



Welcome to Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve

Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve is owned by Embleton Parish Council and managed by volunteers from the local community. Our goals are to protect important habitats and wildlife, improve public access, protect historic interest and encourage environmental education.

Whether walking the dog, bird watching or exploring the site's history, the quarry offers a peaceful place for exercise, relaxation and connecting with nature. We hope you enjoy your visit.

Nature Conservation

Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve is home to a huge variety of plants and animals, some of which are quite rare and linked to particular habitats. The quarry is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. This designation is based on the very rare Whin Grassland habitat and the large range of wildflowers and wildlife found here.

The quarry's different habitats include flower rich grasslands, scrub habitat, marshland, a large pond and even some woodland around the fringes. We are managing the site to protect and enhance these habitats, providing a safe home for wildlife.

Access For All

There are a number of trails for exploring the Nature Reserve. The site is an old quarry and therefore the ground can be quite uneven in places. We are working to make the trails more accessible where possible. For information about wheelchair access please see our accessibility section (below).

Environmental Education

We are committed to protecting and promoting our environment. Working with the local school in Embleton we have created an outdoor classroom and a pond dipping area for environmental education lessons. Our children are the future and we are proud to offer a sustainable base for environmental learning.





Wildlife

Birds

Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve hosts a range of bird species throughout the seasons.

In winter the quarry has wintering wildfowl. Gadwall, Shoveler, Teal, Tufted Duck and Goldeneye are all regular visitors. The pond also hosts a small wintering population of Common Snipe that use the pond margins for cover and feeding.

In spring and autumn the quarry offers a welcome stopover for migrating birds. In spring look out for the occasional Ring Ouzel, Redstart or Whinchat stopping off en-route to their breeding grounds further north. In autumn large numbers of southbound Redwings and Fieldfares arrive from the continent, they stop at the quarry to munch on the abundance of hawthorn berries. Autumn also offers a chance at seeing other migrating birds such as Woodcock and Short-eared Owl that occasionally use the site.

In the summer the quarry comes alive with breeding activity, it hosts most of the common UK warbler species including Grasshopper Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat. The pond margins are home for Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers. Breeding water birds include Little Grebe, Coot, Mallard, Gadwall and occasionally Mute Swan. The ruins of Quarry House hold a locally important colony of Tree Sparrows that nest in the old walls.



Tree Sparrow feeding young

Mammals

Many small mammals live in the quarry. Wood Mouse, Common Shrew and Short-tailed Field Vole are among those that have been recorded and larger mammals include Brown Hares.

A few species of bats have been recorded at the quarry, these include Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared and Noctule. Daubenton's Bat has also been recorded near the pond, this species generally has strong association with water bodies.



Brown Hare



Sedge Warbler is a common summer visitor to the quarry



Wildlife

Amphibians

Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve hosts a number of amphibians including Common Frog, Common Toad and Smooth Newt. These amphibians use the whole site, spending the spring and summer in wetland areas and then often dispersing across the site to seek out hibernation areas for the winter.

For hibernation they prefer areas that are underground, moist and sheltered from frost, often holes in the bases of hedges, old stone piles, pond banks or walls.



Common Toad

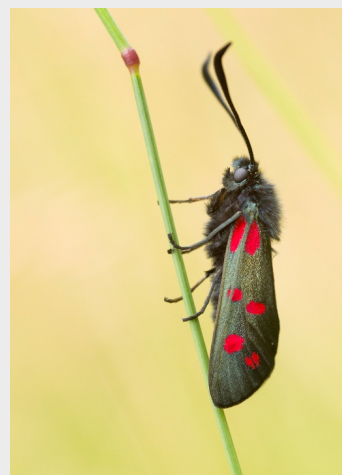
Insects

The quarry is home to a huge number of insect species which reflects the broad range of habitats and wildflowers found on the Nature Reserve, many insects have a strong link to certain habitat types or plant species.

Perhaps the most obvious insects you may encounter will be butterflies and bees. Regular butterflies to look out for around the quarry include the Red Admiral (as seen on our logo !), Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Painted Lady, Wall Brown, Common Blue and Speckled Wood.

The quarry is also home to moths, many of which are associated with grassland habitats. 131 species of moths have been recorded in surveys at the quarry. The species perhaps seen most often are the Six-spot Burnet Moth and Silver Y (both are day flying moths that can be seen around the wildflowers in the quarry).

The Pond area is home to range of dragonflies and damselflies, the most commonly seen here are the Common Blue Damselfly, Common Darter and Southern Hawker. Migrant Hawker can sometimes appear in the Autumn.



