

Nature in the Dales

2000-10

# Biodiversity is life

A Celebrat10n

Celebrating the completion of  
*Nature in the Dales*, the first local  
biodiversity action plan for the  
Yorkshire Dales National Park



“

Biodiversity is the basis of human life and underpins our continued existence. The huge achievements described here are a testament to people working together for a common cause, show-casing actions on the ground to protect and enhance the iconic, magic, environment of the Yorkshire Dales.

”

Professor David Hill

Keynote speaker, *2020 Vision* conference, 2 October 2010



# Introduction

2010 is a landmark year for wildlife conservation work within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Not only is it the International Year of Biodiversity, it also marks the completion of *Nature in the Dales: a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Yorkshire Dales National Park*.

After a decade of hard work, 2010 is a good time to celebrate our achievements, take stock and prioritise our efforts for the future.

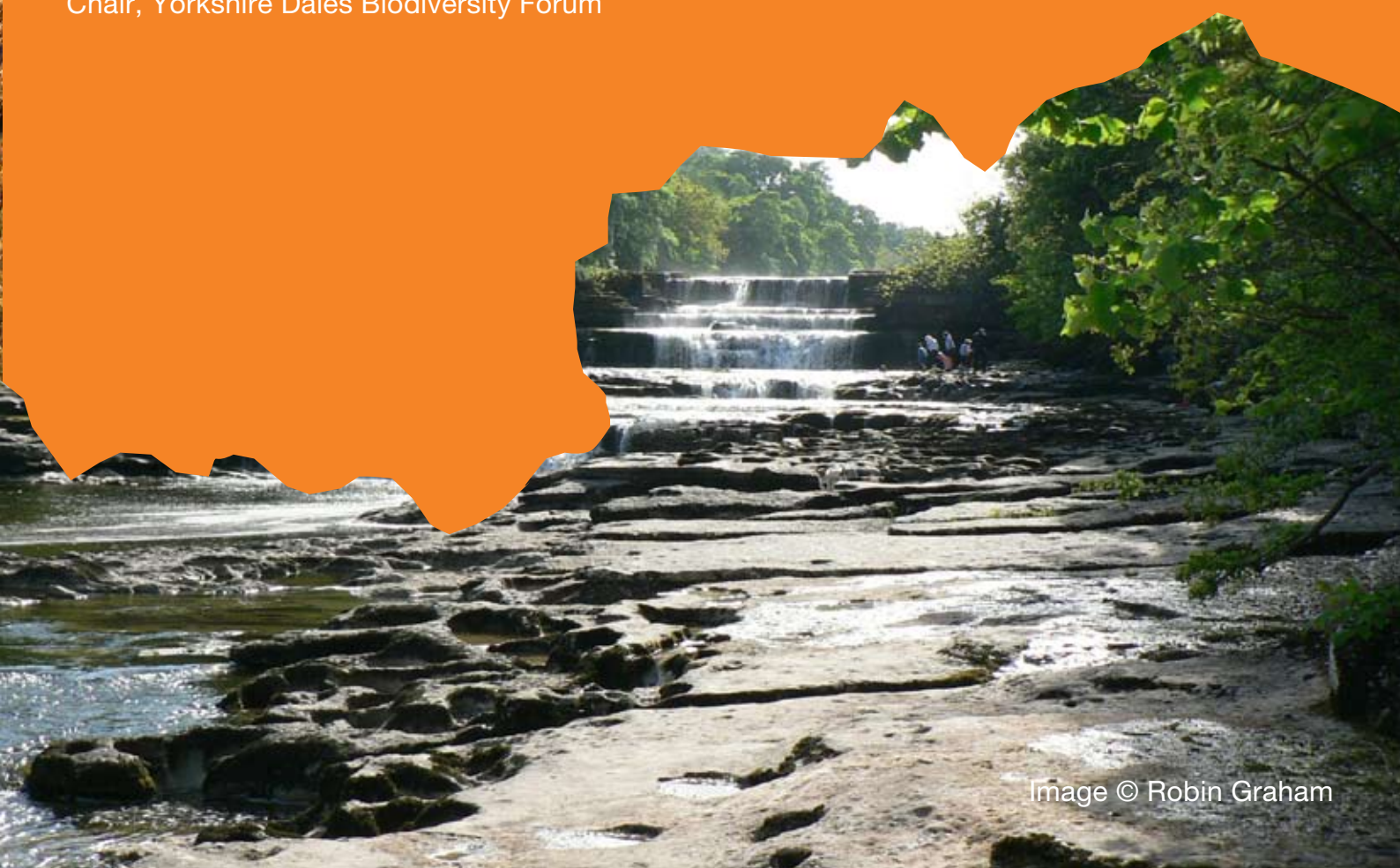
During the last 10 years, many organisations, local groups and individuals have worked hard to look after the unique natural environment of this special place. From the high profile to the low key, we have all been working to conserve, enhance and protect key habitats and species. A lot of this work has taken place through fantastic collaborative projects, from regional partnerships to local community-led schemes.

