

## A year-round haven for wildlife

As winter sets in, large numbers of wildfowl begin to seek refuge. Wigeon arrive in their tens of thousands from breeding grounds in Iceland and northern Europe to graze at the edge of the flooded meadows (Ings). Pochard, pintail, tufted duck, goosander and thousands of teal often provide a kaleidoscope of colour in the weak winter light.

Parties of whooper swans and wild geese arrive in autumn and the number of wildfowl peaks in February and March – in excess of forty thousand birds in this part of the Lower Derwent Valley alone.

As the winter floods recede and spring becomes summer, the huge flocks of wildfowl and waders return to their breeding grounds, whilst here thoughts of UK breeding birds turn to establishing territories. The ensuing aerial combats of the wildfowl are wonderful to watch along with the dramatic displays of lapwings, and curlew and the amazing sound of drumming snipe.

Clumps of marsh marigold, pale pink ragged robin and deeper pink marsh orchids grow in the damper patches of grassland. Ox-eye daisies, yellow rattle, knapweed, great burnet and meadowsweet thrive and the air buzzes with hoverflies, grasshoppers, beetles, butterflies and dragonflies.

In late summer, as the hay crop is taken, groups of lapwing gather on mown fields. The summer migrants make their way to winter quarters – you may see late willow warbler, wheatear or blackcap. The sight of hundreds of golden plover wheeling and calling over growing cornfields on the edge of the Ings heralds the arrival of autumn. Heavy spells of rainfall at this time of year soon cause the Ings to flood once more.

## 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:

Lower Derwent Valley and Skipwith Common National Nature Reserves Office, Bank Island, Church Lane, Wheldrake, North Yorkshire YO19 6FE

Find out more at  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk/lowerderwentvalleynnr](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/lowerderwentvalleynnr)

or by calling the Natural England switchboard on 0845 600 3078 (local rate)

**Front cover image: Curlew** © Terry Watson



Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

ISBN 978-1-84754-280-9  
Catalogue Code: NE412  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

Natural England publications are available as accessible PDFs from:  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications)

Should an alternative format of this publication be required, please contact our enquiries line for more information: 0845 600 3078 or email enquiries @naturalengland.org.uk

Printed on stock comprising 75% recycled fibre.

This publication is published by Natural England under the Open Government Licence for public sector information.

You are encouraged to use, and reuse, information subject to certain conditions.

For details of the licence visit:  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk/copyright](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/copyright)

Natural England photographs are only available for non-commercial purposes. If any other information, such as maps or data, cannot be used commercially this will be made clear within the note/report/publication.

