



Skipwith NNR Flagship Ponds

Skipwith National Nature Reserve is one of the last remaining areas of northern lowland heath in England. The 270 hectares of open heath, ponds, mire, fen, reed-bed, woodland and scrub are part of an ancient landscape, with their roots in pre-history.

Skipwith NNR has been identified as a Flagship Pond site by the Freshwater Habitats Trust because of its exceptional importance for freshwater biodiversity. This fantastic reserve, with its numerous ponds and pools, many probably originating as peat cuttings, sand pits and flax retting pits, support several of Britain's most endangered freshwater plants and animals.

Help us to help save these remarkable pond habitats.



Pond Mud Snail

POND MUD SNAIL are distinctively elongate pond snails, closely associated with old ponds in unimproved habitats like heaths and commons. Sadly the UK population has declined by up to 50% in the last 30 years, though good populations still exist in a few locations, including locally in lower Swaledale. Pond Mud Snails prefer ponds that dry out in summer, and which are naturally low in nutrients. These sites can be overlooked and are easily damaged, either by draining them or turning them into permanent ponds. Pond Mud Snails are found across the Common's ponds and in patches of surface water on the heathland in between.



Pillwort

PILLWORT is a delicate aquatic fern confined to places where low nutrients, fluctuating water levels and grazing livestock limit competition from larger plants. It has declined both in Britain and the rest of Western Europe due to the decline of traditional pastoral landscapes, agricultural intensification, and pollution. Pillwort has been lost from nearly half its known sites in the UK, although there are several recent Yorkshire localities. At the moment Pillwort is known from only one pond on the reserve but we hope that management and pond creation will encourage it to spread to new sites.



Great Crested Newt

GREAT CRESTED NEWTS are the largest of our native newts and an impressive sight when they come to the ponds to breed in the spring. These newts need good quality water which will support submerged and emergent vegetation and a good supply of invertebrate prey. They also need excellent surrounding habitat including a mixture of rough grassland, heath and woodland. Skipwith NNR therefore provides perfect conditions and Great Crested Newts occur in several of the ponds including Pillwort Pond.



Skipwith's Priority Ponds

Protecting the ponds on Skipwith NNR:

Pillwort Pond: The pond in front of you was excavated in the late 20th century in one of the WWII runway embayments. Although still a fantastic pond, it has changed considerably during the past 25 years. Work to reduce shading and remove silt has taken place to encourage regeneration of Pillwort and to create ideal conditions for its range of special wildlife to thrive.

Ponds on Skipwith: The rich diversity of all the ponds on Skipwith NNR is maintained by the gentle poaching of the pond's margins by grazing animals, and a balanced water table which prevents the wetland habitats from permanently drying out. Keeping the ponds free from scrub whilst protecting the mossy margins is vital for their conservation.

Dog Walkers: Please note that it is a legal requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to keep dogs on leads when on open access land, to reduce disturbance and to prevent harm to the grazing livestock. Please be responsible and obey the new signs by keeping your dogs under close control so that the wildlife can thrive.



Skipwith NNR is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation and a National Nature Reserve. Escrick Park Estate owns Skipwith NNR and manages it in partnership with Natural England to ensure that its wildlife survives into coming centuries. A dedicated group of volunteers help maintain Skipwith, carrying out practical tasks including monitoring of the ponds and the special species they support, for more information visit friendsofskipwithcommon.org.uk.

Freshwater Habitats Trust is one of the UK's principle research and conservation charities for the protection and recovery of our most endangered freshwater habitats and species. We work in partnership to develop and deliver practical advice to help people manage and create new clean water habitats for wildlife.

Flagship Ponds is one of three projects within Freshwater Habitats Trust's People, Ponds and Water Project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Much of the Vale of York was once lowland heath, but now only three areas survive: Skipwith NNR, Strensall Common and Allerthorpe Common, all would qualify for Flagship Pond status.



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