Throughout, the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum has been instrumental in keeping the action plan on track and is a good example of wildlife conservation organisations and other experts working well together for the common good.

To celebrate some of the many achievements of the last 10 years, 13 diverse projects have been summarised at [www.natureinthedales.org.uk/projects](http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk/projects) and six are showcased in this booklet.



Gordon Haycock  
Chair, Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum



# Bats under the Dales

## Why was the project needed?

Caves are important mating and hibernation sites for many temperate bat species and critical to their continued survival. Yorkshire Dales National Park has more caves and kilometres of cave passage than anywhere else in the UK yet, prior to this project, virtually nothing was known about their importance to bats.

## What were the project's aims?

To survey major caves, determine the bat species present and estimate the number using key sites. To understand the behaviour and ecology of cave use in order to prepare better conservation plans, and make the importance of the caves known to the widest possible audience.

## What did it achieve?

Over 60 caves were surveyed, finding that bats make use of the majority, but sometimes in small numbers. Many of the larger caves are important sites, each attracting thousands of bats in the autumn from summer roosts far beyond the boundaries of the National Park. The project learned what makes a cave suitable for bats and how caves fit into the bats' life cycle.

The team wrote a cavers' conservation code, promoted the project through local and national presentations, authored articles for wildlife and caving magazines and published in international scientific journals. The project featured on BBC television and radio, including a live, underground transmission for *Autumnwatch*.

## Who was involved?

The project team at the University of Leeds - led by Anita Glover and John Altringham – was funded by the Natural Environment Research Council and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. Additional funding or support was received from the People's Trust for Endangered Species, National Trust, Council for Northern Caving Clubs, local cavers and naturalists.

## Further information

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[www.natureinthedales.org.uk/bats\\_under\\_the\\_dales](http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk/bats_under_the_dales)



# Limestone Country Project

## Why was the project needed?

Mixed grazing with sheep and upland cattle helped create the wonderful diversity of plants and wildlife in the limestone country of the Yorkshire Dales. This declined in the last 50 years due to a move towards more specialised sheep farming, resulting in the loss of species and structural diversity.

## What were the project's aims?

To restore diversity on over 1,500 hectares (ha) of habitat by encouraging farmers to return to mixed livestock farming.

## What did it achieve?

Grants helped farmers establish 18 traditional breed upland cattle herds on 1,850ha, beating the target. The purchase of two weed-wiping machines helped them manage invasive species on 300ha and contractors controlled a further 677ha, as well as reducing rabbit grazing over 6,800ha.

Monitoring found that on land using project cattle, the proportion of recovering calcareous grassland and limestone pavement was higher than elsewhere in the area. The amount of alkaline fen in favourable condition was maintained and the amount that was recovering increased. The diversity of indicator species was found to be higher on land grazed with cattle rather than with sheep.

Importantly, as a result of successful lobbying by the project, the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme contains supplementary payments to encourage farmers to use traditional breeds in conservation grazing.

## Who was involved?

Farmers, EU LIFE fund, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, English Nature, National Trust, Rare Breeds Survival Trust, Grazing Animals Project and National Beef Association.

## Further information

[www.natureinthedales.org.uk/limestonecountryproject](http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk/limestonecountryproject)



The project has won three awards including the Yorkshire Rural Awards 2008





## Red squirrel conservation

### Why was the project needed?

The UK's native red squirrel is in danger of disappearing from our countryside altogether.

The main threat comes from the introduced grey squirrel. As well as competing for a limited food supply, greys carry the squirrelpox virus which is fatal to reds.

### What are the project's aims?

To determine the distribution of red squirrels in the National Park, ensure appropriate woodlands are in positive management, raise awareness of the conservation requirements of reds, and control greys.

