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# INVOLVED

Newsletter for North York Moors National Park Volunteers



North York Moors  
National Park

Welcome to the November issue of our volunteer newsletter



## Seasonal Greetings

**Ian Nicholls Director of Corporate Services.**

I can't believe how quickly 2023 has passed by and how much you have collectively achieved in the Park. This edition of Involved gives a real flavour of the breadth of work that you all do as Volunteers. It also gives me particular pleasure to see how enthusiastically our very young and slightly older volunteers get stuck into their work in our wonderful National Park. The winter photos provide a reminder of the time of year and the great things that can still be seen even though the days are pretty short now. I hope that you enjoy a break during Christmas and New year and look forward to 2024. Best wishes, Ian Nicholls Director of Corporate Services.

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## BioBlitz event

**Zara Hanshaw, Ecologist, Conservation and Climate Change**



Photo credit - Tammy Andrews

On Thursday 1 June, the North York Moors National Park hosted its first ever family BioBlitz event, with visitors challenged to find and identify as many species as possible in the grounds of either Danby Lodge or Sutton Bank National Park Centres. A BioBlitz is a type of scientific study that takes place against the clock, with

those involved working together to record as many species as they can within a certain time frame.

Several gazebos were pitched around the National Park Centres, each with a different focus including woodland, heathland, grassland, and watercourses. Despite rather dreary weather conditions, over the course of 24 hours volunteers and National Park staff at Sutton Bank Visitor Centre recorded 33 bird species and 25 moths. A real highlight of the day was a Turtle Dove which sat on in a tree above the pond at Sutton Bank for several hours, giving many visitors (and staff) their first opportunity to see one! At Danby Lodge, 147 species of plants and animals were recorded, including Entomophthora – a genus of parasitic fungus which was recorded on a dung fly, as well as a cuckoo and a slow worm.

The BioBlitz also gave us the opportunity to talk about the Look Wild project - the biggest citizen science project that National Parks have undertaken. Look Wild uses a free nature identification app called iNaturalist. Citizen scientists can take pictures of wildlife, be those plants, insects, birds or more, and upload the photo to the app. The app can also guess what you have seen, so it's a great way to learn new species. The photos are tagged so the location of that observation is recorded, and every new photo added in the North York Moors National Park contributes to the project. The photos can also be reviewed by experts to make sure that every species is accurately recorded.

This event could not have been run without the help and expertise of our volunteers, and we are very grateful. Thank you!



Helpful staff assist with identification - photo credit Zara Hanshaw



Slow worm - photo credit Zara Hanshaw

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Creating drinking ponds - photo credit James Metcalfe

## **Update from the Birds on the Edge Project**

**James Metcalfe, Director of the North York Moors Trust**

Birds on the Edge is an exciting four-year National Lottery Heritage Funded project, hosted by the North York Moors Trust, that is supporting nature and people to thrive together in and around the North York Moors National Park.

Working with communities and land managers the project is creating and restoring

rich habitat from ponds and pools to wildflower plots. This luscious habitat will provide shelter and nourishment for birds that live on the edge of wood and farmland, such as Turtle Dove, Yellowhammer, Song Thrush, Redstart, some of whom are threatened, as well as providing a haven for invertebrates.

This year we have created or restored nine ponds and pools, with more planned this autumn and winter.

The project is also applying innovative, inspiring, and educational activities that boost nature connectedness, now widely recognised for improving mental and physical health and wellbeing, by removing barriers to accessing nature. Through hands-on conservation and nature-inspired creative workshops and classroom-based activities the project is connecting local young people with the North York Moors National Park (many for the first time) and supporting their emotional, social, and educational development, as well as nurturing a lifelong love and understanding of nature and the importance of its protection and recovery.



Securing the edges of the liner - photo credit James Metcalfe

This year the project connected with 20 students from Scarborough Pupil Referral Unit who, with the support of regional artists and in collaboration with ARCADE in Scarborough, created music videos based on parallels between their personal experiences and birds on the edge, such as endangerment and flight. The music videos were premiered at the St Joseph Theare in Scarborough.

