



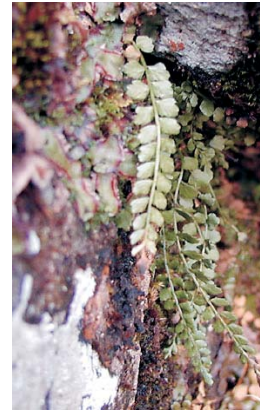
The Yorkshire Dales GREEN CLIMBING GUIDE ACCESS AND CONSERVATION



Wheels of Fire 6a4, Robin Proctors (Norber) Scar

The Yorkshire Dales

GREEN CLIMBING GUIDE



ACCESS AND CONSERVATION

The magnificent landscape features of the Yorkshire Dales were shaped by melting glacial ice 300 million years ago to produce the towering crags, shadowy peaks, expanses of limestone pavement, and picturesque valleys found today.

The area was designated a national park in 1954, and covers approximately 1,769 km²/683 sq. miles with many climbing venues of national significance and a rich diversity of wildlife.

All the crags described in this publication lie within Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and are specially protected for their wildlife and geology.

Responsibility for protecting and managing SSSIs in the Dales lies with Natural England – the statutory governmental advisor on conservation issues and contributor to this publication.

This guide is intended to help climbers and walkers identify the protected flora, fauna, and geology of the Dales, and to contribute towards conserving these vulnerable habitats through 'Good Practice' guidelines.

NATURAL ENGLAND STATEMENT

'All of these habitats can be considered vulnerable to disruption. High visitor numbers and repeated footprinting cause paths to erode and can displace species from their natural habitats. Other effects include damage to the limestone pavements, destruction of vulnerable scree slopes, and plant communities. If future generations are to continue enjoying the Dales in a sustainable manner, it is important we all contribute towards their conservation'.

NEW AND ESTABLISHED ROUTES – CONSERVATION ADVICE

The crags and valleys of the Dales contain some of the most important cliff plant communities in the country. Climbers should be fully aware of the importance of this flora – especially the species illustrated in this leaflet. Important bird species, such as the peregrine and raven are also dependant on cliff ledges for nest sites.

The BMC and local partners strongly encourage an awareness of the potential impacts to the crag environment from climbing.

If new route preparation will result in the destruction of rare vegetation or disturbance to bird habitat then it should not go ahead, and climbers are encouraged to consider fully the following before embarking upon new route activities:

- What degree of route preparation is required?

If a new line on an obscure buttress needs to be excavated from the hillside before it's climbable, then it should be left alone.

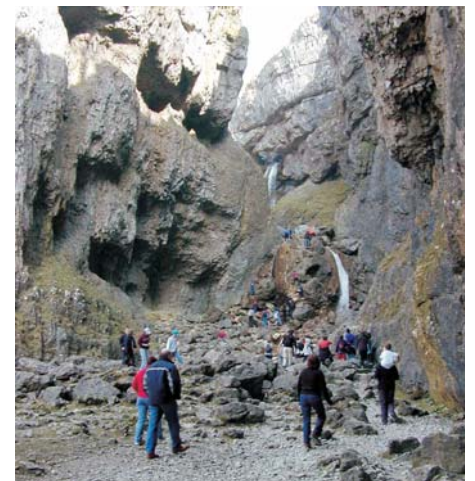
- Will the new route be followed by more than your second?

If not, it will return to nature and become recolonised by more common, invasive species.

