

News

Communications Unit

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Join the search for North Yorkshire's veteran trees

A county-wide hunt is under way across North Yorkshire ... for veteran trees.

Members of the public are being urged to join North Yorkshire County Council's ecology team to identify and record the county's venerable trees.

Trees can live hundreds, even thousands, of years, depending on the species. It is said an oak grows for 300 years, rests for 300 years, then spends 300 years gracefully expiring.

The term "veteran" refers to this second phase in a tree's life, when it has reached full maturity. It becomes "ancient" in its third phase as it starts to die back. Many experts argue this dying stage is when a tree is most important, because as it hollows out and loses branches, it creates an ecosystem that harbours an amazing array of life – fungi, lichens, insects, bats and birds. Some of these creatures live only on ancient trees.

NYCC biodiversity officer Matt Millington, said: "The UK is internationally important for its veteran and ancient trees, and North Yorkshire is fortunate in having numerous deer parks, public and private estates that contain fantastic examples, such as Studley Royal, near Ripon, and Duncombe Park, near Helmsley".

"However, there will be many trees scattered about the county that have gone unrecorded, in old hedge lines, woods, farmers' fields, even village greens. The ecology team, along with North Yorkshire Biodiversity Action Group, are keen to identify these, both to celebrate them and make sure they are correctly managed."

Some identification schemes already exist. For example, in Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty volunteers have identified 300 trees of note in the last five years.

The team is keen to cover the rest of the county, and people interested in getting involved and learning how to identify and measure a tree's girth, are being urged to contact the ecology team.

"All you need is a tape measure or willing friends – for example, an oak will be of interest if it takes three people to give it a hug!" added Matt Millington.

To find out about training, getting involved or reporting trees, call 08458 727374 and ask for the biodiversity officer, or email countryside@northyorks.gov.uk.

Ends

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