

North Pennine Birdwalks

Walk 3: Allen Banks & Staward Gorge



Landscapes
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NORTH PENNINES
One of the
AONB family

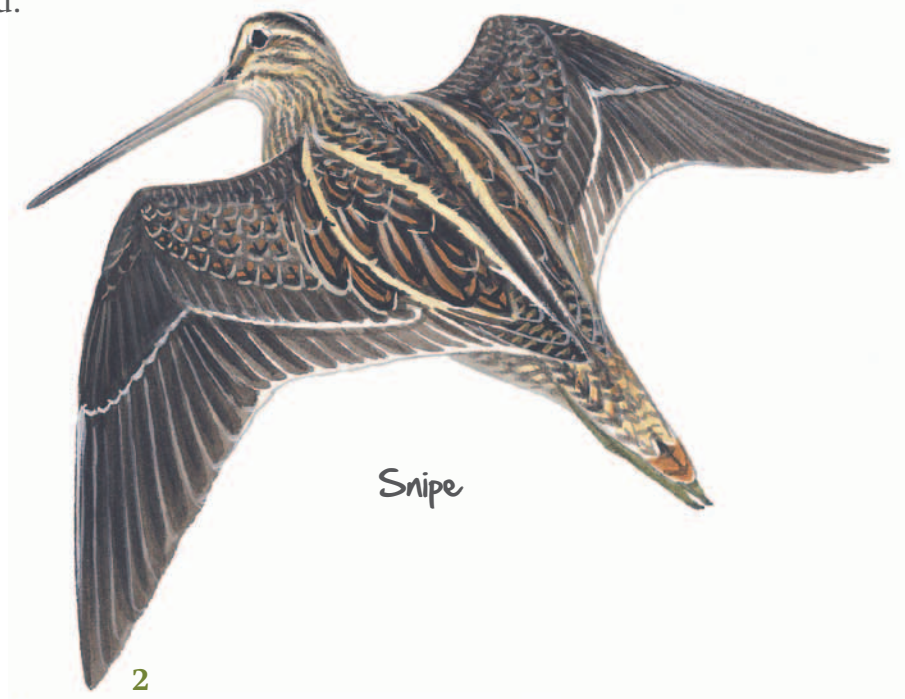
The Birdwatchers Code of Conduct

Birds are very vulnerable to disturbance, especially during the breeding season. It is all too easy to inadvertently harm a bird or its young while trying to watch them.

For example, if an adult bird is prevented from returning to its nest, eggs or chicks may quickly chill and die. Straying from a footpath towards a nest site may also leave a scent trail that a predator is later able to follow.

To ensure that you enjoy watching birds without harming them or their young, please always follow this code of conduct:

- The welfare of the birds must come first. Disturbance to birds and their habitats should be kept to a minimum.
- Keep to footpaths, especially during the bird breeding season (March – August).
- Avoid disturbing birds or keeping them away from their nests for even short periods especially in wet or cold weather.
- Do not try to find nests. **All birds, nests, eggs and young are protected by law and it is illegal to harm them.**
- Keep dogs on a short lead.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Take your litter home with you.



Walk 3

Allen Banks & Staward Gorge



Allen Banks in spring

In spring and early summer the ancient woodland at Allen Banks and Staward Gorge bursts with the songs of birds such as the wood warbler and willow warbler, song thrush and wren. At quieter times of year these woods are still well worth a visit. In autumn the trees are a blaze of orange and yellow while rich clusters of fungi decorate the woodland floor. Even in winter, the activity of resident woodland birds provides a welcome contrast to the comparative quiet of the surrounding countryside.

Keys

Easy Grade Walk

Suitable for most people: easy, comfortable walking, may be some stiles.

Medium Grade Walk

Typically a country walk with some hills, stiles and muddy paths.
Boots advised.

Hard Grade Walk

Hill walk. May have steep or strenuous climbs. Rough moorland.
Boots essential.

A guide is also provided to indicate the best times of year to see key bird species. This can be interpreted as follows:

BEST TIME TO VISIT



Please be aware that the weather can change rapidly in the North Pennines. Always carry suitable wet weather clothing with you and remember that visibility will be poor at higher altitudes in low cloud conditions.



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Front cover illustration and all bird illustrations are by Mike Langman. Other images are © Natural England/Charlie Hedley or © North Pennines AONB Partnership.



Information is correct at the time of production (Aug 2012). Every effort has been made to ensure that information is accurate. However, the AONB Partnership and its Staff Unit cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions. Please check critical information before travel. Inclusion is not a recommendation by the AONB Partnership and in itself is not necessarily a guarantee of quality.



North Pennines AONB Partnership, Weardale Business Centre, The Old Co-op Building, 1 Martin Street, Stanhope, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 2UY.