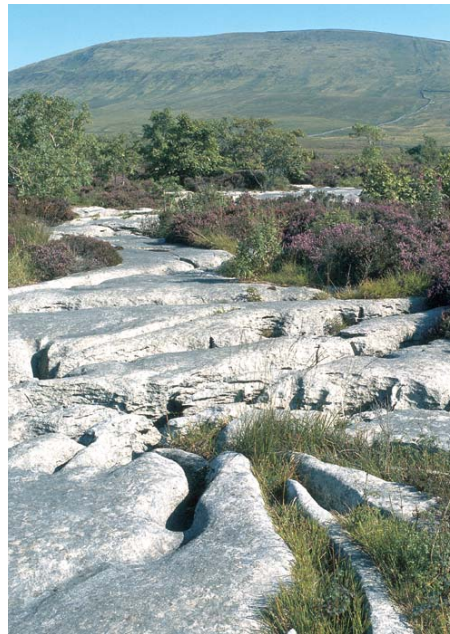
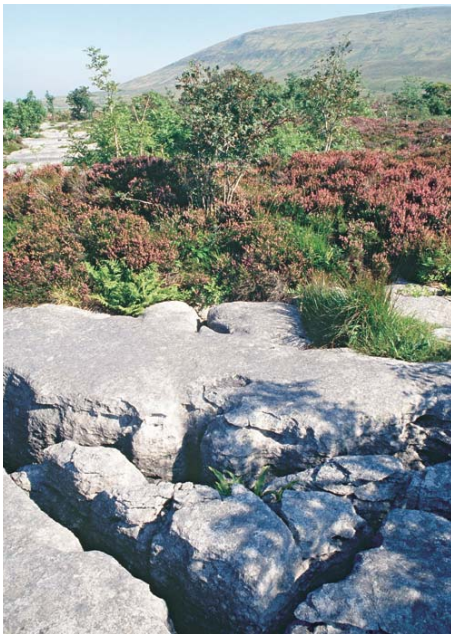
As a result a unique niche habitat will have been lost, and the rare plants removed may take many years to re-establish – if at all.

Finally, if challenged while climbing – avoid conflict and ascertain the challenger's identity, the organisation they represent, and their exact concerns. Remain calm and report the incident to the BMC – who have well-established links with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and other regional partners.

If you are planning on new routes in a SSSI area the law requires consultation with Natural England and/or consent from the landowner – further advice on this can be gained from the organisations listed on page 11.



Crowds at Gordale



Limestone pavements at Scar Close, Ingleborough SSSI

The SSSI Areas

INGLEBOROUGH (5230HA)

Undoubtedly Britain's finest karst habitat, and particularly noted for extensive limestone pavements (see below), dry valleys, and sinkholes including Gaping Ghyll with the highest single-drop waterfall in Britain.

It has a wide range of vegetation types associated with the various drift, peat and rock strata environments.

Crags – Ash Tree Crag, Beggars Stile, Crummackdale, Raven Scar, Robin Proctors (Norber) Scar, Trow Gill, Foredale Quarry, Gaping Ghyll



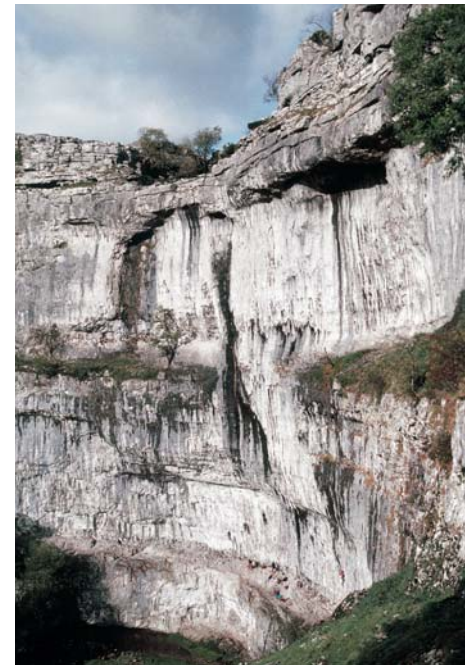
Yorkshire stalwart John Sheard on **Gallows Humour 7a**, Gordale.



Trow Gill



Kilnsey

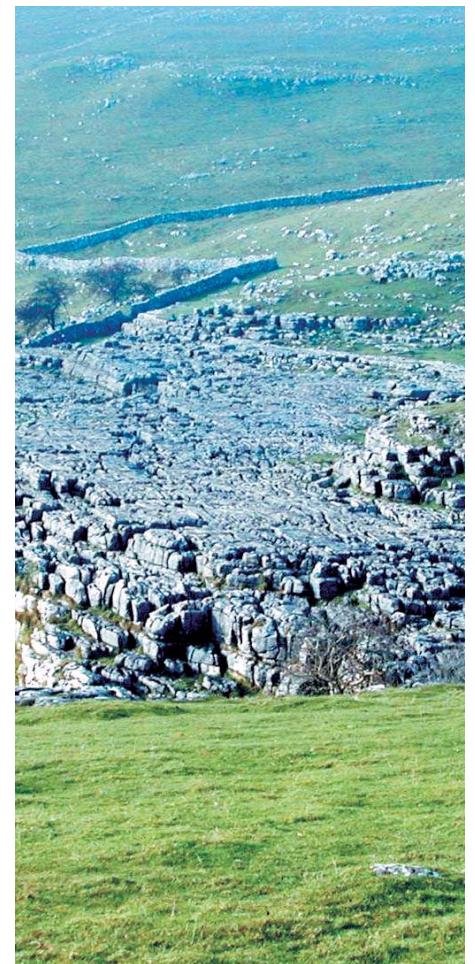


The magnificent main sweep of Malham Cove

MALHAM-ARNCLIFFE (4934HA)

