

Tree photos © Shaun Nixon,
Woodland Trust Picture Library

As trees lose their leaves, notice the new season's buds. Ash buds are jet-black, horse-chestnut brown and glossy, while sycamore is green. Next to its brown buds, birch forms rigid catkins which droop in spring.

Autumn at St Nicks is a time to enjoy summer's last fling. Many of our summer-flowering plants carry on flowering till the first frosts and beyond. On warm days, butterflies and bees enjoy the last of the pollen and nectar. Birds become easier to spot as they feast on seeds and berries. When the harvest is plentiful, you can enjoy foraging and still leave lots for the wildlife. And if the thought of winter depresses you, this is a great time to start looking for signs of spring.

Go explore!

Autumn - Winter

at St Nicks Nature Reserve & Environment Centre




St Nicks
The Green Heart of York

www.stnicks.org.uk/events

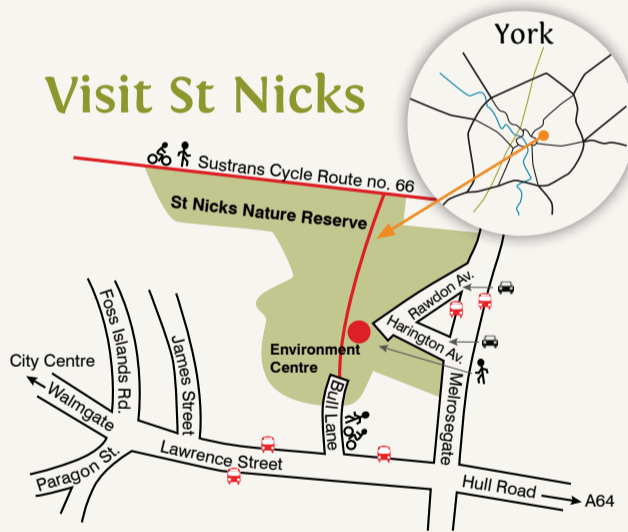
What is your St Nicks' story?
Do you remember St Nicks as brickyards or the tip? Got any interesting memories? Come and tell us at one of our events or just pop in to the Environment Centre and talk to staff.

- While walking around, think of the recent 'rubbish' history of St Nicks, and marvel at what nature can do with a bit of time and help. If you would like to volunteer, please get in touch.
- 12th-18th century St Nicholas Hospital and church set in meadows, fields and bits of woodland
- 19th-20th century clay extraction and brickyards leaving huge pits
- Pits filled with York's rubbish until 1974
- 1994 landfill capped with clay, followed by intensive replanting
- 2000 Environment Centre opens
- 2004 Local Nature Reserve status
- Green Flag Awards since 2010

Brief history of St Nicks

Keep a watch on St Nicks
Join our Wildwatch Group or read:
www.stnicks.org.uk/blog

Visit St Nicks



St Nicks is just one mile east of York's city centre, easily accessible by public transport and bicycle. There is a small car park, accessible toilet and drinks available at the Environment Centre.

The Nature Reserve and car park are open all year round so you can enjoy St Nicks any time you like. For detailed directions please call us or see our website.

St Nicks Environment Centre is open
Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm & during events

Contact us

01904 411821 | info@stnicks.org.uk

St Nicks Environment Centre,
Rawdon Avenue, York YO10 3ST

www.stnicks.org.uk



Supported by City of York Council



Find St Nicks on Twitter,
Facebook and Flickr

Charity registered as 'Friends of St Nicholas Fields' no. 1153739

Leaflet published in 2014, printed on 100% recycled paper.

Visitors' code

Dog walkers are welcome but please keep your dog under control and clean up after your friend. Camping, fires or the use of motor vehicles and motorbikes are not permitted.

When foraging for wild food, only collect what you can safely identify. Please think of the wildlife—leave more food behind than you take. Please take your litter home.

We hope you enjoy your visit and come back soon!

When children get tired of exploring, why not take them to the play area? All are welcome to use the facilities at the Environment Centre.

