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Wheldrake Ings Nature Reserve



Big skies, often full of whirling flocks of birds, stretch out above you, which the wide green expanse of floodplain meadows go for as far as the eye can see. The Derwent flows quietly by, reeds rustle in the breeze and a mysterious 'plop' in the ditches might signal a pike, water vole or even otter. In fact, at times in the centre of Wheldrake Ings, it can be so peaceful and

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Reserve information



Location

Ings Lane
York
North Yorkshire
YO19 6AX

Map reference

SE 694 444

Great for...

birdwatching
getting away from it all
overwintering birds
spring migrant birds
wildflowers



Best time to visit

Apr - Jun
Nov - Mar



Get directions

[Find out here](#)

remote that you feel like the only person on earth.

From Dec to April the site floods, so please ring 0300 060 3900, and ask for the Lower Derwent Valley office at Bank Island for access information.

November 2017: Exciting news! We have been awarded **£42,050** for the **'Wonder of Wheldrake Ings'** project from **WREN's FCC Community Action Fund**, together with support from **Friends of Lower Derwent Valley** and **York Ornithological Club**. The money will be used to attract more visitors to the National Nature Reserve by making it more accessible with an upgraded track, and more rewarding with better facilities and educational interpretation. This project will make an exciting difference to the site to both regular and new visitors, improving their comfort and knowledge especially in winter when the wildlife at Wheldrake is at it's most spectacular. We expect the hide to be ready by the end of next summer but other improvements will be carried out this spring. **Please click here for more information** on the project.

For centuries Wheldrake Ings, at the heart of the Lower Derwent Valley Living Landscape, has been managed in a traditional way, which means you can still see habitats that have been here for centuries.

Spring is a time of vibrant growth on the Ings. As winter floodwaters recede the rich meadows begin to grow plants such as marsh marigold and cuckooflower are the first to add splashes of colour to the fields.

Tucked within the growing grassland waders such as lapwing, redshank and curlew start to raise their young. Flotillas of young duck families scoot into the overhanging willows around the pool edges. Late June sees the meadows at their best with some of the finest areas supporting up to 25 plant species per square metre.

Look for the crimson raspberry-like heads of great burnet and the cream sprays of meadowsweet. This type of meadow community is uncommon now and the area at Wheldrake Ings is of international importance. In the early July the land is dry and the meadows are ready to be cut for hay.

“

Top Tip:

By August sheep and cattle are turned out to graze the re-growth of grass or 'fog' as it is known. In autumn, the meadows start to flood and impressive expanses of open water attract a spectacle of thousands of ducks, geese and waders. 40,000 birds use the Lower Derwent Valley each winter, with a significant proportion of these at Wheldrake.

The wetlands attract a wide range of birds. Spring and autumn can be exciting as migrant waders, terns and raptors pass through. Spotted crake, water rail and willow tit all breed along with many common waders and ducks. Marsh harrier, hobby and peregrine are all seen regularly with the chance of an osprey of black tern during migration.



Public transport

[Plan your journey](#)



Opening Times

Open at all times



Size

156.88 hectares



Status

National Nature Reserve (NNR)

Ramsar

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Special Protection Areas (SPA)



Access

Yes

Permissive footpaths. The paths are level, but muddy after wet weather. Special access kissing gate allows buggy entrance but is too narrow to permit access to all terrain wheelchairs. Contact the Trust for further disabled access information.

Walking information

Permissive footpaths.

Enjoy a post-Sunday lunch stroll on a crisp, sunny winter afternoon. There's a great chance of spotting a hunting peregrine creating a mass whirling spectacle of thousands of teal, wigeon, golden plover, and lapwing - an exhilarating spectacle. Stay until dusk when whooper swans fly in to roost on the floodwater. Magical!

The site also supports a host of grassland and wetland insects including some very rare beetles. Fish such as pike and rudd can be glimpsed in the ditches and otter have bred on the nature reserve on several occasions in the past few years.

Management here is a fine balance of controlling water levels to support the wintering, passage and breeding birds, whilst also creating the right conditions for the rare floodplain grassland to thrive. On top of this regular maintenance and cleaning of the ditches is required, which each winter receive silty deposits as the River Derwent bursts its banks and spreads across its floodplain.

Please note:

Riverside Hide has been taken down for health and safety reasons. Visitors can continue to use the other three hides on site.

You will now find that the roof on Swantail hide has been refelted. The boardwalk leading to Swantail hide is also currently being rebuilt by volunteers, so extra care needs to be taken.

Discover Yorkshire's Wildlife

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's [Discover Yorkshire's Wildlife](#) book, which has detailed information on all of Yorkshire Wildlife and Sheffield Wildlife Trust's reserves, is available to buy now from our online [shop](#).

Public Transport

There is a regularly service between Wheldrake village and York Merchantgate (bus 36 to Sutton on Derwent and 18 to Holme Upon Spalding Moor). This service also passes through Skipwith, North Duffield and Bubwith.

Please check with the local bus companies (Transdev and East Yorkshire Motor Service) before travelling as bus routes are prone to change.

Directions

Eight miles south east of York, four miles east of the A19. From Wheldrake follow the road (Carr Lane) towards Thorganby and out of the village where the road takes a sharp right turn. 0.5 miles further on a narrow road to you left (after the Yorkshire Water compound) takes you down to the nature reserve. Park on the stony area next to the bridge over the River Derwent.

