

A route round the Lower Derwent Valley

OS Map 105 (Grid References refer to the 1km square containing all or part of the site).

Birding locations are **in bold**.

“Ing” is a Norse (Viking) name for a flooded meadow. This landscape is ancient.

The Lower Derwent Valley is one of the north of England’s premier birding sites. The core area is about 5 miles long and about 1.5 mile across at its widest point and is a National Nature Reserve, the northern end of which (Wheldrake Ings) is also a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve. The sheer size of the area, and rather limited access points make it hard for a visitor to explore effectively. This is a shore guide to help visiting birders get to grips with the valley by suggesting a circular route clockwise round the area to take in some (but by no means all) the good birding spots. Visiting all the suggested observation points can take all day. If you start early in the morning, working clockwise round the valley from **East Cottingwith** (SE7042) at the top, east side of the valley, via **Bubwith** (SE7136) in the south, and **Wheldrake Ings** (SE7043) at the northern end means that you have the sun behind you most of the time.

You need a car. From the centre of York and back the round trip is about 40 miles.

For most of the recommended sites a telescope is essential.

Leave York east on the A1079 and turn R. on the B1228 just after the Grimston Bar traffic lights signpost Elvington and Sutton upon Derwent (where you cross the Derwent to the east side). About a mile after leaving Sutton upon Derwent go over the Pocklington Canal and take the second R. (the continuation of the B1228, signpost **Bubwith** and Howden). The B1228 at this point is a long, straight road; proceed for just over a mile to a X roads (signpost Seaton Ross to L. and **East Cottingwith** to R.). Turn R. to **East Cottingwith**

Views over the lower part of Whedrake Ings

Immediately after the village sign for **East Cottingwith** (SE7042) park on the RHS of the road, alongside a tarmac footpath. Walk a few yards to the first houses on the RHS of the road and turn R. into Canal Lane. Walk down Canal Lane to a small cemetery and Millennium beacon and turn R. on a signposted field footpath. Go straight ahead to a ditch and narrow wooden bridge, then turn L. and follow the hedge on your LHS towards Wheldrake Ings. After ca 100 yards turn R. along the hedge obscuring the view of the Ings on your LHS, past an abandoned corrugated iron and chicken wire structure and a small group of trees to get a clear view of the southern end of **Wheldrake Ings** (SE7043).

Re-trace your steps back to the car.

Drive a couple of 100 yards into **East Cottingwith** and turn L. before the little church also on the L. Go past a row of houses (Swan Garth) on the L. and leave the village to come to a T junction, signpost **Ellerton** and Howden. After about 1 mile come to a X roads (give-way sign) and turn R. (no signpost), to reach **Ellerton** (SE7039).

Views over Ellerton Ings

Drive carefully through the village (ignoring a road coming in from L.) and towards the end of the road ignore a very minor road forking L. and fork R. to reach **Ellerton Church**, where the road terminates. Parking is very restricted, but possible for 1 or 2 cars. The churchyard gives excellent views across the ings. Check the church porch for Barn owl pellets.

Return to the car, and drive back through the village, and just before the village pond, fork R. Almost immediately turn R. into Aughton Lane (sign post **Aughton**) and follow a tiny, twisting lane to a T junction on the outskirts of **Aughton**.

Views over Aughton Ings

At the T junction (signpost **Bubwith L.** and **Aughton R.**) turn R. to reach the end of the village (SE7038). At the end of the road, park on the R. in front of the last 2 houses. Walk straight ahead to a small gate and track to the immediate R. of the main entrance to Aughton Hall and the Old Coach House. Proceed along the track (a public right of way) a few 100 yards to reach **Aughton Church**. From the churchyard you get excellent views of Aughton Ings.

Retrace your steps, and head back out of the village, keeping straight ahead following signs to **Bubwith**. Re-join the B1228 at a X roads, and turn R (signpost Howden and **Bubwith**), until you reach another X roads with the A163. Turn R into **Bubwith** (SE7136).