Join St Nicks

Help grow the green heart of York. Your support will help St Nicks to:

- Continue improving St Nicks Nature Reserve for both wildlife and people.
- Develop the Environment Centre as a hub of green inspiration in York.
- Run projects and services, which help make a greener, better city.

Just pick up a membership form from the Environment Centre or join at www.stnicks.org.uk/join to enjoy the full membership benefits.

- Free admission to seasonal walks
- Discount on training events
- 20% off room hire
- Half-yearly newsletter & monthly emails
- Families also get an exploration pack for children

In autumn we celebrate nature's harvest with a fun day for all the family - look out for Autumn Fayre or Apple Day in our events diary.



Look out for...



Try counting robins. From early autumn, both males and females set up territories and sing loudly to stake their claim.



Birds

Try a bird walk round Osbaldwick Beck. Almost anything that lives on the reserve in winter could turn up here. Look for feeding flocks of tits and finches – sometimes single species, sometimes a mix with the occasional rarity like goldcrest or tree creeper.

You should see all the resident birds listed in our Spring-Summer leaflet, together with coal tits, distinguished by their badger-striped head, and siskins – tiny finches that are just as acrobatic as blue tits. Another winter visitor is redwing – similar to song thrush but with a distinct “eyebrow” and red underwings, and often found in flocks. You might also spot a grey wagtail, identifiable by its jerky, tail-flicking walk. Other good places to watch birds are the Bund path for siskins, and the Tang Hall Beck culvert area for more siskins and redwings, bullfinches and the chance of a kingfisher. ●



Some fruit trees, mostly apple, have grown from the old rubbish tip. Safe to eat, we use them to celebrate autumn by making chutneys & juice.



Trees

Walk along the western edge of the reserve and over the Bund to practise your winter tree identification. Overleaf you can find pictures of some common tree buds, and a good tree guide will help you to notice other features. Identify alder by round green seed heads hanging alongside last year's dark dried-out ones, and hazel by fat green catkins that start to lengthen in January.

While the last leaves are still clinging, look underneath oak leaves for little red spangle galls, home of the larvae of a tiny gall wasp waiting to emerge next spring. You might also find crinkly knopper galls formed on the acorns, turning from bright green in late summer to brown in winter. ●

White deadnettle



Peacock butterfly



Yarrow



Bumblebee on Scabious



Blooms & butterflies

Following the main path to the Dragon Stones or the Butterfly Walk on a sunny day, you might find butterflies, and late bees and hoverflies right up to the end of October. Look for them on the little yellow buttons of tansy, flattish white heads of yarrow, and mauve field scabious—and many other species that hang on as long as possible, regardless of what the books tell you. You might also come across butterflies, such as peacock, basking on the paths.

In winter, another good theme for any of the routes is to count how many different plants you can still see in flower. Don't forget that catkins are flowers, and unless there's thick snow on the ground, don't stop till you've found at least one sprig of white deadnettle with its harmless nettle-shaped leaves and white flowers on a square stem. ●

Siskin feeding on alder



Grass



Dandelion



Sycamore



Seeds = future life

In autumn, check out all the different ways that plants use to spread their seeds. You or your dog might have little goosegrass cleavers or large hooked burdock seeds to brush off when you get home. Juicy fruits like elder and bramble attract people, birds and small mammals that drop or excrete some of the seeds. Hazel nuts, acorns and beech mast attract squirrels that bury them for winter supplies and always forget a few.

Trees like lime, ash and sycamore equip their seeds with wings to spin away from the parent tree. Plants like thistles, dandelions and tall pink rosebay willow-herb have seeds on little parachutes that the wind carries all over. The purple and yellow vetches that you see in summer, along with gorse and broom, have pods that burst open to catapult the little seeds away. ●

Find seeds which have: hooks that cling to you, wings or parachutes, bursting pods or tasty parts.



Want to know more about St Nicks wildlife? Annual Report is available online or from the Environment Centre. You could join one of our seasonal walks, or why not book your own tailor-made tour?