### What has it achieved to date?

Visual records from a number of sources and hair-tube surveys by Dales Volunteers have shown that the Cumbrian population of red squirrels has spread into North Yorkshire.

Following on from the 2005 North of England Red Squirrel Conservation Strategy, seventeen reserves have been established, including Garsdale & Mallerstang, Widdale, and Greenfield in the National Park, and positive woodland management is being undertaken on all sites.

Surveys have confirmed that Greenfield is a key site. This has enabled owner UPM Tilhill to employ a ranger to undertake grey squirrel control with Forestry Commission funding.

In order to raise awareness about the species, working with the landowner a viewpoint has been created at Snaizholme on a self-guided walk from Hawes in Wensleydale.

### Who is involved?

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, local landowners and land managers, Sedbergh Red Squirrel Group, Save our Squirrels and Red Squirrel Survival Trust.

### Further information

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[www.natureinthedales.org.uk/red\\_squirrel\\_conservation](http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk/red_squirrel_conservation)

# Hay Time Project

## Why was the project needed?

Over the last sixty years, meadow quality and extent in the Yorkshire Dales National Park - and nationally - has declined dramatically. Although funding for restoration work has been available through agri-environment schemes such as the Pennines Dales Environmentally Sensitive Area, the lack of specialist machinery, trained contractors and dedicated staff to co-ordinate schemes had prevented much work from being undertaken.

## What are the project's aims?

To enhance and restore at least 200ha of upland and lowland meadows (MG3 and MG5, respectively) within, and close to, the National Park.

Meadow enhancement involves introducing seed to traditionally-managed meadows currently in agri-environment agreements but lacking some characteristic species. Meadow restoration involves seed addition and/or better management of meadows that have declined following inappropriate management but retaining some botanical interest.

## What has it achieved to date?

To date, 1000ha have been surveyed and 143ha of meadow have had seed added and/or are in better management.

Meadow-themed events and activities for residents and visitors featured in the Hay Time Festival 2008 and Flowers of the Dales Festivals 2009 and 2010.

## Who is involved?

Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, National Trust, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and farmers. This partnership is supported by Natural England, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Wildlife Trusts, Flora Locale, RSPB and others. Volunteers have helped with meadow surveys and seed collecting.

## Further information

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[www.natureinthedales.org.uk/projects/hay\\_time\\_project](http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk/projects/hay_time_project)

## Winner of



# Ribblesdale Crayfish Conservation Project

## Why was the project needed?

The white-clawed crayfish is the UK's only freshwater native crayfish. North West England supports one of the last strongholds for this rapidly declining species. The ill-conceived introduction of the North American signal crayfish, and the crayfish plague that it carries, are the primary causes of this decline.

## What are the project's aims?

- To attempt the first successful eradication of a crayfish plague outbreak.
- To establish a captive breeding programme, to investigate ecological requirements and to identify and monitor potential 'ark' sites.
- To raise awareness about conservation and the threat of invasive species.
- To attempt eradication of American signal crayfish.

## What has it achieved to date?

Specially designed 'conservation weirs' have been effective in limiting the downstream movement of white-clawed crayfish into the plague-infected zone. Continued monitoring is assessing whether crayfish plague has been eradicated.

A captive breeding facility – the most successful in the UK - has been established in Ribblesdale comprising online tanks fed by a spring. Three generations have been raised, isolated from non-native crayfish and crayfish plague.

Trial educational set-ups have been established in the Malham Tarn Field Studies Centre and in schools, a public aquarium set up and the project featured on BBC1's Countryfile.

## Who is involved?

Environment Agency, Natural England, PBA Applied Ecology and Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust. The project has had significant volunteer input and support from local farmers, anglers and the Field Studies Council.

## Further information

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[www.natureinthedales.org.uk/ribble\\_crayfish\\_conservation\\_breeding\\_facility](http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk/ribble_crayfish_conservation_breeding_facility)





# Raydale Project

## Why was the project needed?

Raydale is a small valley with one of only two glacial lakes in Yorkshire, a good number of gills and streams and one of England's shortest rivers, the Bain.

As with all land in the UK, there are pressures and conflicts for space which has resulted in a number of problems around the river catchment area.

## What are the project's aims?

To tackle climate change and artificial moorland drainage issues which lead to erosion, deposition of sediment and the degrading of riverine habitats. This community-led project has a whole-river catchment approach.