Keep to footpaths as there are areas of deep water. The ground is often soft and slippery.



Parking

Limited parking available.



Dogs

No dogs allowed

Grazing animals

From late summer through to late autumn sheep and cattle are on site.



Reserve manager

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Tel: 01904 659570

info@ywt.org.uk

Want to see more of Wheldrake Ings before your visit? Have a look below.

[Our favourite Wheldrake Ings Pictures](#)

[Wheldrake Ings Nature Reserve photos in our Flickr group](#)


Find out more about the Lower Derwent Valley NNR - see the [webpage](#), [Facebook page](#) or [blog](#).

Species and habitats

Habitats [Meadow](#), [Wetland](#)

Species [Great Burnet](#), [Meadowsweet](#), [Otter](#)

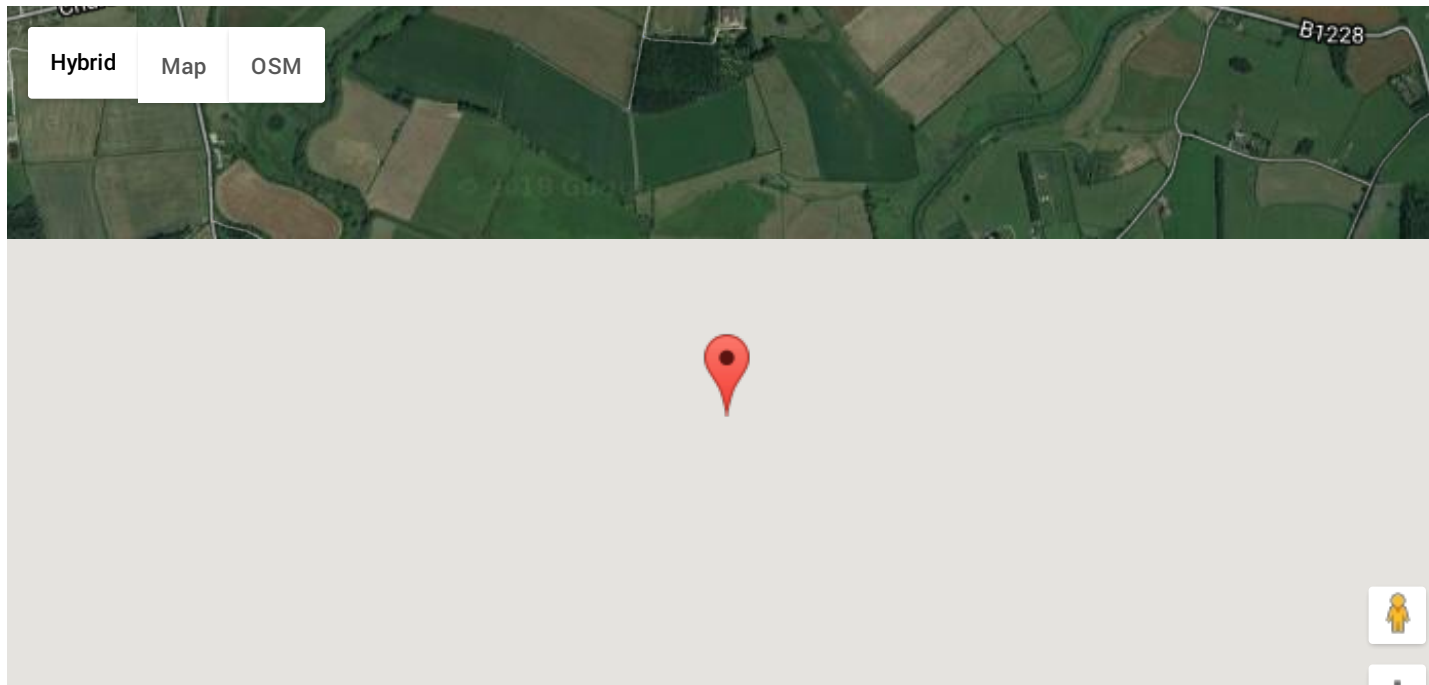
Nearby nature reserves

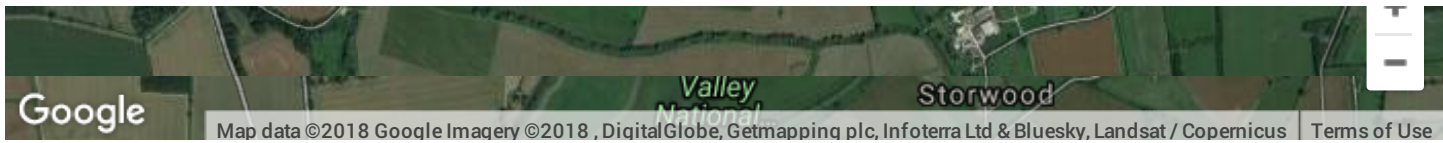
 [Allerthorpe Common Nature Reserve](#)
4 miles - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

 [Calley Heath Nature Reserve](#)
5 miles - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

 [Askham Bog Nature Reserve](#)
8 miles - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Nature reserve map





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