

Newsletter

December
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www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk/pondscape

Welcome to the third issue of the Pondscape newsletter. We have had a frantic summer season of pond surveys with site visits to 130 ponds, including invertebrate and plant surveys on 16 ponds. We have now over 950 ponds on our Tees Valley Pondscape database.



Volunteer, Francis Rowney identifies the invertebrates from survey work

Ecological Surveys

This summer Rachel Jackson (Pondscape Officer) and volunteers have carried out 16 invertebrate and plant analysis surveys on ponds (www.pondconservation.org.uk/aboutus/ourwork/surveys/psym.htm). The Pondscape project aimed to carry out 5 of these surveys this summer and completing 16 is due to the hard work of volunteers. The results of these surveys will be discussed in the next newsletter. The survey results are used to assess the condition of the pond by comparing factors such as size, pH, altitude and soil type to compare to a national database and the results are an indication of the condition of the pond. This is an important factor in categorising priority ponds (www.pondconservation.org.uk/pond_hap/prioritypondcriteria.htm).





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Mapping Ponds

All the survey data has been joined with existing wetland data on our interactive GIS maps. Data requests can now be made from our projects partners. These graphical maps allow us to easily see the link up between wetlands, but also between known Great Crested Newt sites and dragonfly breeding sites for example. This will allow the project to make better strategic decisions where staff and volunteer time is best spent and where to carry out additional surveys in areas with little data.

Getting landowners on board!

The Tees Valley Pondscape leaflet, produced for landowners in April has now been sent to over 100 landowners (some with more than one pond). The response has been fantastic and we have accessed and assessed ponds on private land and provided advice, allowing a greater understanding of the connectivity of wetlands across the valley.



Pond at Coatham Woods

Creating and restoring ponds

Rachel Jackson has been working with landowners and managers on plans to create and restore ponds and this winter we are aiming to create 15 new ponds and restore 10. The newly created ponds will improve the connectivity of ponds across the area and some ponds that have been neglected will be improved for biodiversity.

Our funding bid to Pond Conservation's 'Million Ponds' project was successful and therefore three new ponds will be created for the benefit of BAP species. Our sites for pond this year include Northumbrian Water's Billingham Site, Mill Farm in Guisborough and Thornton Plantation Woodland and Lucite's Cassel Site at Haverton Hill.



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We have been working alongside INCA to create and restore ponds at the Lucite site; 7 new ponds will be created and 3 of the existing ponds will be restored. The site is already excellent for wildlife, particularly dragonflies and damselflies with species-rich grassland and a wetland network. Brownfield sites have excellent potential for wildlife and Amanda Buck (Environmental Manager) has been very supportive of the work the Wildlife Trust will be carrying out this winter.



The work is being carried out here because of the range of undisturbed habitats present at the back of the industrial site; there are already areas of good quality grassland, and terrestrial invertebrate habitat enrichment is planned for next year. Alongside the existing water bodies, trees and scrubs this creates a peaceful area rich for wildlife to enjoy and the project feels this is worth supporting and managing.

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust's Reserve Officer, Dan, and a team of volunteers have begun the process of having the pond at Mill Farm restored. It has been completely overgrown with rushes and horsetails. The sides of the pond were being encroached with gorse. All the gorse has been cleared and they have trimmed back some of the trees overhanging into the pond. Then our work force team led by Neil got a digger to clear the pond and ensure the root balls of the horsetails were removed. Mill Farm has the last remaining historic mill pond in Cleveland and therefore it is important to restore it.



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The first pond to be created this year was at Kellgate Green in Stainton – the area is a small wetland area, managed by villagers. Nearby, Dan and the volunteers are now clearing trees around a pond in Thornton plantation woodland, which historically had Great Crested Newts and we hope to encourage them back! This will allow sunlight to reach the pond. A second stage is needed for this work and the pond will be cleared of decomposing leaf litter. Kellgate Green and Thornton woodland are important for wetland biodiversity in the area and the work that is being carried out will improve the connectivity.



Thornton Woodland pond before the tree felling....



....and after!

Remember to visit our website –

www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk/pondscape

for information about ponds. We have already made huge progress in developing our understand of ponds in the area and by securing funding we are now to take active measures to improve wetlands. Tees Valley Pondscape is here to help partners and supporters understand and manage their ponds so please contact us for data or advice.

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