## What has the project achieved to date?

Work has concentrated on reducing silt and diffuse pollution, particularly around Semerwater SSSI.

Three eroding gills have been fenced and planted with trees favoured by black grouse, with a fourth, naturally-wooded gill fenced to encourage regeneration. A kilometre of bank side has been planted with indigenous willows as a buffer strip below silage fields. Bank side fencing elsewhere protects a feeder stream from cattle trampling. Linear woodland and wood pasture above the lake completes a tree corridor and will reconnect surface to ground water, slowing run-off and reducing silt. A small area of flood-damaged meadow has been planted with willows and alder.

Future plans include the development of a small hydro-electric scheme to provide financial support for the community, the blocking of moorland grips and heather restoration. Lower down the dale, catchment sensitive farming methods are being championed.

## Who is involved?

The Raydale community and the Yorkshire Rivers Trust.

## Further information

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[www.natureinthedailes.org.uk/raydale\\_project](http://www.natureinthedailes.org.uk/raydale_project)

# 2020 Vision

October 2010 sees the launch of *Nature in the Dales: 2020 Vision* which sets out the conservation priorities in the Yorkshire Dales National Park for the next 10 years.

Several recent projects – such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's dormice reintroduction, the Yorkshire Peat Partnership, and the National Trust's Malham Tarn NNR management plan - are already implementing aspects of *2020 Vision*.

Examples of the range of new projects are given in the snapshots on these pages.



Species such as twite are benefitting from the Moorland Fringe Project



Adder: a new priority species



Moonwort on Calaminarian grassland, a new priority habitat



Protecting wildlife sites, such as Malham Tarn National Nature Reserve



Dormice: a thriving reintroduction in Wensleydale



Consideration for protected species in the planning process

But, as well as continuing to work on many priority habitats and species, *2020 Vision* also presents many new opportunities. There is a new Habitat Action Plan for Calaminarian grasslands and new Species Action Plans for two amphibians, two beetles, 21 birds, three bryophytes, three butterflies, one fly, four fungi, seven mammals, two moths (plus a grouped action plan for an additional 44 moth species), four reptiles, two spiders and 10 vascular plant species.

The last 10 years of work leading to the completion of our first local biodiversity action plan have shown that when the wildlife conservation community works together we have the capacity to achieve great gains on the ground.

This is an exciting time for wildlife conservation in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Many new projects will develop over the coming years and we welcome greater involvement from professional organisations, naturalist groups and individuals so that together we can continue to make a positive and practical difference for wildlife.



Planting local provenance trees like juniper



Surveying and monitoring priority species



Yorkshire Peat Partnership Project: restoring degraded habitats



Monitoring the management of priority habitats (bogbean)



Species recording by local naturalist groups

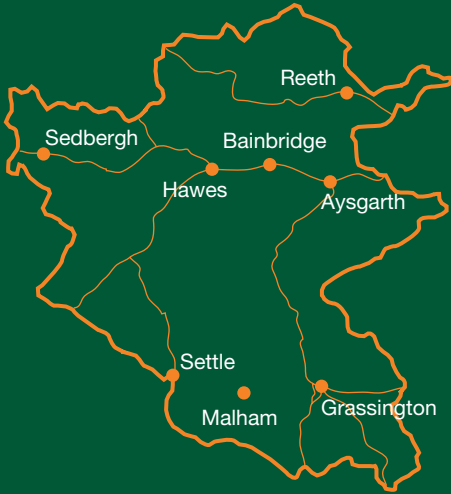


Parish Wildlife Project: Sustainable community-led schemes such as Scalegill Mill

Images: Malham Tarn © Tom Chamberlain  
Bats © John Altringham  
Bogbean © Robin Graham  
Recording © Craven Conservation Group  
Parish Wildlife © James Ferguson



2010 International Year of Biodiversity



Yorkshire Dales National Park was designated in 1954 in recognition of its outstanding natural beauty, diversity of wildlife habitats and rich cultural heritage. It covers 1,762 square kilometres and is a living, working environment, home to 20,000 people.

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## Acknowledgements

This booklet was produced by the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum, with grateful thanks to the authors of the project case studies.

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## Forum members

In addition to these organisations the Forum comprises a number of independent experts.



Upper Wharfedale Field Society



YORKSHIRE DALES National Park Authority

