

The Birds in the Flesh

You can enjoy this wildlife not only by looking at our video and web broadcasts but by walking the many footpaths in Nidderdale and getting closer to the birds and the environment.

On Greenhow Hill you can take the short walk to The Coldstones Cut, a massive sculptural viewing point from where you can see the wonderful scenery of Nidderdale and beyond and overlook the fascinating working Coldstones Quarry. On route you may see the birds being featured in the Birds on the Hill Project.

Wherever you go of course, you should follow the country code and make sure you protect plants and wildlife, and leave no litter. All birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and it is an offence to intentionally take, injure or kill a bird or damage or destroy its nest.

Getting involved

Local people can make a difference. If you would like to get involved by learning more about Nidderdale and its birds, and enjoying yourself too, there are several organisations, listed below, which would like to hear from you. You can also access the Birds on the Hill web broadcasts via the websites of any of these organisations.



Nidderdale AONB

This is the body charged with looking after the special area of Nidderdale. It does this by working with bodies such as local councils, by implementing conservation projects and raising awareness and understanding. It offers many opportunities for local people to get involved in research, recording and conservation projects. Contact via the website www.nidderdaleaonb.org.uk or by telephone 01423 712950.

Nidderdale Birdwatchers

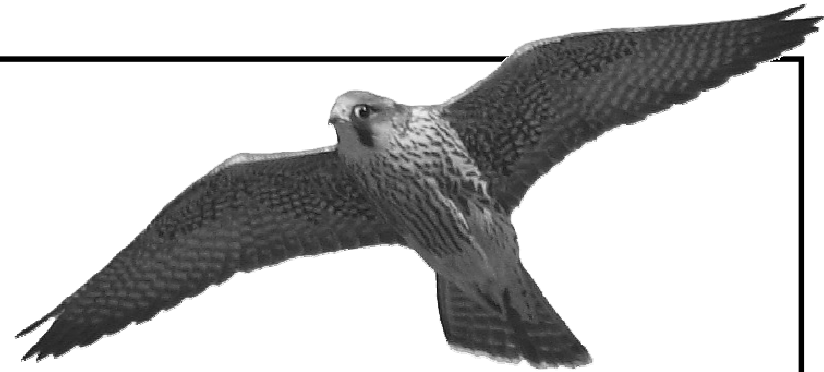
A voluntary group which exists to promote interest in and knowledge of birds and to work for their welfare, particularly in Nidderdale. Catering for everyone from the mildly interested to the enthusiast the group welcomes beginners as well as experienced birdwatchers. Activities include trips out, social evenings and talks and conservation work. The web site is www.nidbirds.org.uk and you can contact them via email info@nidbirds.org.uk or by telephone 01423 711887.



RSPB Harrogate District Branch

open to everyone who shares an interest in birds and the environment and wants to help and enjoy wildlife, even if you are not a member of the RSPB. The group's aim is to run a programme of meetings and field events which will be fun and educational, useful and practical. Contact them via their website www/harrogaterspb.com or by telephone: 01423 326682.

This project has been organised by Nidderdale AONB with help from Nidderdale Birdwatchers and RSPB Harrogate District Branch and Hanson Aggregates. Our thanks to all who have helped and to Pet Pad in Pateley Bridge for allowing the Project to use their premises as the Birds on the Hill Watch Point.



The Birds on the Hill

A project to help us to research,
understand and enjoy some spectacular
birds which nest on *Greenhow Hill*

Nidderdale is a special place with some wonderful birds and Greenhow Hill is home to many of them, ranging from the common starling to the soaring buzzard. The Birds on the Hill Project will be monitoring many of the birds which live on Greenhow Hill, both those which are resident all year and those which come here each Spring to breed and raise their young.

Using cameras to constantly film nest sites, the Project records the life of birds 24 hours each day, so that we can learn more about their behaviour and how successful they are at raising their chicks. This will help us to protect their future in Nidderdale. The project also allows members of the public to observe the birds, live via a video link and through selected recordings, which can be seen both on the screens in the windows of Pet Pad in Pateley Bridge High Street and on the Web. This is something which is not normally possible as many bird nests are usually in inaccessible areas and are fully protected by law. Granted licences have given us permission to film and having such constant and close-up views is therefore a real pleasure and privilege.