An extensive area of outstanding geological and biological interest containing many of the Dales finest crags. Carboniferous Great Scar Limestone underlies an area of internationally important caves and karst features, and nationally important fen and mire habitats, calcareous grasslands, freshwater streams, and limestone pavements also abound.

Crags – Blue Scar, Gordale, Great Close Scar, Kilnsey, Langscar Crag, Low Stoney Bank, Malham Cove, Yew Cougar Scar, Cowside Flask



Scree slope conservation fencing at Malham Cove (English Nature); Two areas of limestone pavement

LANGCLIFFE SCARS & JUBILEE, ALBERT & VICTORIA CAVES



Hare's Wall, Attermire

Langcliffe Scars are a classic Carboniferous Limestone locality demonstrating the most complete sequence of Dinantian strata found in the Craven area. The deposits of Victoria Cave (dated to approx 120,000 years Before Present) are of international importance due to fossilised spotted hyena, lion, straight-tusked elephant, hippopotamus and fallow deer.

Note: These sites are scheduled ancient monuments.

Crag – Attermire Scar



Dave Musgrove on Twisleton classic **The Candle**



Grike moss community

WHERNSIDE (3840HA)

An area of major significance for its upland vegetation communities, limestone pavements and cave systems. While the site shows some similarity to Ingleborough, supporting important examples of blanket mire, dwarf shrub heath, sub-montane acid grassland, and pavement vegetation, it differs by consisting of a ridge rather than a plateau. Whernside qualifies for SSSI notification on the grounds of its outstanding assemblage of rare plant species.

Crag – Twisleton Scar, Tow Scar

CONISTONE OLD PASTURE (297HA)

Important not only for its limestone grassland communities and limestone pavement flora, but also for a range of impressive physiographic features.

Craggs – Dib Scar, Bull Scar, Conistone Dib

OXENBER & WHARFE WOOD (88.4HA)

Composed of three woodlands, Oxenber, Wharfe and Feizor, as well as limestone pavements, grassland and marsh communities. Separately these habitats are of high scientific interest, and in combination they present a site of considerable national significance.

Craggs – Oxenber Scar, Feizor Nick

PEN-Y-GHENT

The Pen-y-Ghent massif, comprising a ridge of alternating bands of limestone, shale and gritstone, is significant for a wide variety of vegetation types ranging from limestone pavement and cliffs to sub-montane acidic grassland, blanket bog, dwarf-shrub heath, valley bog and herb-rich meadows. It also supports a number of nationally scarce plant species including a rare **lady's-mantle** *Alchemilla glaucescens*.