Six-spot Burnet Moth



Painted Lady



Peacock



Speckled Wood



Wildflowers

Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve boasts a large range of wildflowers which are a crucial element of the quarry's ecosystem. Many insects rely on the wildflowers. These insects are important pollinators and also a food source for birds and bats and so on.

Much of the surrounding landscape has been nutrient enriched by decades of agricultural fertiliser use. As a result, many flowers that were once common in the wider countryside have become much rarer or vanished altogether. The Nature Reserve provides a rare island of habitat where many of these flowers still exist. The soil here remains unfertilised and lower nutrient levels provide good conditions for wildflowers to flourish.

In the summer some regular flowers to look out for include Common Knapweed, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Selfheal, Lady's Bedstraw and Meadow Buttercup. The much rarer Purple Ramping Fumitory can also be found at the quarry, which is thought to be one of the few remaining sites in Northumberland for this species.

Some of the most spectacular flowers to be found at the quarry are the four species of orchid present, Northern Marsh Orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, Common Spotted Orchid and the locally rare Bee Orchid.

We are using grazing animals on the Nature Reserve to help restore flower rich grassland areas. These herbivores play an important role for wildflowers, they help to open up areas dominated by dense grasses and invasive scrub, they also help to disperse flower seeds.



Bee Orchid



Pyramidal Orchid



Purple Ramping Fumitory



History

Embleton Quarry has a long and interesting history. The site was opened as a Whinstone Quarry in 1864 and operated for nearly a century, finally closing in 1961. The quarry was a prolific producer of whinstone setts and blocks for use in pavements and buildings, producing between 20,000 and 30,000 tons per year. At the peak of production the quarry employed around 80 men, women and children.

Between 1970 and 1984 the quarry was used as a landfill site. Operated by Alnwick District Council the site was a dump for household waste. In 1984 when the landfill site finally closed, it was capped with soil and left to nature. The soil used was relatively low in nutrients, providing perfect conditions for wildflowers to flourish. As the quarry is protected from neighbouring agricultural land and associated inputs, it has developed into an important site for wildflower conservation.



Embleton Quarry 1910



Methane Vent

Today the quarry still shows signs of its industrial past, there are tall cliff faces to the south and north-west of the site that were created and left by the quarrying activity. An old ruined cottage sits on the north-western boundary of the site, this is the old Quarry Master's House. This house was lived in until the late 1970s, but now sits in disrepair. The people have moved out but wildlife has moved in and the house is now home to a large colony of Tree Sparrows and Pipistrelle Bats.

Look around and you will notice that there are a number of metal tubes with spinning fans on top. These are methane vents that were placed in the ground when the landfill site closed. The vents were designed to allow any methane build up to escape and prevent explosions during the first few years after the site was capped.



Embleton Quarry 1910



Embleton Quarry 2020



Dark Skies

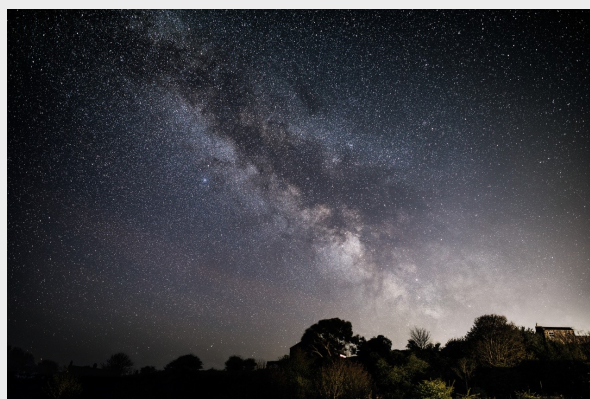
Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve is designated as a Northumberland Coast AONB Dark Sky Site. The quarry's rural location, away from larger towns, means that the influence of light pollution is reduced, as a result the sky is darker with more stars visible. This naturally dark sky provides perfect conditions for Stargazing.

The quality of night sky viewing from the quarry can be excellent. On moonless nights the Milky Way is visible to the naked eye. You may also see large features like the Orion Nebula (this appears as a fuzzy star with the naked eye). With binoculars or a telescope more can be seen so that structures of some galaxies and nebulae become visible.

