

## **Campaign for National Parks**

In Northumberland we are well aware of the existence of National Parks, with our own excellent one so accessible. Not so many of us know that there is an on-going campaign to protect and enhance them. Sandra Gann, herself a campaigner, spoke to Berwick Wildlife Group on this subject at their November meeting.

The idea of National Parks came from a Scot, John Muir. He was born in Dunbar, but emigrated to America with his family. He was instrumental in setting up Yellowstone as the world's first National Park in 1872. The United Kingdom was slower off the mark. In the 1930s the YHA and the National Trust had been formed and it was thought important for city workers to enjoy the countryside and fresh air, away from industrial fumes. The landowners were perhaps less enthusiastic about this idea. A mass trespass of Kinder Scout was arranged on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1932. The Second World War delayed developments, so it was not until 1951 that the Peak District became our first National Park, followed by designation of the Lake District, with Snowdonia, the North York Moors, Pembrokeshire and the Yorkshire Dales following close behind. In 1955 the Northumberland National Park was designated, to include Hadrian's Wall. Later the Brecon Beacons and, in the 1960s, the Norfolk Broads National Parks came into being. In 2009 the New Forest became a National Park and in 2009 the South Downs. The latter is the most visited National Park and the Northumberland Park the least, no doubt reflecting the relative populations of the surrounding areas.

The Scots were later still to designate Parks, perhaps because the laws of trespass differ north of the Border. In 2002, the area of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs was declared a National Park, and in 2005 the Cairngorms followed suit.

National Parks attract funding from Central Government, although the present cuts are having their effect here too. Each is managed by its own Park Authority, composed of local councillors, landowners and so on. The Campaign for National Parks monitors developments such as quarrying and house building in the Parks and encourages sustainable living and working, hosting courses in traditional crafts such as dry-stone walling, so that the needs of residents and visitors alike are protected.

This was a very informative and interesting talk.