

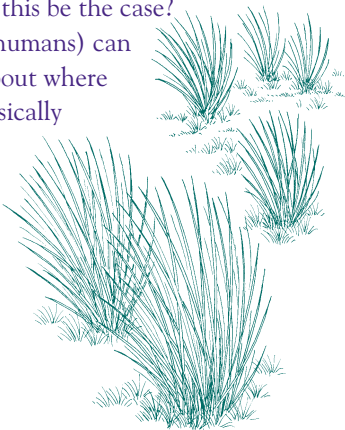
Walk 3 BIRDS, BRACKEN & BUGS

VISIT THE BUG BANK!

As you approach Grange Head Farm (direction 5) notice the series of damp depressions on the right hand side of the track. These 'wet flushes' are fed by water running off the moorland and are often fringed by the tussocky soft rush. This dark green plant is easily recognised by its thin leafless stems.

These areas and others like them throughout the moors are invertebrate 'banks'. Moorland birds, including curlews, are frequent visitors making regular insect withdrawals! Although only making up a very small proportion of the moorland area wet flushes play a crucial role - a kind of larder for birds.

Notice that the plants found in these wetter places are different from the surrounding drier areas. Why should this be the case? Plants (like humans) can be choosy about where they live. Basically some like to get their feet wet and others don't!



THE CRY OF THE MOORS

As you take in the sights and sounds on this splendid walk you will be unlucky not to encounter the curlew. This white rumped, brown bird is easily recognised by its long, downward curving bill which it uses to delve for an underground meal.

The curlew is a part-time inhabitant of the moors,

preferring to spend the harsh winter months by the seaside. Early spring heralds the return of this vocal bird. In readiness for the breeding season, males bring the moors alive again, as they establish their territories. To announce their presence to their female counterparts, male curlews rise steeply into the air with rapid wing beats. Their song starts with low-pitched notes, gradually rising in both tone and tempo before fading



away as the bird glides gracefully down, wings a quiver.

The North York Moors supports as many as one thousand breeding pairs of curlew - making the National Park an important stronghold for this distinctive bird.

HEATHER UNDER ATTACK

Between directions 6 and 7 this walk crosses a battleground! The war is being fought between bracken and heather so don't worry you are unlikely to get caught in the crossfire!

Right on the edge of the moor notice the wavy line of bracken fronds, snaking across the hillside. Look carefully and you will see that bracken is on the offensive, sending out advance troops to scout in enemy territory. This seemingly tentative approach belies the massed legions underground.

The bracken advance is supported by a massive root system, what you see on the surface is only the tip of the iceberg.

Throughout the North York Moors bracken spread has become a serious threat to the moorland - one of the special qualities of the area. What are

the reasons for bracken's rise to infamy? The short answer is that no one really knows for sure. But changes in farming coupled with milder winters have been suggested as prime culprits.

What can be done? Heather has allies in the struggle in the form of moorland owners and the National Park. In the last 10 years a joint effort has seen the amount of moorland dominated by bracken reduced from 25% to about 15%. In the long term the aim is to reduce bracken domination to 10% of the total moorland area.



Walk 3

Murk Mire Moor

This circular walk offers glorious moorland views, stretching right to the coast. A fine opportunity to get to know this corner of the National Park.

Time 5 hours
Length 6 miles (10km)
Start & Finish Egton Bridge Station
Terrain After a relatively gentle climb up, the route crosses the moor top, before descending (steeply in places) back into the Esk Valley

1. Leave the station. Turn right under the bridge.
2. Follow the road as it turns sharply to the right.
3. At the junction continue ahead, signed *Rosedale 8*.
4. Turn left on the bridleway and follow the track uphill.
5. Turn left through the gate. Cross the railway sleeper bridge and bear left following the rush-filled hollow. Follow the waymarks uphill to the stile.
6. Cross the stile and follow the sunken path. Bear left to begin with before swinging round to the right.

7. Turn left onto the path.
8. At the road turn left and then right onto the bridleway.
9. Go through the bridlegate and follow the wall to the road. At the road turn left.
10. Half way up the hill turn right onto the bridleway, keeping the stone wall on your right.
11. Go through the fieldgate and follow the path between the stone walls.
12. Continue ahead, through the gate.
13. At the road turn right. Just after the farm turn left onto the footpath. Follow the track past the house and continue down through the fields keeping the wall first on your right and then on your left.
14. Cross the road and continue downhill.
15. Cross the stream and bear right to cross the river. Bear left, alongside Beckside Farm
16. Turn left on the old toll road.
17. Turn right and return to the station.