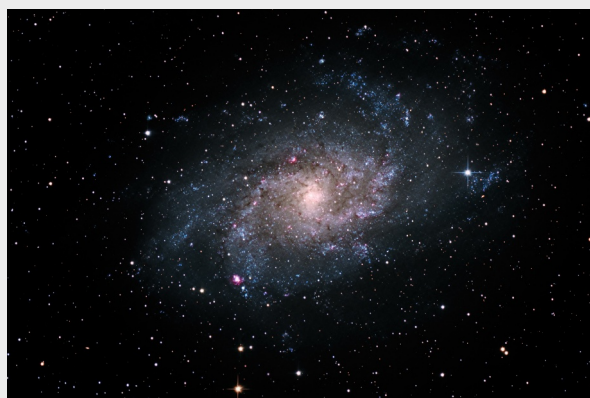
Given the correct set of conditions the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) can sometimes be seen from the quarry. To see this requires a strong solar storm combined with a dark, moonless and cloud free sky.

If visiting the quarry at night to look at the stars please take care and use torches for access. When you arrive at the Dark Sky Observation Area turn your torches off and then give your eyes 10 minutes to adjust. As your eyes slowly adjust to the darkness you will see more and more pinpoints of light in the night sky !

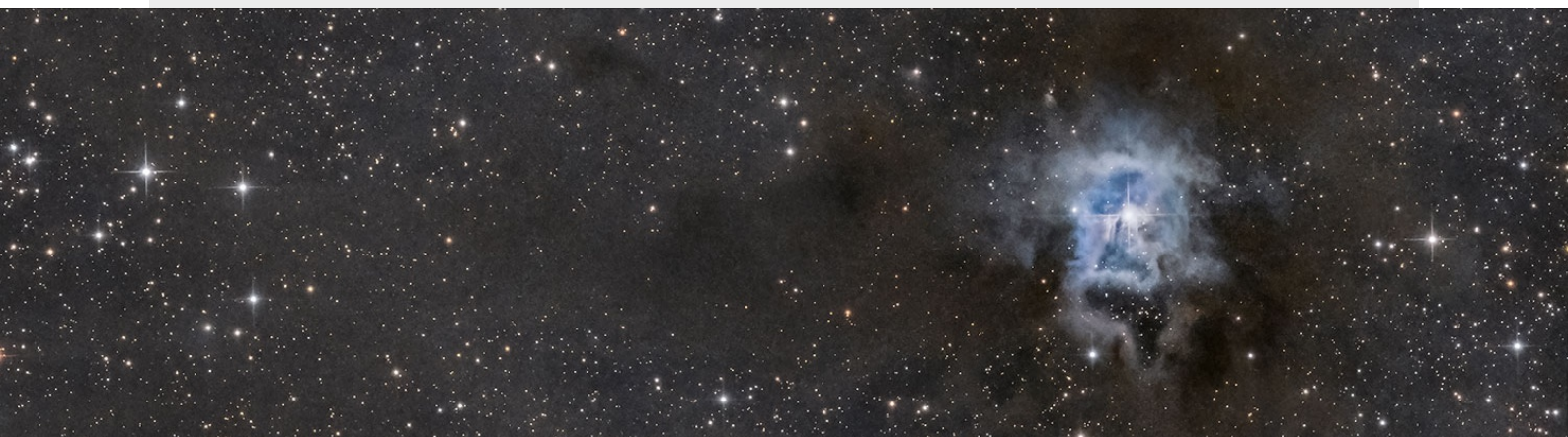
Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve has sky quality rating of Bortle 4. The Sky Quality Meter (SQM-L) reading for the Nature Reserve is 21.4, this indicates a good quality dark sky.



