

Scaling Dam

Site designations

Within North York Moors National Park and has a company designated nature reserve. Part of the nature reserve is within the North York Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation.

Location

Adjacent to the A171, on the main Guisborough to Whitby road, located in the north-eastern part of the North York Moors National Park.

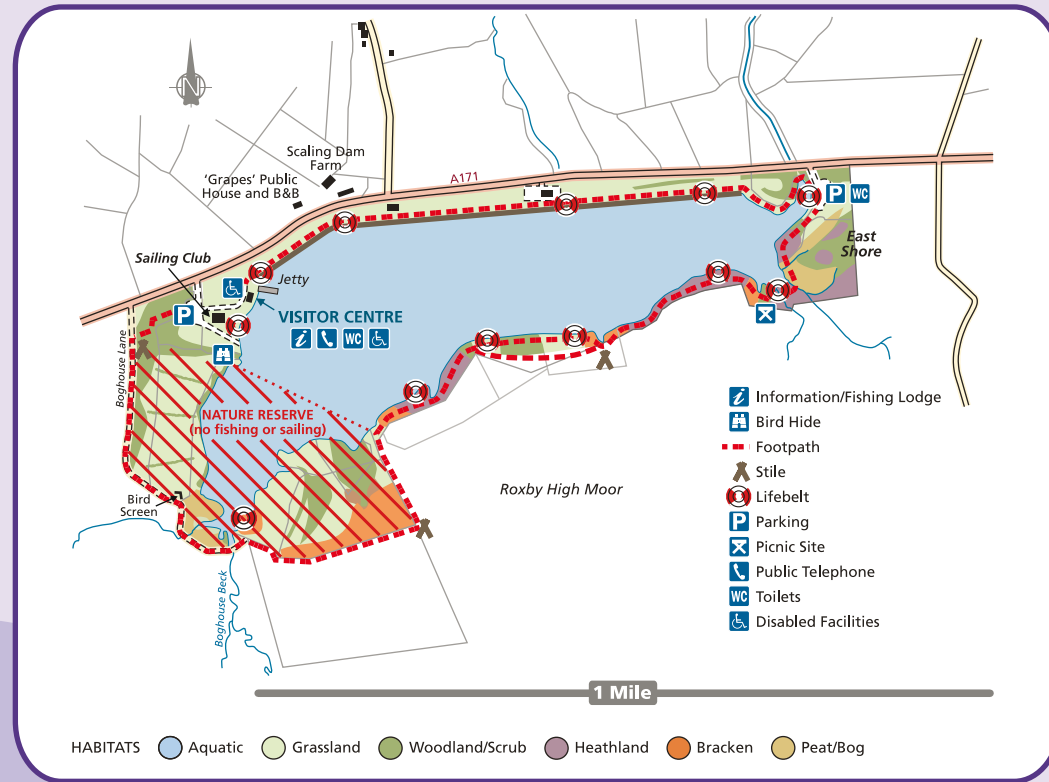
Access & facilities

Car parking facilities with disabled access toilets. A 4.5km circular path gives access around the whole reservoir. There is no public access to the nature reserve, but the bird hide accessible from the Sailing Club car park and the bird screen at the end of Bog House Lane provide excellent vantage points to observe birds within the reserve.

Site

Scaling Dam was built in 1957 and is 180 metres above sea level. Its location close to the East coast means that it is particularly important for passage migrants on their journey either to or from their summer breeding grounds.

The shallower western end of the reservoir was established as a nature reserve in 1969. The reservoir is used for a variety of water sports including sailing and canoeing; angling is also popular. To minimise any potential conflict between wildlife and recreation, we manage the reservoir by zoning where and when particular activities can and cannot take place. Angling and all boats are excluded from the nature reserve at all times. The sailing season is from March until the end of October. Boats are kept off the water during the winter months, to avoid disturbance to the numerous wintering wildfowl.



Habitats

Scaling Dam, unlike the majority of our reservoirs, has a relatively well-developed aquatic flora. Water vegetation is abundant here because the water level fluctuates little and at times, curled pondweed and canadian pondweed have been so prolific as to impede sailing. The margins of the reservoir are very stony, and experience frequent wave action that inhibits plant growth. However, rushes, damp tolerant grasses and a few marshland herbs are present; probably the most notable species is the marsh speedwell, known only to occur in three or four sites in Cleveland.