Bubwith Ings

Drive through the village past the White Swan pub and almost immediately after leaving the last house and before the traffic lights controlling Bubwith Bridge over the river park in a picnic area on the LHS. There is a gateway across the road and to the L. of the parking area giving good views of Bubwith Ings (CARE crossing road).

Bubwith Bridge is narrow and we do not recommend walking across it with traffic passing. To check the ings to the south of the parking area it is safer to return to the car, turn L. out of the picnic area over Bubwith Bridge and park on the immediate R. after the lights in a lay-by. Check Bubwith Ings again from here, then cross back over the road to the south side and head into a rough entrance and gateway alongside the river, looking south.

Return to the car, and turn R. heading towards North Duffield (SE6737). You are NOT going into North Duffield yet. Drive about half a mile towards the village to reach a 'phone mast on L. and trees on both sides of the road, and turn R. into a rather concealed car park provided by the NNR. Take care on this road as some people drive far too fast along it and do not expect cars to turn off as there is no signpost.

North Duffield Carrs

There are two hides overlooking **North Duffield Carrs** (SE7037). From the car park, access the path in the LH corner (facing north); follow the path down and turn L. to reach the first hide. The second hide can be seen well over to your L. from the first hide. To reach it follow the path along the boundary of the ings for ca 5 minutes.

Return to the car.

Leave the carpark and turn R. into North Duffield. In the village ignore sign on R. to Village Hall and take next R (signpost Skipwith and Village Hall). Continue through North Duffield

towards Skipwith passing a pub and the duck pond on the L. After 1-2 miles reach Skipwith (SE6638). In Skipwith bear R. at a slightly complicated X roads to pass the Drovers Arms on R. and shortly after leaving the village turn R. (signpost **Thorganby, Wheldrake** and Elvington)

Thorganby Ings

Thorganby (SE6841) is 2-3 miles from when you turn off in Skipwith. Once in the village the road bears round to the L. and then past the church and a field both on L. Soon after, when the houses start again there is an unsigned carpark on the R. for the village hall (easy to miss), which is public parking. Park at the far end nearest the ings, and take the little path in the RH corner to a viewing platform looking out over the ings.

Return to the car, join the road and turn R., heading for **Wheldrake** (SE6845).

Wheldrake Ings, Bank Island and Ing Marsh

You have nearly now gone full circle and can access Wheldrake Ings from here.

About 1 mile after the de-restriction sign at the end of Thorganby village turn sharp R. back on yourself (with a wood on your R.) to see a large sign advertising Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's ownership of this part of the NNR. Proceed to the end of the track and park. Cross the footbridge over the river and pick up the riverside path along the side of the ings. Stay strictly on the path; there is no right-of-way across the meadows. The path will take you to three hides (in sequence the Tower Hide, The Pool Hide and the Swantail Hide) the latter about half-an-hour's walk from the car-park (without stopping in the two other hides on the way) so you need plenty of time.

Alternatively (or as well as) about 100 yards after where you turned in to the car park on the road towards Wheldrake village is a bus stop on R. and the entrance to the NNR Natural England Offices with another car park just past the bus stop also on R. From here you can access a viewing platform overlooking Bank Island and Ing Marsh, and another hide below and to the L of the car park overlooking Ing Marsh.

Back to York

Turn R. out of the car park, and after a few 100 yards the road bears sharp left into **Wheldrake** village. From here you can turn R. in the village just after the church and Wenlock Arms and head towards Elvington where you turn L. re-join the B1228 you came out on from Grimston Bar, to head into York on the A1079 from the E.

Alternatively go straight through Wheldrake village, fork R. at the end of the village (ignore the L. fork to Escrick) and drive to Crockey hill to join the A19; turn R to head into York from the S.

Good birding! And please submit your records to the club via BirdTrack or the club's spreadsheet, see instructions at <http://yorkbirding.org.uk/records/>.

John Lawton
April 2018