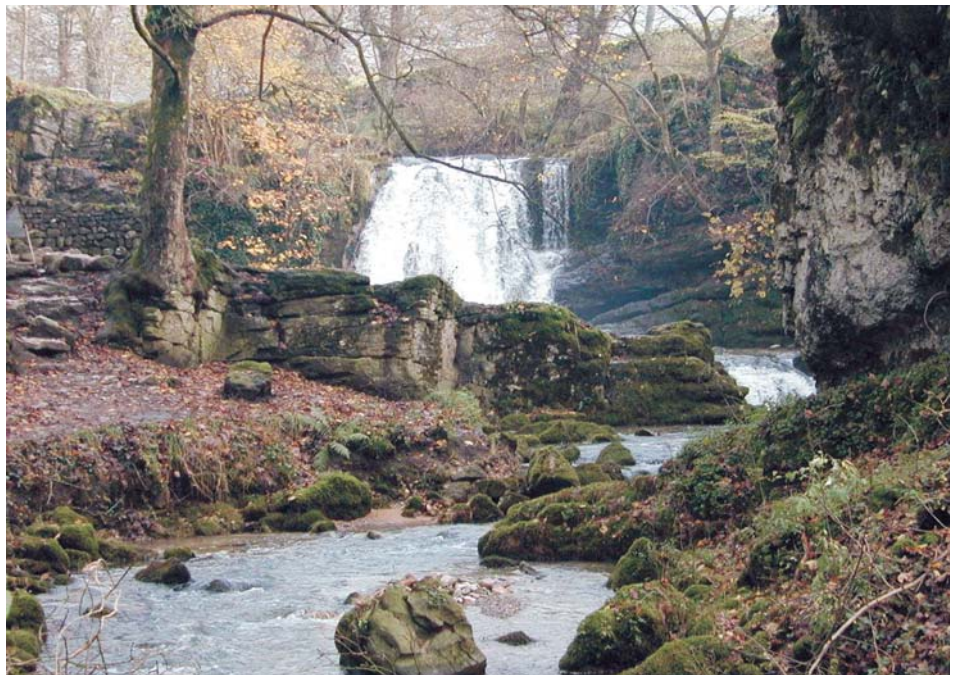
Craggs – Pen-y-ghent



Giggleswick South



Central Wall E3 5c at Dib Scar



Waterfall near Pen-y-Ghent

GIGGLESWICK SCAR AND KINSEY CAVE

Important sites for geomorphological and palaeontological features and the woodland, grassland and ledge habitats associated with outcropping limestone. The calcareous grassland found on cliff ledges, scree and around the limestone outcrops is particularly species-rich, including the dominant **Blue moor-grass** *Sesleria albicans*, **limestone bedstraw** *Galium sternerii*, **bloody crane's-bill** *Geranium sanguineum* and **horseshoe vetch** *Hippocrepis comosa* (see overleaf).

Craggs – Giggleswick Scar (south)

Conservation and climbing

All the crags featured in this guide are protected for their conservation value and designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or National Nature Reserves (NNRs). Although there is much of interest and to conserve outside these sites, they form the central core of the statutory conservation system and are very important for the habitats, wildlife, geology and landforms they support.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**, the Rio Convention on biodiversity in 1992 and the **Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000** provide the main legislation for the conservation of sites in the Dales. However, they don't just give powers to government to designate and protect special sites, they also provide for many positive initiatives to conserve our wildlife including grants, management agreements, action plans and access provision.

Remember, it is against the law:

- intentionally to uproot any plant from the wild without permission from the landowner;
- to pick, uproot or destroy, or collect flowers or seeds of any protected plant;
- intentionally or recklessly to disturb a protected species or its places of shelter, such as a bird's nest, or bat roost.

The reckless disturbance of protected species can carry severe penalties including a maximum £20,000 fine and/or imprisonment.

Although this legislation may seem over the top, it is needed to protect the wildlife in the Dales from increasing public pressure, of which outdoor recreational activities are just one small part. Climbing and hill walking are by no means the major culprits in the decline suffered by some of our wild habitats over the years, but by their very nature, they take place in major refuges for wildlife and an extra effort is needed to minimise any damage or disturbance.

Generally, there is little conflict and outdoor recreation happily co-exists with conservation interests. However, there are exceptions where birds nest on the crags or rare cliff plants are found. These are usually covered by voluntary agreements and seasonal nesting restrictions (between the BMC and local statutory bodies) to avoid the unpalatable alternative of bans, or legal proceedings if disturbance was proven to have occurred.

Natural England, whilst responsible for the protection of SSSI sites, also recognise the importance of the Yorkshire Dales for climbing and will continue to work closely with the BMC and the National Park Authority to ensure a workable balance between recreation and conservation interests.

YORKSHIRE NESTING RESTRICTIONS

A number of access restrictions for nesting raven and peregrine have been agreed by the BMC in the Yorkshire Dales on behalf of climbers. The crags most likely to have restrictions during spring are:

Blue Scar (whole crag)

Malham Cove (part)

Langcliffe Quarry (part)

Gordale Scar

High Stony Bank (whole crag)

RAD (Regional Access Database)

The RAD is the 'one-stop-shop' for all the access and conservation info. you need – from nesting restrictions, to conservation advice or preferred parking spots. It can be found on the Access & Conservation page of the BMC website and a quick check before setting off could save you wasted time and effort.