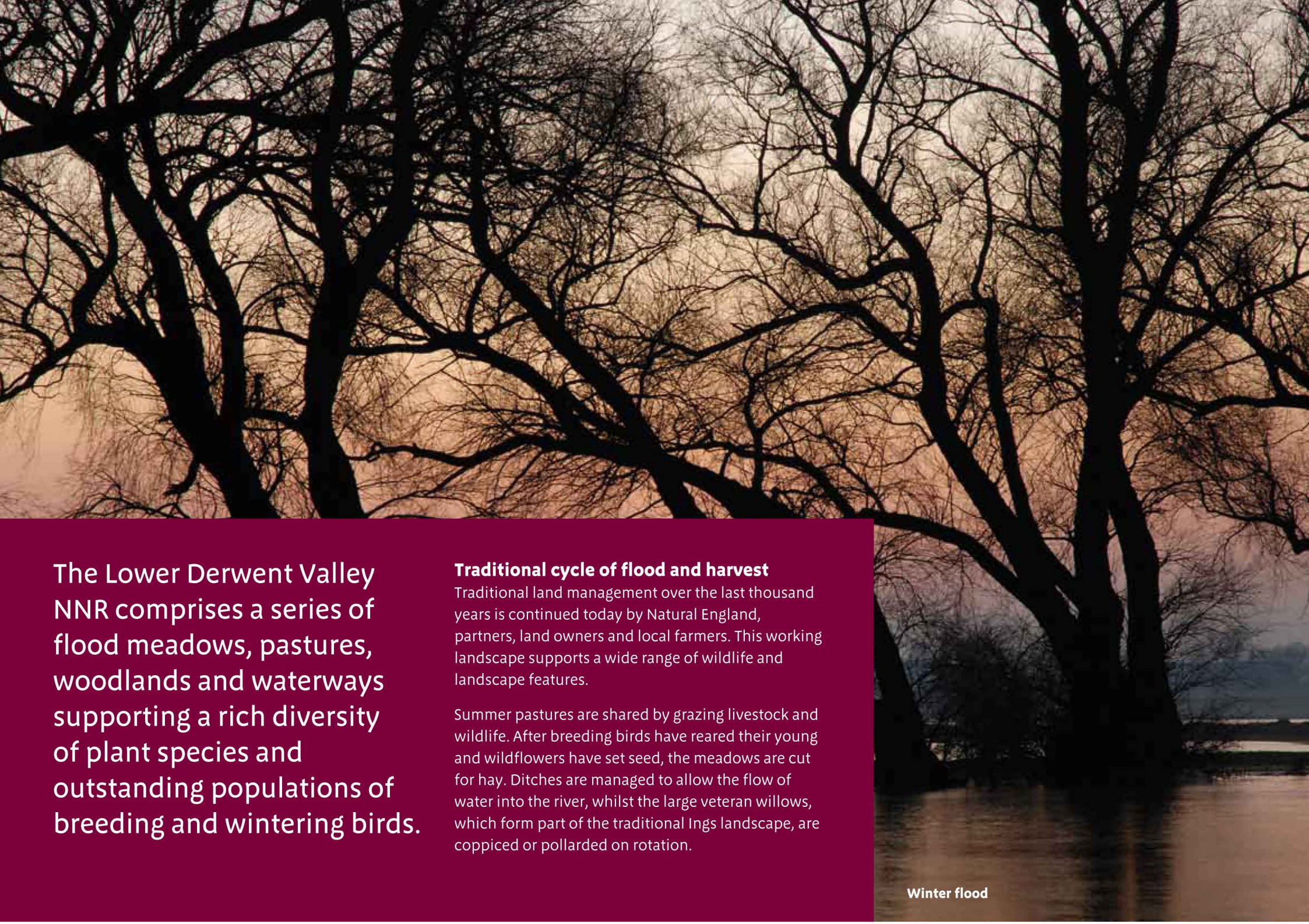
© Natural England 2013



# Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve







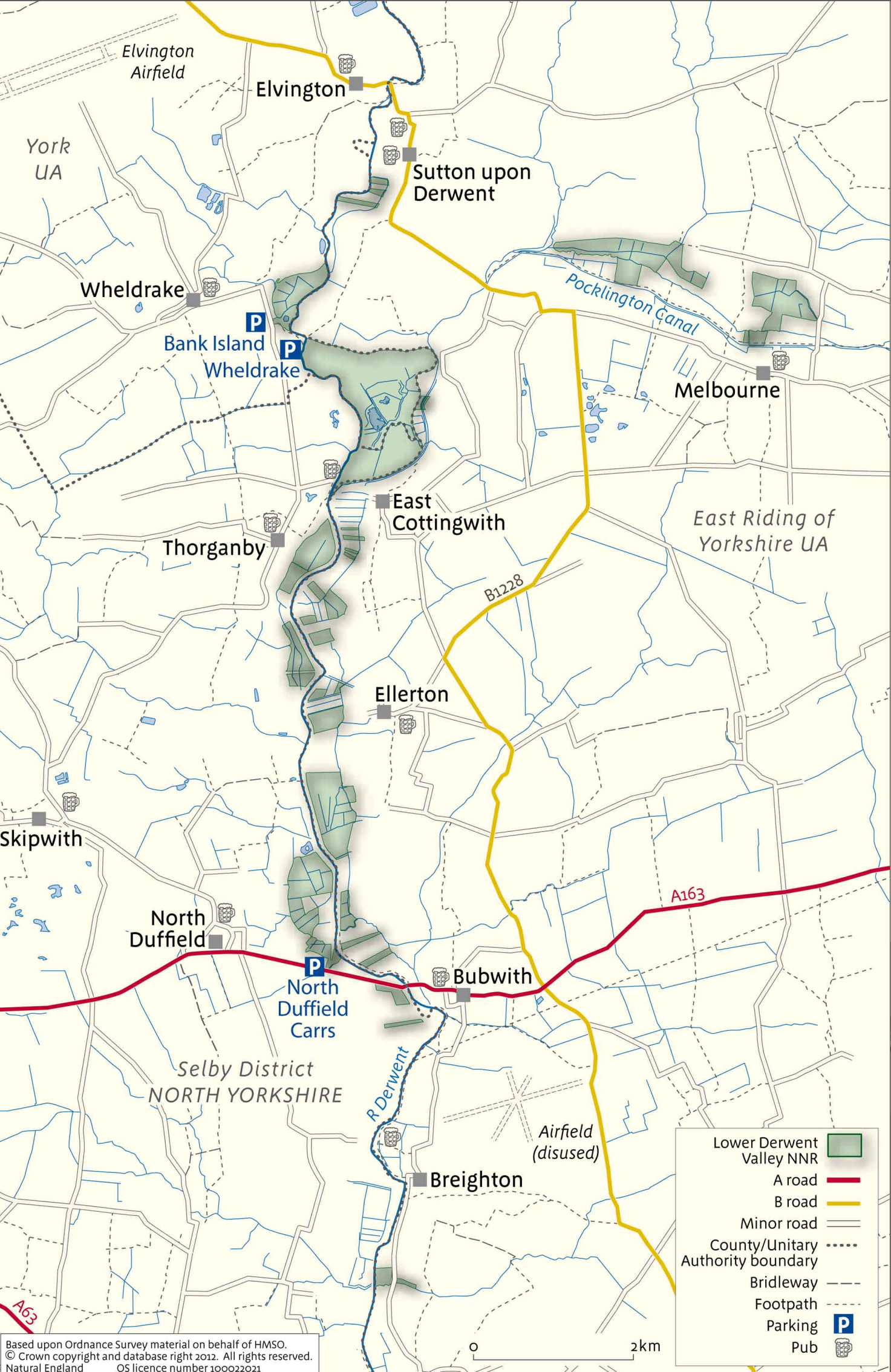
The Lower Derwent Valley NNR comprises a series of flood meadows, pastures, woodlands and waterways supporting a rich diversity of plant species and outstanding populations of breeding and wintering birds.

#### **Traditional cycle of flood and harvest**

Traditional land management over the last thousand years is continued today by Natural England, partners, land owners and local farmers. This working landscape supports a wide range of wildlife and landscape features.

Summer pastures are shared by grazing livestock and wildlife. After breeding birds have reared their young and wildflowers have set seed, the meadows are cut for hay. Ditches are managed to allow the flow of water into the river, whilst the large veteran willows, which form part of the traditional Ings landscape, are coppiced or pollarded on rotation.





Lower Derwent Valley NNR	
A road	
B road	
Minor road	
County/Unitary Authority boundary	
Bridleway	
Footpath	
Parking	
Pub	

Based upon Ordnance Survey material on behalf of HMSO.  
 © Crown copyright and database right 2012. All rights reserved.  
 Natural England OS licence number 100022021

0 2km



## Acknowledgements

Land owned in the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve is owned by Natural England, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Carstairs Countryside Trust and the Environment Agency. Land acquisition has been supported by many organisations including: National Heritage Memorial Fund, World Wide Fund For Nature, Countryside Agency, English Heritage, Hamamelis Trust, The Lyndhurst Settlement, Frognaal Trust, R. Mitchell Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Charles and Elsie Sykes Trust, James Goodhart, Alan Evans Memorial Trust, G.V. Armitage Trust, Laings Charitable Trust, Cuthbert Horn Trust, Clothworkers' Foundation, Humberside County Council, Enventure (Northern) and Defra (Countryside Stewardship Scheme).

