

The Yorkshire Dales Nature through the Year

Summer



Stoat © Whitfield Benson YDNPA

Summer is the time when birds and animals are hard at work feeding their young. Even night hunting creatures like owls sometimes have to keep going into the daylight hours to catch enough food. The flowers in the road verges and hay meadows reach their peak and butterflies make the most of the ample supply of nectar.

Look out for a [stoat](#) hunting along the line of a wall. These fast little creatures are deadly hunters and know that rabbits like to hide in holes in drystone walls.



Swaledale hay meadow © YDNPA

Families of wrens can often be seen hunting in and out along the tops of drystone walls. For such a tiny bird, the [wren](#) must surely have one of the loudest songs.

There is no finer sight (or smell!) than a hay meadow in full flower on a hot summer's day. Many have footpaths running through them but try not to trample the grass – it may look beautiful to you but to a farmer it also means winter food for his stock. [Swaledale](#) has some of our finest hay meadows but Dentdale also has some lovely ones too, especially alongside the [Dales Way](#), and The National Trust's [Upper Wharfedale estate](#) is also rich in these traditional meadows.



Buzzard © Whitfield Benson YDNPA

Keep your ears open for the mewing call of a [buzzard](#), floating lazily on a rising current of warm air but keeping a sharp look out for a meal. These huge birds of prey are making a come back in the Dales. Keen birdwatchers might also spot the rarer [hen harrier](#) and [red kite](#).



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Watch the fastest bird on earth – the [peregrine](#) – at Malham Cove. Effortless and magnificent, it can dive after prey at over 200mph. During the summer volunteers are there with powerful telescopes to help you spot them.

Why not take a torch and go [bat spotting](#). The Yorkshire Dales has several different species of these fascinating creatures. By a river you might see large Daubenton's bats skimming along grabbing insects with their large feet from the surface of the water or near house lights watch out for tiny Pipistrelles snatching an easy meal from the gathering insects. Don't forget the midge repellent though!