The Milky Way at Embleton Quarry



Triangulum Galaxy (M33). Photographed with a telescope from Embleton Quarry



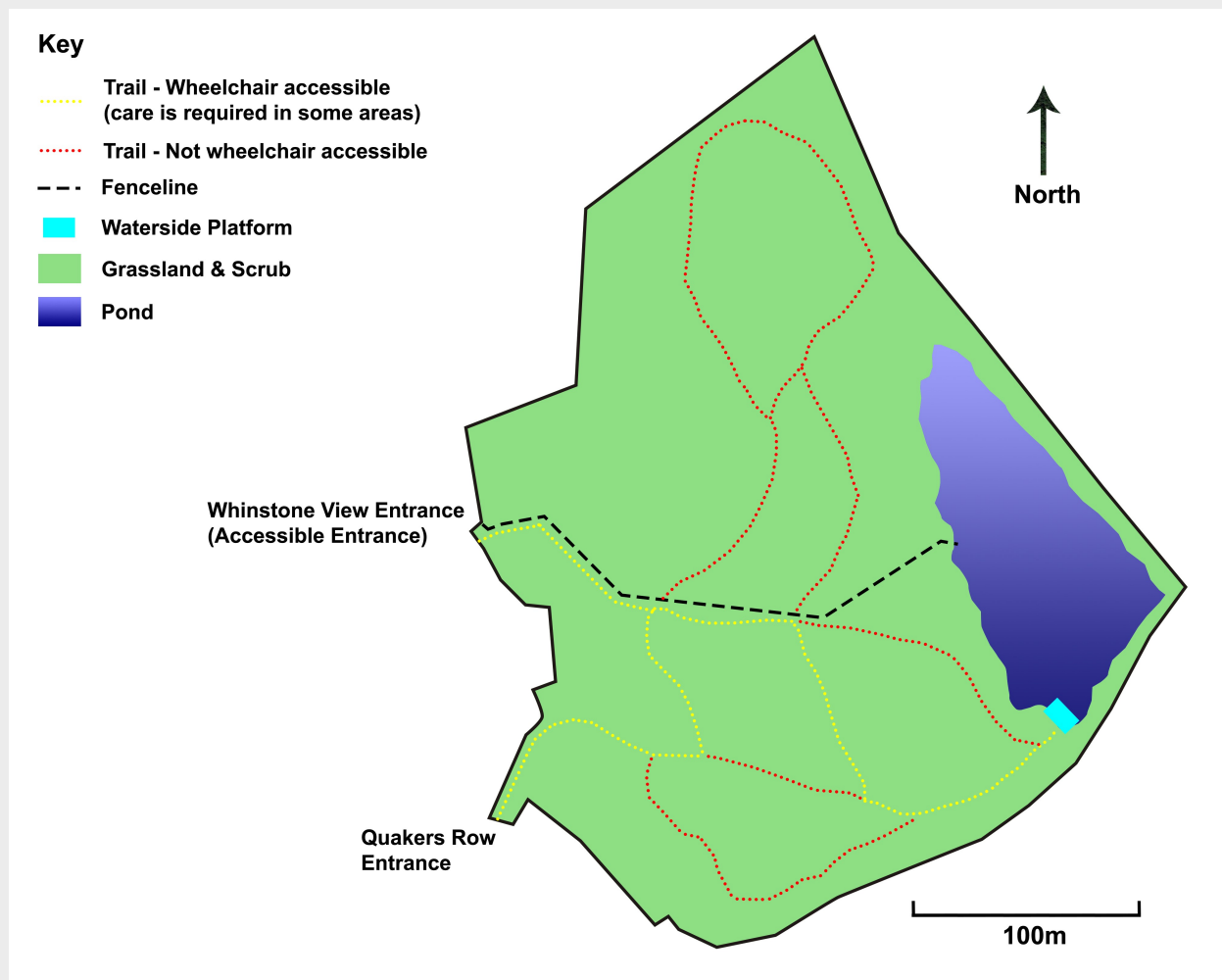
Iris Nebula (NGC 7023). Photographed with a telescope from Embleton Quarry



Accessibility

Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve is an old quarry, due to the nature of the site the ground is difficult and uneven in places. We are working to make the nature trails more accessible, undertaking a programme of levelling and widening trails where possible.

Currently the Nature Reserve is wheelchair accessible (with care) along the yellow route (shown below). The Whinstone View entrance offers the easiest access into the Nature Reserve (it has a shorter slope). Both of our entrance routes slope down into the quarry, the gradient isn't large but returning up the slopes may be a little difficult for those self propelling. With support or a powered chair these slopes shouldn't present any issues.



The yellow route is wheelchair accessible, it offers a combination of hard stone based paths and grass trails. After spells of prolonged wet weather, some of the grass sections can become a little muddy, so care should be taken. Please expect some dips and uneven ground in places.

We hope that wheelchair access to the Nature Reserve will only improve as we continue to work on these trails, identifying any problem areas, filling and levelling bumps and hollows.



Enjoy Your Visit !

We hope you enjoy your visit to Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve. Please respect the quarry and its wildlife and observe these rules.

- **No fires or BBQs.**
- **No camping.**
- **Do not disturb wildlife and livestock.**
- **No climbing of the cliff faces.**
- **Dogs to be kept under control.**
- **Dog owners are responsible for picking up their dog waste and disposing of it off site, bins are provided at both entrances.**
- **Dogs to be placed on a lead when entering areas with livestock or ground nesting birds.**
- **If visiting the quarry at night for stargazing, do not stray from the access trail or Dark Sky Site Observation Area.**

THANK YOU.



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