Check it at www.thebmc.co.uk/bmccrag/

The RAD works like a simple web search engine – type in the name of a crag or area you want and it will list all relevant climbing sites. From here click on the crag name for the access and conservation advice.

Recent upgrades to the RAD have included the ability to search for the most commonly viewed sites, the most recently updated sites and extra information showing CRoW access status, group use advice or new route sensitivity. We have also added a whole host of new crags – why not check it out before you climb?

Birds of the Yorkshire Dales

The Yorkshire Dales support nationally important populations of breeding wader species, including Curlew, Lapwing, Snipe, Redshank and Golden Plover with smaller numbers of Dunlin nesting on some of the wetter blanket bogs.

The heather moorlands are also important for a number of other species. **Red Grouse** with smaller numbers of **Ring Ouzel** and **Twite** are also found in some areas of the National Park. The Dales are also important for a number of other classic upland species such as **Wheatear**, **Dipper**, **Whinchat** and **Raven**.

Hen harriers are of particular importance as they remain one of England's rarest birds. A few birds are known to nest on grouse moors in the Dales each year, but despite the large areas of suitable nesting habitat, breeding success remains very low.

Red kites are another flagship species re-introduced to Yorkshire after an absence for almost a century. They were first released to the south of the National Park in 1999 and have bred successfully ever since –



Raven



Red grouse



Twite



Wheatear

so keep your eyes peeled for this majestic bird of prey with its characteristic 'wedge' shaped tail.

All UK wild birds, their nests, eggs and young are legally protected. In addition, intentionally killing, injuring, taking or disturbing any Schedule 1 bird, their eggs or dependent young are offences with severe penalties.

For more information see the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) website – www.rspb.org.uk

THE HEN HARRIER HOTLINE

The hotline has been set up by the RSPB for people who are out and about in the countryside and might see hen harriers. If you spot the birds prospecting or setting up territories please call **0845 460 0121** and the RSPB will try and ensure the birds can nest in safety.

'Climbers and hill walkers are a key target audience for us and reported sightings can provide vital information in helping us protect these rare and spectacular birds.'
The RSPB

SPECIALY PROTECTED SCHEDULE 1 SPECIES



Peregrine falcon



Merlin



Curlew



The hen harrier, one of Britain's rarest birds



Red kite

OTHER BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN



House Martin



Ring Ouzel



Lapwing



Short-Eared Owl



Golden Plover



Snipe

Vegetation of the Yorkshire Dales

LIMESTONE PAVEMENT

Limestone pavement is a unique and rare habitat and the National Park contains approximately half of the limestone pavement area in Britain. It is an internationally recognised habitat for its biodiversity.

The pavements are outcrops of rock, typically horizontal or gently inclined with a surface which has been dissolved by water over millions of years into 'paving blocks' (clints) and patterns of crevices (grikes).

The biodiversity of limestone pavements depends primarily on the depth of grikes and the level of grazing by livestock and rabbits. The majority of limestone pavements in the Dales are heavily affected by grazing with vegetation growth confined to the deeper and less accessible grikes.

Ferns remain a characteristic plant species of limestone pavements and some of these, such as the **rigid buckler fern**, and **baneberry**, are extremely rare and confined exclusively to limestone pavements.

ROCK-FACE VEGETATION

Exposed limestone cliffs support species such as wild thyme and blue moor grass in association with specialist cliff species such as common whitlowgrass, hairy rock-cress, thale cress, hoary whitlowgrass and wall whitlowgrass, biting stonecrop and the rare winter hutchinsia.

The shaded and sheltered cliffs support ferns such as **wall-rue, maidenhair spleenwort, green spleenwort, brittle bladder-fern** and lesser clubmoss.

Wetter flushed cliffs support **marsh hawk's-beard, Pyrenean scurvygrass, mossy saxifrage** and **stone bramble**. In very sheltered, stable areas more robust flowering plants occur such as, **rock-rose, small scabious, bloody crane's-bill** and **marjoram**.

Limestone screes also support a rich diversity of lime-loving species such as **maidenhair spleenwort, wall-rue, herb Robert** and more specialist species such as the **polypody fern**.



