



North York Moors National Park Education Service

Notes to accompany the 'Welcome to the Park' presentation for KS2

Learning Objectives

After this presentation most children will understand and be able to talk about:

- the special qualities of the North York Moors National Park
- why people visit and what sort of activities people can do in the countryside
- ways in which the countryside can be damaged by people / the impacts we can make
- how we can all take responsibility and help care for the countryside

Suggested questions to ask children to generate discussion are shown in bold italics.

Slide 1

The North York Moors is a very special area of countryside and because of this it is protected as a National Park. The next few slides will help to explain why it is so special, why people visit, the impacts that people can have on this very special place and how we can all help to care for the park by making our impacts positive.

Slide 2: Map of UK National Parks

In the UK there are 15 National Parks. We live on a small island with beautiful countryside but there is a lot of pressure to build new houses, roads, railways and industrial sites. National Parks contain our most important landscapes and wildlife habitats. They are so special that the government says we must protect them from these pressures to stop them being spoilt. National Parks protect the countryside, the habitats and wildlife within them, this is called CONSERVATION.

North York Moors became a National Park in 1952.

Which is the closest National Park to where you live?

Slide 3: Map of the North York Moors

This shows the area of the North York Moors National Park. It covers 1,436 km² (554 square miles). If you travel from east to west (Scarborough to Sutton Bank) in a car it would take you about 1 ½ hours. If you go from north to south (Staithes to Pickering) it's about an hour in a car. *Point out any areas you might be visiting if you are coming on a trip to the National Park.*

Notice that the park boundary misses out towns like Guisborough, Whitby and Scarborough.

Remember the National Park exists to protect the countryside. Notice the many place names within the park. These are villages in which around 25,000 people live. For many of these people the park is where they work as well as their home.

Who do you think owns National Parks? Most of land is owned by farmers or landowners. The government gives the National Park Authority money to help these landowners manage and care for this special area of countryside for everybody. (The National Park Authority owns very little land itself)

What are the main land uses in the National Park?

Moorland, woodland and farmland. Notice how much of the National Park is moorland.

So why is the North York Moors so special? It has many special qualities, the first of which is moorland.

Slide 4: Special quality - heather moorland

The most special habitat in the National Park is heather moorland. This area was chosen as a National Park because it contains the largest continuous area of heather moorland in England and Wales.

What is moorland? – Ask the children to come up with some words to describe what they see in the picture. Purple plant (this is the heather plant), boggy, wet, dark patches, large, wide, open space, sheep, good view.

Can you see any roads, people, trees, buildings?

What do you think you might be able to hear if you were out on the moors? Moorland is quiet and peaceful with lots of space. This is one of main reasons why visitors come here.

How do you think you might feel if you were standing here?

Fascinating fact: There is less moorland in the world than tropical rainforest. The UK has 70% of all the heather moorland in the world!

Slide 5: A landscape managed by people.

Many people think the moors are wild places but in fact they are carefully managed habitats. People have used moorland for thousands of years to graze cattle and sheep. Cattle and sheep eat heather and any young trees so they help to keep the moorland as moorland. If moors weren't grazed by animals they would become overgrown with trees and would gradually turn into woodland.

It may seem strange but the other way people look after moorland is by burning it! Landowners employ gamekeepers and one of their jobs is to burn the heather in winter when the ground is wet and when it is not too windy. The fire destroys all the tough, old, woody stems above ground but the roots underground remain undamaged. The fire encourages new shoots to grow and seeds to germinate. Many of the birds on the moors nest, feed and hide from predators in the heather. Some birds need short heather and some tall heather and some need medium sized heather. The gamekeepers therefore burn small patches of heather to create a patchwork of areas of heather at different heights.

Slide 6: Moorland birds.

The way in which the moors are managed benefits many other types of wildlife, particularly birds. Here are a few of them.

Red grouse lives on moorland in the UK and nowhere else in the world! The heather provides shelter, a place to build nests and 90% of its diet.

Curlew has long legs for wading through water and a long beak for probing into soft mud to find worms and grubs. It spends winter down by the coast on mudflats as it is too cold on the moors. It then flies back to the moors in spring to nest in the heather.

Lapwing – has shorter legs than the curlew but it is still a wading bird. It has a shorter beak for catching insects and grubs. It nests on the ground on the edge of farmland and moorland.

Golden plover – likes to make nests in recently burnt areas of moorland. It is quite rare throughout the world so the moors in the National Park are an important habitat for it on a world wide scale.