Information Point



1:50,000 – Landranger 87
1:25,000 – Explorer OL43



Public toilets at the car park at the start. Pubs/cafés and local shops at Whitfield (9 km), Allendale (12 km) and Haydon Bridge (6 km).



Linear route. 5 km (3 miles) each way



Easy. May be muddy in places. One very steep descent and one area of narrow path with a steep drop at the far end of the walk



At road junction to Beltingham (NY793635)



Visit www.northpennines.org.uk for information on green places to stay



National Trust Pay and Display car park at NY797641



A train service operates to Bardon Mill, 2 km from Allen Banks. For information call Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.travelinenortheast.info



Pied flycatcher
(female)

Walk Directions

From the car park, walk past the information board and follow the main footpath that runs parallel to the River Allen on your left.

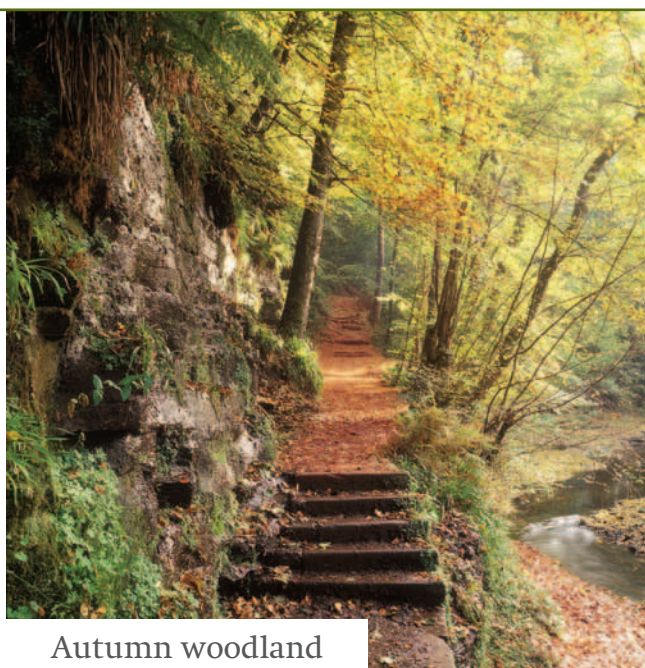
Pass a suspension bridge and keep on the footpath with the River Allen on your left. After some time cross a wooden bridge over a small tributary stream. Continue on, passing an area of mature pine trees.

Enter the Briarwood Banks Northumberland Wildlife Trust nature reserve. Follow the path to cross another tributary stream via a footbridge. Turn left and cross the bridge to the opposite bank.

Turn right and walk alongside the River Allen. At the end of the field go through the gate and turn right to enter the woodland at Staward Gorge. The path leads to a National Trust information board overlooking the river. Continue to follow the path keeping the River Allen on your right.

Cross a tributary stream via a footbridge and where the path divides, take the left path leading uphill. At the top of the bank take the right path, continuing straight ahead where the path divides again. Walk beside a wall covered with moss on your right.

Turn left where the path meets a pair of old stone gateposts on the right. Where the path divides again take the main path on the left. The River Allen can now be seen far below in the gorge.



Autumn woodland

Take the right path leading down hill towards the river where the path divides again. This is a steep path in places with a drop (take care!)

Follow the clear path keeping the river on your right. The path passes through an area of birch woodland and crosses small streams and after c100m arrives beneath an area of steep crags with dramatic views of the river and gorge below. There is a very steep drop here and the path is narrow (take care!) This is a good place to begin the return walk.