Nidderdale's birdlife

Nidderdale is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its moorlands are of international importance and provide a home for many breeding bird populations - including those of Merlin, Golden Plover, Snipe, Curlew, Redshank, Short-eared Owl - and they form parts of the North Pennines Special Protection Area. In moorland gills increasingly rare species like Ring Ouzel are frequent summer visitors and moorland edge pastures provide breeding space for Lapwing. Ancient woodland is home to Pied Flycatcher and Wood warbler as well as the more common birds. Gouthwaite Reservoir, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) near Pateley Bridge supports large populations of Wildfowl and Waders, and offers great opportunities for raptor watching on the surrounding moors.

Other birds common during the breeding season include Skylark and Meadow Pipit whose calls, together with those of waders like Snipe, Curlew, Lapwing and Redshank, make a fine spring day in the AONB unforgettable.

The Birds in the Frame

There are several species of birds which we would like to film as part of the Birds on the Hill Project. However the species which can be researched depends entirely upon co-operation from the birds because we need them to nest in areas where cameras can be located without danger and without disturbance. Below are details of some of the birds we hope to include in the project.

Among the many special birds which live in Nidderdale is the **Peregrine Falcon**. The Peregrine is a raptor which hunts other birds, taking its prey in the air. Noted for its agility and speed the Peregrine can reach a speed of 200 miles per hour as it dives or stoops for its prey, and is recorded as the fastest animal on the planet. Peregrines stay all year in Nidderdale and there are several pairs of Peregrines, each with their own territory. In March each year the pairs mate and begin to incubate their 3 or 4 eggs.



The **Raven** is a large black bird, a member of the crow family. It is a majestic bird, even bigger than a Buzzard and has a heavy bill and long wings. When it flies it displays a diamond-shaped tail. Ravens live all year round in Nidderdale and breed here. The birds mate for life and each year produce between 3 and 7 eggs. There is much folklore about ravens and the ones at the Tower of London are famous.

The **Curlew** is the largest British wading bird which spends its winter on coastal estuaries but comes back to the moors each Spring to raise a family. It is very recognisable with its long down-curved bill, brown upperparts and long legs. The call of the Curlew is a beautiful rather plaintiff bubbling trill. Curlews lay between 2 and 5 eggs in April or May. There has been a decline in the number of Curlews breeding across the UK.



Another common bird in Nidderdale is the **Lapwing**. In Autumn Lapwings move out of the area especially in harsh winter weather but they return each spring in the breeding season. These birds are medium sized waders and are distinctive looking birds, with a black and white appearance and a splendid crest. Lapwings are known locally as peewits, a name which describes the birds' call as they make their spectacular display flights in which they roll, tumble and twist. Lapwing chicks are delightful little creatures too, but populations are in decline so the more we can learn about how to increase the breeding success the better.



The **Skylark**, once a very common bird has suffered a huge national decline. It is a small brown bird larger than a sparrow and has a crest. It is best known for its wonderful liquid warbling song as it soars in the air. Skylarks return to Nidderdale from lowland areas after the winter and breed on open grassland in uplands and on heaths. They lay between 3 and 5 eggs in late March or April.

Another bird rather similar to the Skylark but slightly smaller is the **Meadow Pipit**. A brownish bird with a slightly spotted chest the Meadow Pipit often has an upright pose and is rather jerky in its movement. This is a regular breeding bird on the moors and its nests are often favoured by Cuckoos when they are looking for foster parents for their chicks. Meadow pipits are around all year though they often move to more lowland areas in the winter.



Wheatears come to Nidderdale in the Spring from central Africa where they have spent the winter. Slightly larger than a Robin it is a smart upright bird, the male being blue-grey above with black wings and white below and with an orange flush to the breast. In flight it shows a white rump and a black 'T' shape on its tail. The female is a browner bird. Wheatears are often seen on walls and fences and they make their nest in holes among rocks, in walls, or in old rabbit warrens. They rear between 5 and 6 offspring each year.

Birds and Biodiversity

Nidderdale AONB has a commitment to protect biodiversity, and works to conserve and increase the variety of plants and animals at the local level. This balance in nature is essential if we are to preserve the earth's species in the future including many local bird species where populations are reducing.

There are many reasons for the decline in bird numbers, including loss of habitat, intensive farming practice and persecution. Peregrine Falcons were a persecuted species for many centuries and declined dramatically when toxic pesticides were in general use. The birds we are studying are part of the biodiversity of Nidderdale and we are fortunate to have these birds. Learning more about them will help official bodies and individuals to work for their welfare and future.