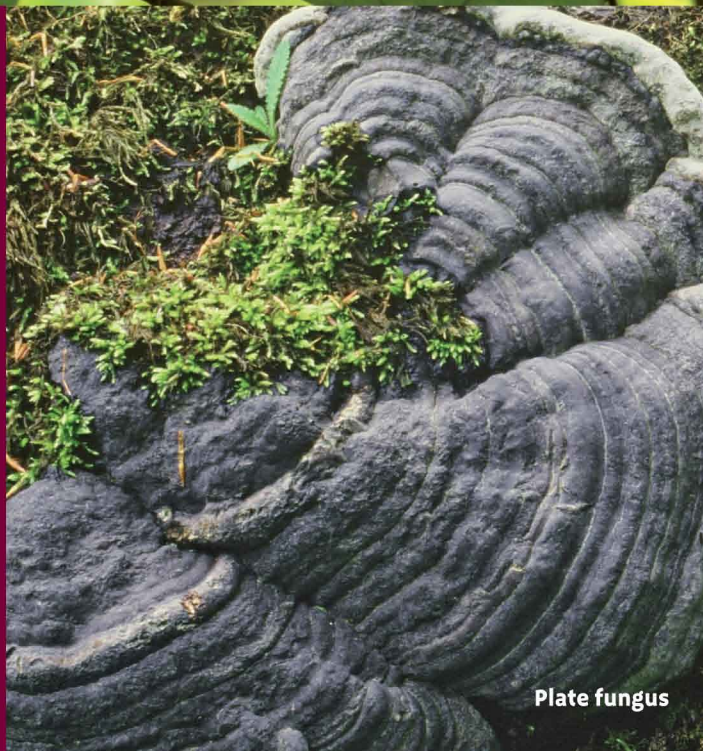


Plate fungus

Public opening times

As part of the impressive Duncombe Park Estate, the gardens and parkland have a restricted opening period. For details of their annual opening times, please look at their website.

Location and access

By car: Duncombe Park is approximately 25km to the north west of Malton and 1km south west of Helmsley on the A170. The site is accessed via a minor road from the town. There is car parking in Helmsley and in Duncombe Park.

By public transport: The nearest train station is in Malton and there are bus services from Malton and York to Helmsley. For bus service details phone Helmsley Tourist Information on 01439 770173

Cleveland way: The Cleveland Way is a national trail, covering 177km of footpath from Helmsley to Filey on the North Yorkshire coast. To find out more about this trail, visit www.nationaltrail.co.uk/clevelandway



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Throughout the seasons

During spring, bird song erupts through the park as they start to defend territories and pair up, breaking the silence of winter. The woodland floor becomes carpeted with bluebells, primroses and ramsons, which add their strong garlic scent to the air when disturbed. Early purple orchids also appear, bringing a scent likened to tom-cats as they produce beautiful flower spikes in the ancient woodland.

In late spring, hawthorn blossom (known as 'may') is visited by brightly coloured Rievaux, six-spotted longhorn and cardinal beetles to feed on the nectar.

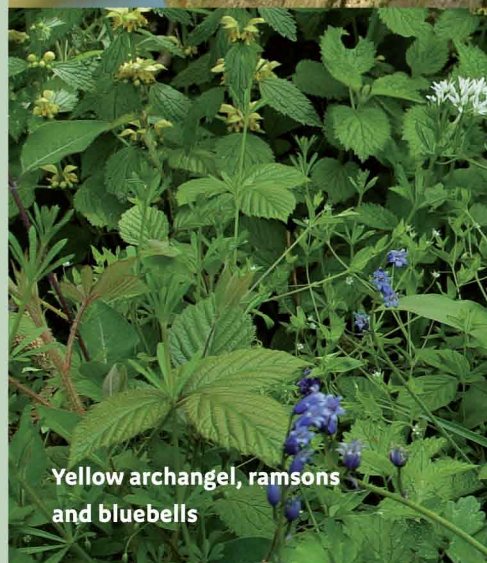
In summer, bird activity increases with the crevices and holes of old trees providing a rich variety of sites for nesting birds such as redstarts, spotted and pied flycatchers which are summer visitors to these woodlands. Down by the River Rye you may also chance upon birds such as dipper, grey wagtail, kingfisher, grey heron and sand martin. As twilight approaches look out for bats as they emerge to feed on night flying insects.

As the trees take on autumn shades reflecting the sinking summer sun look for the emergence of a host of colourful and strange fungi from the ground and dead and rotting timbers of the old trees in the park. The dry crackle of leaves may reveal the presence of birds and other animals moving under the trees.

The gnarled and contorted grandeur of ancient trees is revealed in winter. Birds such as the hawfinch and brambling arrive to feed on seeds and nuts. If you are lucky you may spy nuthatch or treecreeper climbing up and down tree trunks scouring the bark for insects.



Treecreeper



Yellow archangel, ramsons
and bluebells



Kingfisher



Ancient oak tree at Duncombe Park

The ancient trees

Ancient trees are trees that are by virtue of their great age, size or condition, of exceptional value biologically, aesthetically or culturally. Northern Europe is now home to over 80% of all ancient trees. These trees have passed any useful commercial life-span and have all but ceased to expand their crowns, although they will continue to grow in stature. At this stage, the crown may die-back and there could be quantities of dead and rotting wood throughout the tree.

As the tree ages it becomes more valuable for a wide range of other organisms and its habitat value increases. A tree might take more than 400 years to reach the stage of decay when it is suitable for some endangered species of invertebrates, fungus or lichens. These ancient trees support complex and secretive food webs,

with some of the rarest species and highly specialised insects relying on the stability of the habitat.

The more dead wood a tree contains the more valuable it is to wildlife. Thus a living veteran is better than a dead one because it will continue to produce more dead wood. Many of the organisms associated with veteran trees can be found in fallen dead wood and it should be left where it falls.

The actual age that a tree is considered ancient depends on its age in relation to the length of life for each species. Birch may never reach 200 years old, willows are ancient at this point, while beech and ash are just starting to mature. Another hundred years has to pass before oak is maturing and yew reach maturity at around 500 years old.