



Newsletter

July 2010
Issue 4



Welcome to the fourth edition of the Tees Valley Pondscape newsletter. This winter has been a whirlwind of pond digging, followed by an exciting season of amphibian surveying! We now have well over 1000 ponds on the database (old and new)– a target Rachel was keen to reach.



Sir Plants-a-lot garden centre, Stockton



Silverton Road, Guisborough

Pond creation and restoration

Tees Valley Pondscape have created 16 ponds, 14 scrapes and restored 15 ponds over this recent winter. Details and pictures of these sites can be found at:

www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk/pondscape/pondwork2009-10

We have short listed the sites where work will be carried out during the final winter of this project. Work will begin in October 2010, with plans finalised by the end of August.



Coatham Marsh, Redcar



www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk/pondscape



Tees Valley Pondscape

Amphibian surveys

Ten keen volunteers completed amphibian training at Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park – learning to identify all our local amphibians, including great crested newts.

Torchlight surveys were carried out on 43 ponds. An additional 25 ponds were purely bottle trapped, mainly at Lovell Hill Pools SSSI.

Volunteers also returned to Saltburn Golf Club to establish whether it was smooth or palmate newts that were present as well as the great crested newts. It turns out all three co-exist there!



Lovell Hill Pools SSSI, Guisborough



Gravel Hole Quarry, Stockton

Many of the sites targeted this year were Local Wildlife Sites that, based on historic surveys, have been designated as containing good populations of great crested newts. These surveys have re-confirmed their presence at the following sites:

- Eliff's Mill Allotments
- Gravel Hole Quarry
- Lovell Hill Pools (SSSI)
- Saltburn Golf Club
- Slosh mire Gate
- Upsall Hall Rural Centre

This is a useful update and excellent news. The data will be shared with ERIC (Environment Records and Information Centre) and NERAG (North East Amphibian and Reptile Group).



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PSYM survey results from 2009

We are now pleased to report the results from the 16 PSYM (Predictive System of Multimetrics) surveys carried out in 2009. These surveys involved writing a full plant species list, identifying the freshwater invertebrates to family level and recording basic environmental factors such as pH and soil type. The environmental factors allow a predicted score to be established. The closer the pond 'scores' to that prediction, (based on the flora and fauna), the better the quality of the pond.

By scoring 'good' in both the plant and invertebrate categories, the pond falls under the national definition of a 'priority pond': www.pondconservation.org.uk/pond_hap/prioritypondcriteria

Pond Conservation states that nationally 20% of our ponds are priority ponds. This is excellent news as two of the sites fall into this category (Middlesbrough – The Grange, Stainton Vale Farm and a pond at Nunthorpe—Eastfields Farm). Eight of the ponds surveyed (50%) fell into the 'moderate' category, meaning simple improvements could easily improve their pond quality.



The Grange, Stainton Vale



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Crassula

We have recently received several enquiries regarding the invasive pond plant – New Zealand Stonecrop or *Crassula helmsii*. It has now been found at sites in Middlesbrough, Stockton and Redcar. Several national case studies are available to download from our website:

www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk/pondscape/invasive-species/

Please contact Rachel Jackson for copies of a leaflet 'What's in your pot?' (published by Plantlife), with information on invasive plant species.



Pond ecology training day

This course was run at the Guisborough Forest and Walkway Visitor Centre, Pinchinthorpe, in June. The day included discussions on the importance of ponds, their key groups of species and how to manage ponds for their benefit.

An afternoon session of pond dipping allowed participants to improve their identification skills of freshwater invertebrates.

Remember to visit our website –
www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk/pondscape

for information about ponds. Huge progress has already been made to our understanding of ponds in this area. By securing further funding, we can now take active measures to improve our wetlands. Tees Valley Pondscape exists to help partners and supporters understand and manage their ponds. Please contact us for data and / or advice.



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