Heathland, co-dominated by ling (a type of heather) and bracken occurs in the south-eastern and southern parts of the site. The heather is not burnt or grazed allowing it to develop to maturity unlike small areas of the surrounding moorland that are regularly burnt as part a management regime for grouse shooting. This cyclical process of burning produces different ages of heather and creates the patchwork appearance that typifies this part of the North York Moors.

Species-poor neutral grassland, dominated by coarse grasses and managed through sheep grazing, is a feature of the north-facing dam embankment. Where damper patches occur hard rush, sedges and occasional marsh herbs may be found such as cuckoo flower and ragged robin. These may be seen flowering during the summer months.

The woodland at the eastern end of Scaling Dam is dominated by willow, which also line some of the drainage ditches. Gorse scrub also occurs here. The main area of woodland occurs within the nature reserve and includes a mixture of hawthorn, birch, rowan and conifer species.

Several minor streams join Scaling dam at its south-eastern corner and most have linear bog-communities or adjacent marshy zones. The flora of these wetlands is generally more profuse than elsewhere on the site and is typically rush dominated with common cotton grass, common spike-rush and bog moss. Bottle sedge, recorded from only a few sites in Cleveland can also be found here. A profusion of flowering plants occurs in the summer, including sneezewort, greater bird's-foot trefoil, water mint, yellow rattle, marsh cinquefoil and lesser spearwort. Less widely distributed species include common spotted orchid, marsh valerian, marsh speedwell and ragged robin.

The four fields at the western end of the reservoir lie within the nature reserve. These have been carefully managed for the last twenty years and have a species rich neutral collection of grasses and flowers. The dominant grass species are sheep's fescue and sweet vernal grass. Glaucous sedge is locally common. Pignut, meadow vetchling, bird's-foot trefoil, yellow rattle, common sorrel, lesser stitchwort and bird's-eye speedwell are amongst the most obvious herbs and the fields are also home to the rare adder's tongue fern. The fields are managed by winter grazing with sheep rather than annual cutting, to encourage the spread of the adders-tongue fern.

The wetlands that occur in the nature reserve where Boghouse Beck enters the reservoir from the moorland, are very important in a regional context. Here, the wetland is characterised by several notable species such as bottle sedge, common butterwort, ragged robin, water mint and red rattle. The field next to Boghouse Beck also contains a sizeable population of common spotted orchid. Later in the season the delicate grass of parnasus appears as well as other species including marsh valerian and marsh violet.

Birds

The bird hide close to the sailing club is a good vantage point for bird watching, all year round. From September-October the reservoir teems with over-wintering coot, teal, pochard, mallard and tufted duck. Their numbers have remained fairly constant since recording began in the late 1960s.

There have been recent increases in the populations of both coot and greylag geese at Scaling Dam, whilst wigeon and teal numbers have fluctuated markedly.

In the spring and autumn, passage migrants and scarce wildfowl such as shoveler, red-breasted merganser, gadwall, goosander, pintail, garganey, scaup and smew frequent Scaling Dam. Passage waders like greenshank, spotted redshank, ruff, green sandpiper and common sandpiper may also be seen. Ospreys are a regular sight during their spring migration.

Breeding birds

In the summer 3 or 4 pairs of great-crested grebe regularly breed at Scaling Dam. Other breeding wildfowl include mallard, teal, tufted duck, greylag goose, coot and moorhen. Breeding waders include redshank, lapwing, and curlew. Cuckoo may also be heard singing during the summer.

Short-eared owls are regularly seen hunting over the meadows in the summer, looking for small mammals, whilst hen harriers patrol the surrounding moorland in winter. Kestrels are resident at this site.



Other wildlife

Brown hare, roe deer, hedgehog, stoat, weasel and common shrew as well as adder and common lizard have been recorded. Newts, common frog and common toad all spawn in the margins of the reservoir

The species rich grassland in the nature reserve attracts an abundance of common british butterflies such as small skipper, large skipper, small white, green-veined white, small copper, common blue, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, peacock, meadow brown, ringlet and small heath. The green hairstreak, which feeds on bilberry, and the rare dark green fritillary, which feeds on violets, have also been recorded at Scaling Dam.



Scaling Dam is also probably the best-surveyed Northumbrian Water reservoir site for moths. A dedicated group of enthusiasts has been live trapping and recording for a number of years. Several methods of trapping are utilised across the whole site and whilst the species list to date is large for an upland reservoir, with over 150 species, it is undoubtedly incomplete.

Further information

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