Angular Solomon's Seal



Bloody Cranesbill



Blue Moor Grass



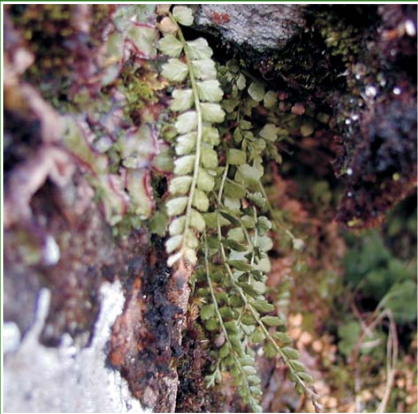
Brittle Bladder Fern



Dark-Red Helleborine



Dog's Mercury



Green Spleenwort



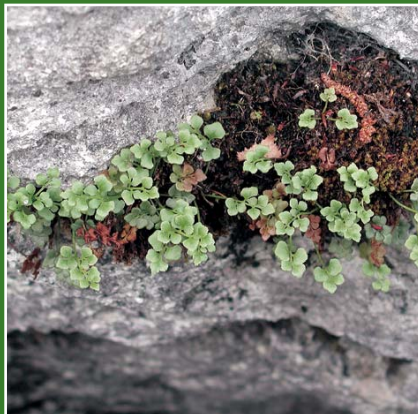
Hart's Tongue Fern



Maidenhair Spleenwort



Rigid Buckler-Fern



Wall Rue



The 'Good Practice' guide to climbing and walking in the Yorkshire Dales

- 1 Take care not to damage crag or pavement flora – this is illegal on SSSI sites.
- 2 If you experience obvious 'alarm calling' birds – retreat from the area.
- 3 Take care when setting belays in the fragile crag-top environment – this can disturb important habitats.
- 4 Be **very aware** that Gordale Scar experiences high numbers of tourists during the summer and contains some loose rock. Therefore:
 - take the utmost care not to dislodge rock or drop equipment while climbing and setting belays
 - belayers should advise tourists not to pass under climbers
- 5 Bolt re/placements must satisfy the BMC Yorkshire Area policy – developed to ensure protected species and designated sites are not disturbed or damaged. For more info contact the BMC limestone access rep.
- 6 Adhere to the agreed bird nesting restrictions, updated annually and available in the Access & Conservation – Downloads section of the BMC website.
- 7 'Tread Lightly' on paths and limestone pavements – avoid walking on lichens, they can take 500+ years to become established!
- 8 Avoid limestone scree slopes – if you must cross them, use established paths with care and try not to dislodge additional rocks.
- 9 Avoid taking large groups into SSSI sites, especially in wet conditions – this increases path erosion.
- 10 Place rucksacks on exposed rock surfaces (rather than on vegetation) – reducing ground erosion at popular sites.
- 11 Get in to the habit of 'Going before you go' – if nature calls make sure any waste is buried, bag and take home your toilet paper.
- 12 Take home all litter, even fruit skins – studies have shown these can attract valley predators into the high karst habitat.
- 13 Observe the 'Countryside Code' – available from the Natural England website: <http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk>

Useful websites

- British Mountaineering Council www.thebmc.co.uk
- Natural England www.naturalengland.org.uk
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority www.yorkshiredales.org.uk
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds www.rspb.org.uk
- The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust www.yorkshire-wildlife-trust.org.uk
- The Yorkshire Naturalists Union www.ynu.org.uk
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee www.jncc.gov.uk for wildlife legislation
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan www.ukbap.org.uk
- Magic www.magic.gov.uk – information on site scientific designations.
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty www.aonb.org.uk
- National Parks www.nationalparks.gov.uk
- National Trust www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- Plant life www.plantlife.org.uk – for information on invasive species

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BMC



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority



ACT



Many thanks to everyone who contributed towards this publication.

Photos: D. Kerr, C. Craggs, D. Musgrove, S. Crowe, P. Ford, A. Briggs

<http://www.gsymes.freeserve.co.uk/camera/yorkshire/>, R. Hannam, I. Forrest

Gallus, RMD, M. Goyt, Natural England, K. Woodcock, R. Oliver, D. Taylor, G Pain, and finally to Dr P. J. Llewellyn at www.ukwildflowers.com for the plant pictures and Whitfield Benson © YDNPA for the great bird shots.

Text: Guy Keating (The BMC), Jeff Knott (RSPB), Andy Mackintosh (Natural England) Barbara Jones (CCW), Saffra Kelly (Helios Ecology), Mark Allum & Ian Court (YDNPA)

The BMC recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions.