

65. Lower Derwent Valley

Geographical Coordinates:	53°55'N 0°56'W	Area:	1,089ha
Location:	Alongside the River Derwent, about 15km southeast of the city of York, in the counties of North Yorkshire and Humberside, northeast England.		
Date of Ramsar Designation:	Originally designated 17 July 1985; site extended from 783ha on 8 June 1993. incl		
Other International Designations:	European Union Special Protection Area		
National Designations:	National nature reserve ^P ; Sites of special scientific interest.		

Principal Features: The Lower Derwent Valley represents one of the most important examples of traditionally managed species-rich, alluvial flood-meadow habitat remaining in the UK. These grasslands, which were formerly widespread, are now very restricted in distribution due to agricultural modification. The river and these flood-meadows play a substantial role in the hydrological and ecological functioning of the internationally important Humber basin. The site has a rich assemblage of wetland invertebrates, including up to 16 species of damselfly and dragonfly, the most notable being *Erythronna najas* at its northernmost British site. Eight rare Red Data Book wetland species have been recorded, the beetles *Panagaeus cruxmajor*, *Hydraena palustris*, *Carpelimus obesus*, *Selatosomus nigricornis*, two empid flies *Ramphomyia physoprocta* and *Hilara merula*, a snail *Lymnaea glabra*, and the snail-killing fly *Sciomyza dryomyzina*. Also of note is the leafhopper *Cicadula ornata* for which the only known British site is the Lower Derwent Valley. The site is also important as a staging area for passage birds in spring. Of particular note are the nationally important *Philomachus pugnax* and *Numenius phaeopus*. The Lower Derwent Valley also regularly supports over 20,000 waterfowl in winter. In the five year period of 1986/87-1990/91, the mean peak figure recorded was 27,580 - comprising averages of 17,415 wildfowl and 10,165 waders. In no year did the combined total fall below 20,000 birds. The site further regularly holds internationally important numbers of two species¹ *Anas crecca* (4,040) and *A. penelope* (7,790). These represent >1% of the northwest European population of these species. The site is notable also for supporting nationally important wintering numbers of *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, *Pluvialis apricaria*, *Philomachus pugnax*, *Anas clypeata*, *Aythya ferina* and furthermore, nationally important numbers of breeding *Anas clypeata*.

¹ mean peak counts in the five-winter period of 1986/87 - 1990/91.

Conservation Issues: Mining operations could affect the hydrological balance of the area, although planning permissions for this land use will be reviewed, and if necessary, brought up to modern standards to safeguard the integrity of the site. Parts of the site have been proposed for designation as European Union Special Areas of Conservation. A National Nature Reserve management plan is being implemented by English Nature.