Via the outdoor learning team at the National Park Authority the project has also worked with 184 primary school pupils across 10 schools in the National Park and Howardian Hills AONB, equipping pupils with knowledge and empowering them with resources and skills they have since put into practice at school via wildflower plots, bird feeding stations and bird surveys.

HOWEVER, none of this is possible without the support of our project partners or the amazing generosity of volunteers.

In September we ran a practical day task with some of you in the fantastic volunteer team – thank you! The weather looked kindly on us as we somehow avoided Storm Agnes to create three of those drinking pools at Stocking House Farm in Scawton. 16 volunteers, staff and trustees removed some interesting agriculture debris,

formed the shape of the pools, laid the liner, and infilled with gravel – powered by tea, coffee and Yorkshire parkin.

It is fair to say the project is off to a flying start and I am really excited to see how the project progresses – and I hope to welcome you to a future task day in 2024.

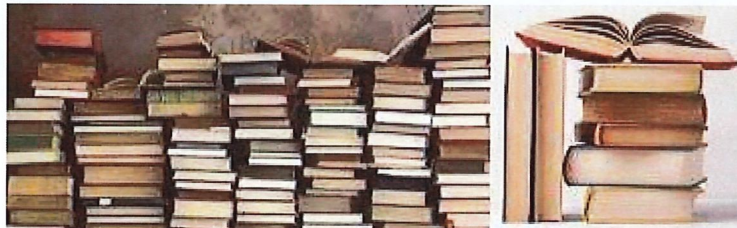
If you would like to find out more about the Birds on the Edge project or the North York Moors Trust, please get in touch I would love to hear from you.



Securing the liner and reinforcing the bank - photo credit James Metcalfe

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## New home for pre-loved books



The Book Stop at Danby Lodge National Park Centre is open!

We're so pleased to open our second hand bookshop. Stocking everything from crime thrillers, nature books to children's stories. Come and stop by, browse the books and take a moment to unwind.

Books are individually priced and payment is via the honesty box inside the bookshop.

The Book Stop is open 10:30am - 4:30pm daily.

Should you have an overloaded bookshelf, or any books looking for a new reader the Book Stop would welcome any additions. Donations may be left at at Danby Lodge National Park Centre or The Old Vicarage, Helmsley.

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Collecting wildflower seeds - photo credit Wendy English

## Wild flower meadows

**Wendy English, Volunteer**

Northcliffe/Seaview Holiday Park helps Whitby Cemetery Flower rich grasslands can be beautiful on a summer's day, full of flowers, butterflies and other insects. They are an increasingly rare sight, with 97% of meadows lost since the 1940's according to Plantlife.

Northcliffe/Seaview Holiday Park has 3 flower rich meadows; one below the Park adjacent to the Cleveland Way and Coast to Coast, and 2 above the Park near the Cinder Track. The bottom meadow is exceptional, with species such as Northern Marsh Orchid and Devil's-bit Scabious admired by passing hikers in summer. The top 2 meadows are in excellent condition, and have a high concentration of Yellow Rattle – a hemiparasitic plant that is often recommended to improve the flower content of grassland as it weakens the vigorous grasses that compete with flowering plants.

For the past few years, the central area of Whitby Cemetery has been managed as a hay meadow by council workers assisted by Whitby Naturalists. Cut grass has to be raked off by hand, and it was decided to introduce Yellow Rattle into the meadow area to reduce the volume of grass. Northcliffe/Seaview Holiday Park readily agreed to Whitby Naturalists collecting Yellow Rattle seed from their top meadow which could be used in the cemetery.

The National Park Young Rangers then spent a morning in September preparing the ground in the cemetery and planting the seed, while learning about wildflower meadow ecology. They did a great job, and the rattle flowered in the summer adding more colour and diversity to the area, appreciated by cemetery visitors. More seed was collected from Northcliffe this summer, to extend the coverage.