The undergrounding of overhead electricity lines between East Cottingwith and Thorganby, which threatened birds using the valley, was accomplished with the co-operation of Yorkshire Electricity and the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and James Goodhart.

### Location, access and facilities

The individual sites making up the reserve lie in a section of the Derwent river valley between its junction with the B1228 in the north, to the village of Wressle in the south.

There are three main access points to the reserve: North Duffield Carrs car park (1.5 km east of North Duffield, off the A163), Bank Island car park, and the nearby Wheldrake car park, both 1 to 1.5 km south-east of Wheldrake, off the minor road from Wheldrake to Thorganby.



Hay making

## The Pocklington Canal

The Pocklington Canal is an important tributary of the lower part of the River Derwent. Flowing first through a landscape dominated by arable cropping, then pasture and hay meadows. This range of habitats together with the canal's aquatic interests makes the area exceptionally rich in wildlife. To enjoy this special place access is made available at nine locations along the towpath. Although ideal for walking, many sections are not accessible for wheelchairs.

## Wheldrake Ings

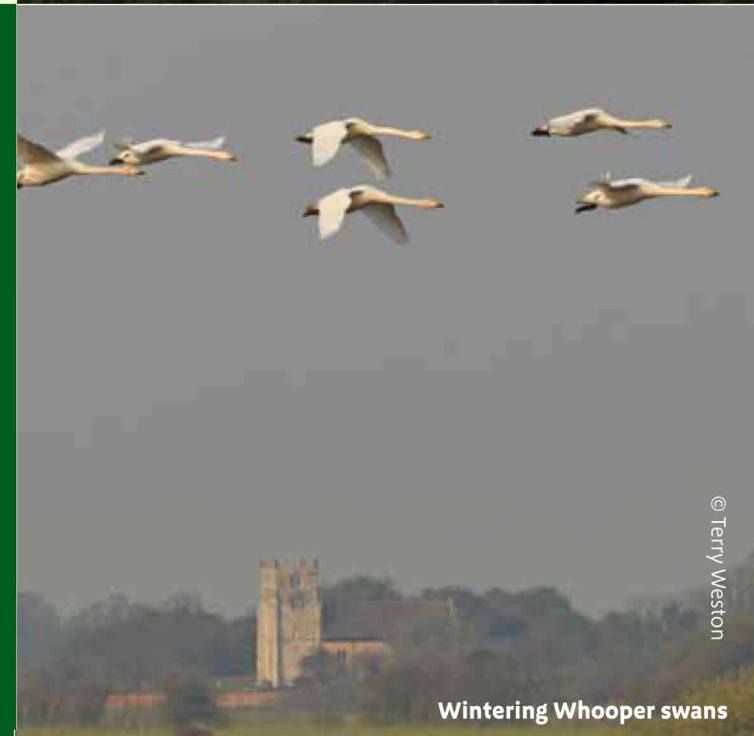
Wheldrake Ings, makes up nearly 157 hectares of the lower Derwent Valley and is owned and managed by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, who run event and volunteering opportunities on the site. [www.ywt.org.uk/](http://www.ywt.org.uk/)

## Visiting or getting involved

Visit between November and March to view the waterfowl on the flooded grassland, or between May and June to see and hear the summer spectacle of breeding birds amidst the flower-filled meadows of the Ings landscape.

At Lower Derwent Valley NNR there are opportunities to get involved with volunteering, bird monitoring, and events on the Reserve and nearby Skipwith Common National Nature Reserve. To keep up-to-date about the birds on the Reserve, visit [www.ldvnnr.blogspot.com](http://www.ldvnnr.blogspot.com)

The Reserve also acts as a location for field trips, research and educational visits, with the Reserve Office at Bank Island having a small classroom and toilet facilities which is also available to community groups. Visit our website for more details of school visits.



Wintering Whooper swans