Use this link to the RSPB website to listen to their calls

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/a/>

Find out more about these birds and other wildlife on our website using this link

<http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/funzone/>

There are lots of other special qualities of the National Park

Slide 7: Special quality – traditional farmland

Moorland is located on the highest ground where it is often cold and windy and the soil is low in nutrients. In the valleys the soil is better and there are many small fields.

Do you have farms and fields around where you live or go to school?

What crops grow in the fields?

Do you see animals grazing in the fields?

In the National Park not many arable crops are grown on these farms. Why? The land is too steep for farm machinery. The main crop is grass which is grazed by cattle (beef and dairy) and sheep. More often than not the fields are divided by drystone walls – rocks picked out of the fields and placed together to make a wall. They are called ‘drystone’ because they don’t have any cement or mortar holding them together. Some walls are many hundreds of years old. **How many metres of wall could one skilled person build in a day?** Answer – about 3 metres.

Slide 8: Special quality –rivers

There are many rivers flowing through the National Park. One of the largest is the River Esk. *If you are coming to The Moors National Park Centre on a trip you will see this river as it flows by the centre.*

It is an important river for salmon and the very rare fresh water pearl mussel. Use this link to find out more about these amazing creatures. <http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/funzone/>

Slide 9: Special quality – deciduous woodland

Woodland covers a large area of the National Park. Deciduous woodland provides an important habitat for wildlife and is particularly good for biodiversity (variety of living things). In deciduous woods, before the leaves completely come out, many different flowers bloom on the woodland floor. ***Does anyone know what these blue flowers are called? Bluebells.***

Slide 10: Special quality –coastline

The National Park has 26 miles of spectacular coastline. Much of the countryside is undeveloped (no towns or industry) so it has extra protection as a Heritage Coast. The coastline and beaches are important for wildlife but also for rocks and fossils. The rocks can be seen in the cliffs along the coast and these formed during the Jurassic Period. Erosion from the sea and rain exposes the fossils which can then be found lying on the beach. Dinosaur footprints have been found in rocks near Scarborough!

Slide 11: Recreation and relaxation

All these special qualities make the North York Moors National Park a very attractive and exciting place for people to visit. ***Have you ever visited a countryside area? What sort of activities have you done?*** There are lots of things to do whilst you are in the National Park such as walking, cycling, sightseeing, horse riding, picnicking etc.

How many people do you think come to the National Park each year? A good way to ask this question is to have everyone stand up and ask them to stay standing if they think more than 100 people come, stay standing if more than 1,000 people come, more than 10,000, more than 50,000, 100,000, 200,00 etc until you get to the answer which is more than 10 million people!

Slide 12: Damage

10 million visits are made to the North York Moors National Park each year. This benefits the area because visitors spend a lot of money here which is good for businesses, farmers and local people. However, so many people can cause damage to this fragile landscape. ***What do you think the problems are in these photographs?***

90% of people come in cars which can cause congestion on the roads, pollution and problems with parking. The National Park Authority provides a Moorsbus Service for visitors (and residents). There

are many of these operating throughout the park and you can get on and off them to explore, leaving your car at home.

Some people might use their motorbikes or off road vehicles in places where they shouldn't do which annoys other visitors and residents and it disturbs wildlife.

Moorland fires can start by accident in summer. Remember the moors are managed by fire but this is done by experts and only in winter when it is safe. Unfortunately in summer when the weather has been hot and dry for days, accidental fires can start. Usually these are started by people discarding cigarette butts (thrown out of car windows), leaving used BBQs which are too hot to take home, unattended campfires or broken bits of glass which act like a magnifying glass on dry vegetation. When there is a high fire risk the rangers put out fire warning signs but some people ignore them.

Some people don't take their litter home which spoils places for other people and it is also a danger to wildlife which might try and eat it or get trapped in things such as bags and bottles.

Slide 13: Looking after the National Park.

In these pictures you can see some of the people who work for the National Park Authority. You can see:

- apprentices making a footpath more accessible for people who use wheelchairs
- a ranger putting out an unattended campfire,
- ranger and police chatting to motorbike users about the right places to go
- Simon, a river expert, looking for freshwater pearl mussels in the River Esk
- Ami, a farm expert, chatting to a farmer about how to encourage wildlife on his farm.

Slide 14: How you can help look after the National Park?

Ask the children for ideas. Everyone can help to look after the National Park when they visit by following the countryside code. These are simple rules which we can all follow which make sure we have a good time, the residents and farmers are happy and wildlife is protected. If you are coming on a trip to the National Park please remember these simple rules.

This link will take you to the countryside code website.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/countrysidecode/>

To find out more go to:

www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/learningzone