Thanks to Northcliffe/Seaview Holiday Park, NYMNP Young Rangers, Scarborough Parks and Whitby Naturalists



Wildflower emerging from the meadow grasses

## National Park Explorers and Young Rangers: Building a lifelong connection to nature.

**Sallie Harland, John Jameson, Tammy Andrews, Mary-Jane Alexander and Heather McNiff.**



Explorer families

As many of you are aware we have, over the last three and a half years, run a lottery funded project to break down the barriers that families and young people face in accessing our Family Explorer Club and Young Ranger volunteer groups. July saw the culmination of everyone's hard work in two celebration events.

Families from all five cohorts of the Explorer Club gathered at Danby Lodge National Park Centre for a day of fun, games and reflection. As the sun shone, and the rain held off, everyone enjoyed a spot of animal Olympics, willow heart making, animal yoga and wildlife geocaching. A delicious lunch of hot dogs and cakes was prepared and served up by Sally and Lucy.

The families of cohort 5 graduated on the same day, receiving their John Muir Discovery Awards. They had worked really hard through winter and spring, completing a wide variety of tasks. Clearing stone trods, which we have adopted, in Goathland was a particularly muddy affair with surprising finds of pottery and a gentleman's pipe. River fly monitoring at Sinnington, on the river Severn, was popular, not least because families found an enormous eel. They have also worked on the Forest Eye in Dalby Forest, spruced up the boardwalks, birdboxes and Woodling houses in Crow at Danby Lodge and surveyed microplastics at Sandsend. In May the third and final cohort of Young Rangers graduated with their John Muir Discovery Awards. This followed a wide variety of conservation and skills activities including bracken bashing, boardwalk maintenance, meadow and tree management and bird box making. Skills included a wide variety of ID sessions, first aid and water safety, star gazing, fossil hunting and green wood working, making their own walking sticks.

We were fortunate to be able to bring all three cohorts of Young Rangers together for a final digital detox celebratory residential at Boggle Hole Youth Hostel in July. The residential focussed on wellbeing and reflection of all that the young people had achieved over the three and a half years. Despite the horrendous weather they all enjoyed a canoe down the river Esk, with one Young Ranger even managing to accidentally catch a fish in his canoe!

We know, anecdotally, that both schemes have a lot of positive impact on the participants. However, we better understand and can evidence this from the end of project Social Return on Investment evaluation. The evaluation asks participants what has changed for them through being involved in volunteering and how much they value it and how long they think the impacts will last for. We surveyed lottery funded and core funded participants. The overarching themes are that participants have significantly increased their environmental awareness and responsibility and they have improved their mental health. Young people are more resilient, and families are stronger. When this impact is extended to households who have barriers to accessing activities like these, the value is increased. The average value per person for lottery funded cohorts is higher than for core funded cohorts (24% higher on average). The social return on investment for lottery cohorts is 1:6. This means that for every £1 invested in the programmes there is £6 worth of social value created.

For those of you who like facts and figures some other outputs are;

51 families engaged through Explorer Club contributing 3,291 volunteer hours. 49 practical tasks completed and 51 explore and discover sessions undertaken.

178 young people engaged through Young Rangers contributing 4,782 volunteer hours. 32 practical tasks completed, and 46 skills sessions undertaken.

Over both schemes 142 John Muir Discovery Awards achieved and 6 Explorer Awards.

All of this wouldn't have happened without the amazing support of our dedicated adult volunteers, all 26 of them who contributed a fantastic 1,141 hours of volunteering. THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!

We are really happy to say that through additional external funding; through the

BMW recharge in Nature Project, the Ganton Educational Trust and Forest Holidays all of those participants who want to carry on with the programmes can.



Young Rangers



Butterfly Survey Training May 2023

## Call of the Cliffies

## Andrea Brew, Countryside Ranger Apprentice

When David Bream handed me over to the Cliffies eight months ago, a distinct feeling of trepidation growled inside...so I turned up with a box of chocolates. It was the 14th of February after all.