Walk 3

Allen Banks & Staward Gorge



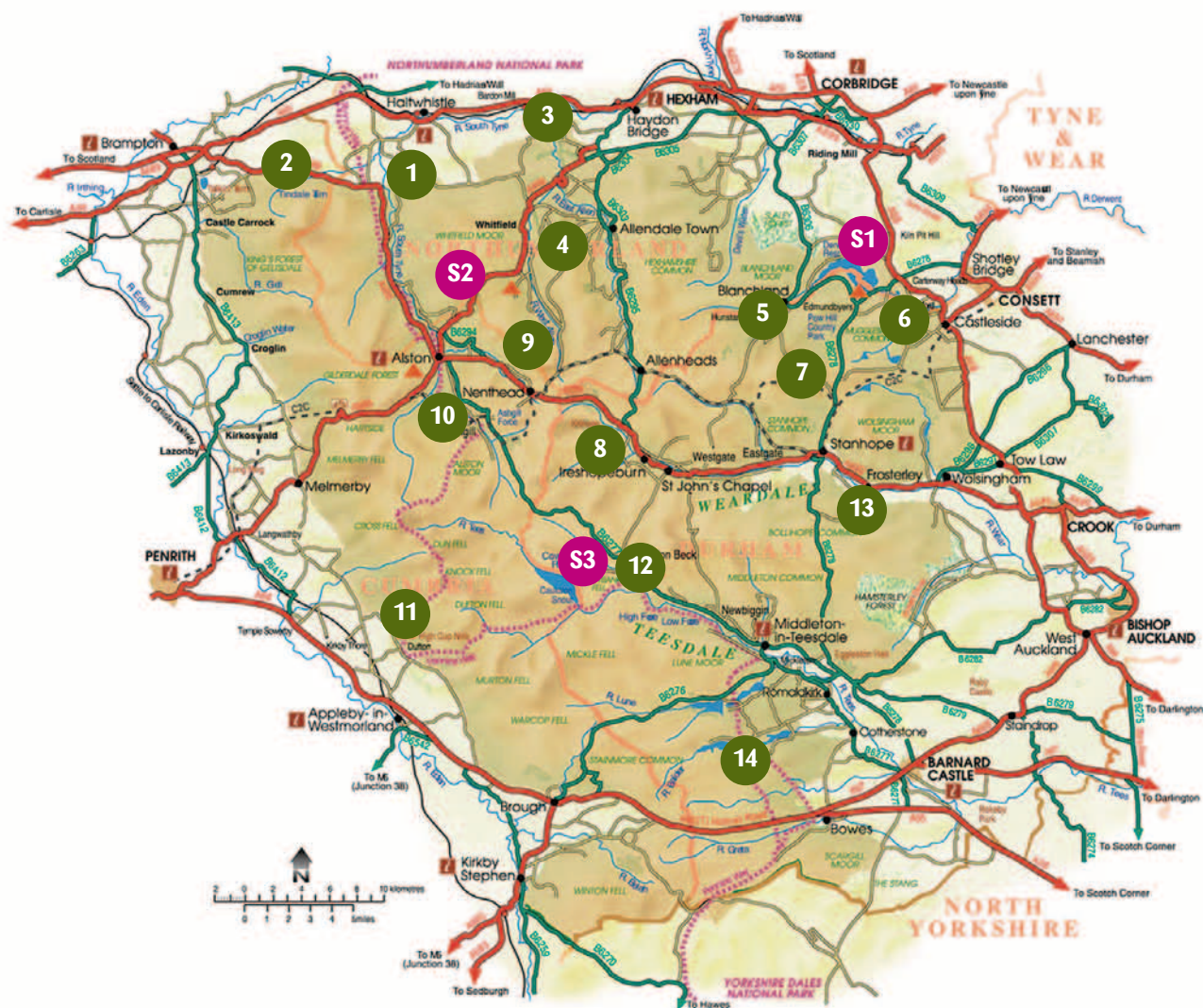
- 1 Woodland has existed in this area since at least medieval times. Native broadleaf species include sessile oak, ash, birch, hazel and holly. As well as birds, these woodlands support many types of specialist invertebrates such as longhorn beetles.
- 2 Large flocks of redwings and fieldfares frequent the edges of these woods during winter. Feeding on fruits, berries and earthworms, they can be seen flying between hawthorn bushes and surrounding pastures.
- 3 In spring and early summer listen for the joyous songs of the redstart, wood warbler, pied flycatcher and blackcap.
- 4 Look out for dipper, oystercatcher, goosander and heron on the River Allen. Goosanders are unusual waterbirds as they nest in holes in trees.
- 5 Active year-round, these woods are good places to see species such as great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, treecreeper, long-tailed tit & willow tit. Watch out for red squirrels too.
- 6 This is one of the most northerly breeding sites for the rare dormouse. Seldom seen, their presence can be detected from holes in hazelnuts they have eaten. Dormice leave teeth marks at an angle to the hole and the inner rim is virtually smooth and circular in shape.

BEST TIME TO VISIT





Map of the North Pennines AONB showing location of Walks and Sites



- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Lambley and the South Tyne | 10 Garrigill |
| 2 Tindale Tarn | 11 Dufton Pike |
| 3 Allen Banks and Staward Gorge | 12 Upper Teesdale |
| 4 Chimneys on Dryburn Moor | 13 Howdon Burn |
| 5 Blanchland | 14 Blackton Reservoir |
| 6 Derwent Gorge | S1 Derwent Reservoir |
| 7 Burnhope Head | S2 Ouston Fell |
| 8 Cowshill | S3 Harwood Beck and Widdybank |
| 9 Wellhope Moor | |

NORTH PENNINES



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



The North Pennines is one of England's most special places – a peaceful, unspoilt landscape with a rich history and vibrant natural beauty. In recognition of this it is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is also a Global Geopark – an accolade endorsed by UNESCO.

This 6 mile (in total) linear route explores the birdlife found in Allen Banks and Staward Gorge - a stunning site in the north of the AONB looked after by the National Trust.

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The AONB Partnership has a Green
Tourism award for its corporate office

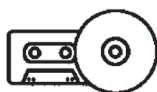


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