Having completed the Task Day Leader training in December and shadowed Mr Bream in January, I gathered courage and limped to the mark. Since then, things have evolved, and I feel positive our volunteer group has undertaken a wide variety of tasks around Sutton Bank...mainly with the hope of enticing them back each month!

Chris Pye and David already had it in mind that this volunteer group would do more than scrub clearance and litter-picking. I was all for that idea...and to involve wildlife. In March, we did do scrub clearance in the plantation but then in April, we replenished the bark and sand in the children's play area before summer arrived. Early May Joe Fryer, Ryevitalise Trainee and lover of all things butterfly, offered a training session in the Dark Skies Hub. We were drawn into his passion for these beautiful creatures so then for the May task, we embarked on a butterfly survey using guidance from the UKBMS (UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) and applying Joe's training. Andrew now knows that a cabbage white is the same as a Large white (*Pieris brassicae*)! Though it sprinkled with rain that day we dug up some stone slabs for a picnic bench and inspected a young hedge around the overflow car park ahead of an autumn task.

On another rainy day in June, we dug out the area for the picnic bench, then after lunch Zara Hanshaw, assistant ecologist, kindly gave us her time to talk through wildflower surveying techniques so we could undertake the surveying of the triangle meadow for her team.

July brought more rain but we were determined to survey the meadow. Mike now knows the names of some grasses and Marisa impressed us with her ever-growing knowledge of wildflowers, pointing out Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) that had gone to seed.

We were earning a reputation for bringing rain however thankfully August brought sunshine and we gleefully installed a tramper layby along the Cleveland Way. With the sun warming our faces, we did our butterfly survey again. Though identifying species is a daunting prospect for some people, Neil for one is quietly embracing the idea which is encouraging. Albert Einstein said life never stops teaching, so you should never stop learning.

We collected disused tree guards from the woods around Cliff Plantation in September and then in October we cut and raked the bank along the overflow car park as another yearly task to encourage wildflowers for pollinators. I have some other ideas to develop.

It is hoped that we are managing to get that balance between heavy, physical work which appeals to some people and nature spotting which appeals to others. Or if you are like Keith you will enjoy anything I plan. Please get in touch with the Volunteer Team should you like to join us.



Constructing tramper layby August 2023



Tramper layby in use by Annette (on tramper) and Pat - August 2023

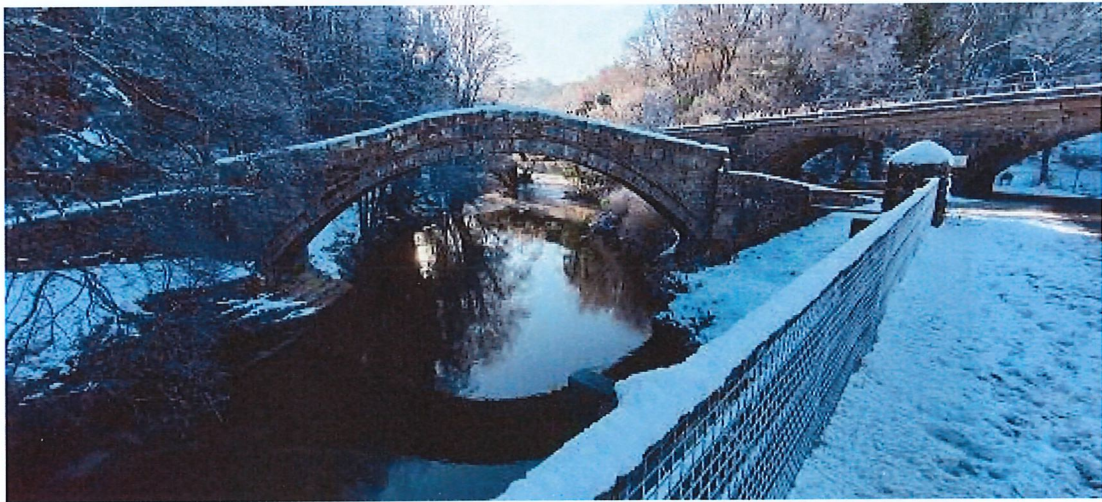
## A selection of recent wintry scenes

Thank you to all volunteers who sent in their winter photographs, here are a few lovely scenes from around our National Park.

We will be including more in future issues, keep an eye open in future months if yours isn't amongst our first group.



Pony amongst young woodland near Aislaby, Whitby - Richard Randle



Beggars Bridge - Christopher Stoker



Sutton Bank winter walk- Antony Fleming



Supertask Dec 2023 at Levisham - Nicola Startup



Robin Hood's Bay taken just before sunrise - Paul Ming



Near Newton on Rawcliffe by Eric Wesson

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## Volunteering Opportunities

Outdoor Learning Team call for volunteers

The Outdoor Learning Team are looking for volunteers to assist with their Explorer Volunteers and Young Rangers groups. These groups attend events on weekends. Assistance is needed in minibus driving, and supporting the leaders in the running of the events. We are particularly looking for volunteers in the Middlesbrough, Whitby and Scarborough areas who would be happy and able to join leaders in transporting the groups to and from events, whether that is driving a minibus or being a responsible adult assisting the driver. We have a brilliant events programme, including practical conservation tasks, skill activities and visits.

### **Explorers**

Age: 4 to 11 yrs

Group size: 3 to 6 families (up to 25 individuals)

Group type: Core; Informed/experienced. Funded; New/little experience

Location: Various

Events: All year round

Practical task level: Hand tools

Event: Weekends, 10am to 2pm

### **Young Rangers**

Age: 11 to 17 yrs

Group size: 15+ young people

Group type: Informed mixed with young people with little outdoor experience

Location: Various

Events: All year round

Practical task level: Hand tools, potentially more

Event: Weekends, 10am to 3pm

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## **Danby Lodge National Park Centre Volunteer Roles**

Come and help us make the most of our wonderful environment at Danby Lodge National Park Centre! We're looking for volunteers to join us at this magical spot in the beautiful North Yorks Moors countryside to help us improve and maintain our facilities.

Throughout the year you'll be able to spend time in and outdoors, helping to maintain and develop the grounds and buildings, including our lovely Crow Wood.

We'd love some support this winter - imagine all those crisp, frosty days outside and a warm drink at breaktime - and from next spring onwards we would really like to welcome at least one grounds volunteer (hopefully more!) every weekday. There is plenty to be done, and something for everyone, whether you'd like to make a regular commitment or drop in as and when you can. Tasks will include: mowing, strimming, planting, weeding, painting, path clearance, sweeping and looking after our statues and benches.

If gardening is your passion, we have a regular voluntary team maintaining and improving our lovely terraced gardens. There is a regular task day on a Wednesday, as well as drop-in opportunities throughout the week. We'd love to hear your ideas

about how to make this an even more welcoming and nature-friendly spot. We have some really exciting plans for the future at Danby Lodge, and it's really important to us that volunteers help to shape what we do. Why not come and help us decide where our new benches should go, keep an eye on and help maintain our engaging nature trails for children and even help to welcome and engage the public with a whole host of drop-in and organised events throughout the year as well as helping in our new second-hand bookshop. Weekday volunteering hours are 10.30am - 3pm, however we can be flexible so please let us know what you'd like to do.

For an informal chat about any of the voluntary positions mentioned above, please contact Lucy Heal, National Park Centre Manager on: [l.heal@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:l.heal@northyorkmoors.org.uk)

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### **We have a wealth of opportunities for you!**

Although we advertise roles on our website, we like to offer opportunities to our existing volunteers first via email in case there are other things you would like to explore. There is no obligation to take on anything extra – it's entirely up to you!

Keep up to date with our current publicly advertised roles on our website and look out for those internal emails: <https://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/looking-after/volunteering/current-volunteering-opportunities>

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