



Pooling Together - Reviving the Wetland Landscape

Project Newsletter no 2 November 2015 Jane Čabara



Our new project (a partnership between HART and the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust) started in July and is now well underway. We aim to invigorate the wetland of the Bromyard Downs, Brockhampton, Bringsty area. This includes restoring and digging a network of ponds across the landscape. Many wetland sites have been lost due to neglect, changes in farming and ponds silting up and losing water. The main aim of the project is to 'reset the ecological clock' by restoring 21 ponds - creating a network of sites to encourage the movement of wildlife across the area.

Before the restoration work took place the project got involved with the National PondNet project run by Freshwater Habitats Trust. We followed their survey methodology called **PSYM** (pronounced "sim"). This standard method provides an assessment of the ecological quality of a site compared with ponds nationally. It requires basic environmental information including pH and identification of the plant species and/or invertebrate families found at the site. The survey will be repeated and a new PSYM score will be recorded. This methodology will help monitor the improvement of each pond.

Restoration work is ideally done between October-



Bromyard Downs: Park Head - before and after

February as most species have left the pond. The good weather in October gave us an opportunity to bring in the diggers and dumper trucks and this meant the contractors were able to progress nicely with the restoration work. So far we have restored 18 ponds. We will have also begun to develop the educational facilities at The Grove - a dipping platform and

education shelter - and these will be completed in the New Year. The wood for the planking will be provided from trees in the adjacent woodland on the NT's estate. The trees will be felled by NT staff in the next few weeks and the planks and posts made with their mobile saw-mill. The shelter will have an open side facing the pool, and will include rustic seating and tables made from the trees. As part of the facility, a composting toilet is to be built.



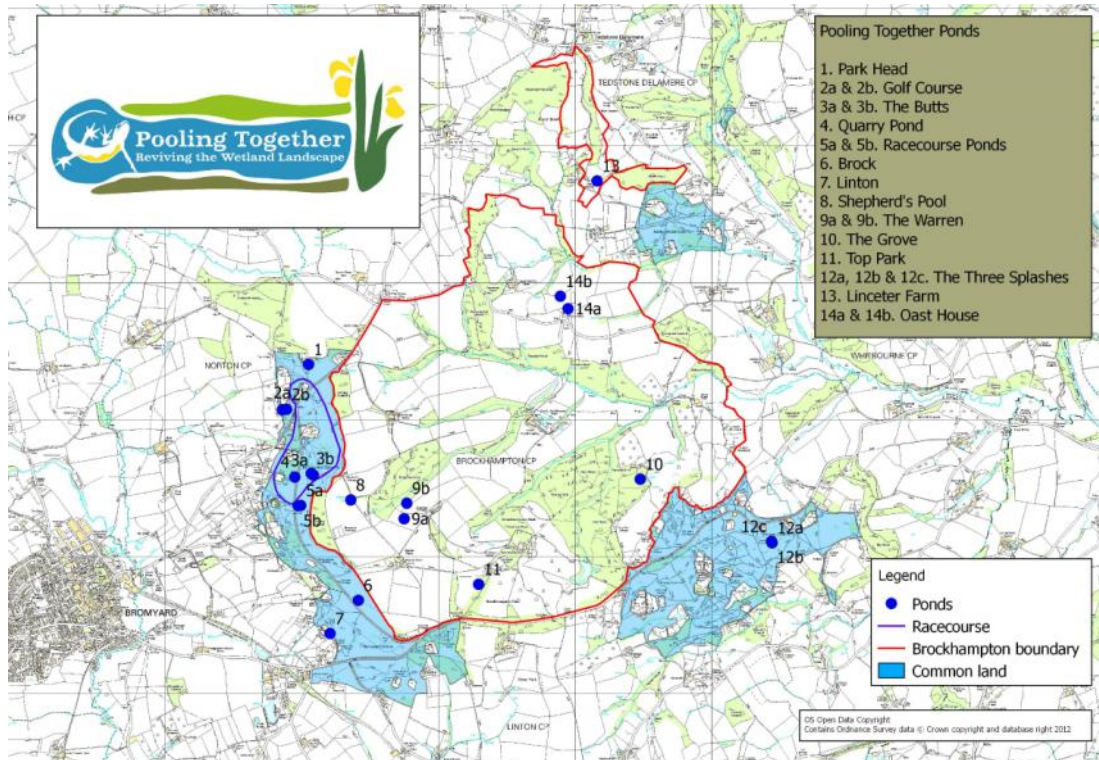
Bromyard Downs: The Butts

One local resident said "it looks like a meteorite has hit the Bromyard Downs". This is quite a normal stage in pond restoration projects. Next spring we will see even more improvements, vegetation will begin to grow as will the number of amphibians and invertebrates. Bird numbers will also increase as invertebrate numbers rise.

Community and volunteer involvement

The project is not only about restoration of these valuable sites but also community engagement. Our first event was when we joined in with the HWT Bromyard Downs Project in September on their Big Picnic day. We met lots of people from around the area and hopefully inspired some of them about ponds and the project.

Once the pond work was underway, we worked with the Bromyard Downs Common Association (BDCA)



volunteer group when we spent a day creating a brush fence round one of The Butts ponds using up the brush left by the clearance work for the pond. A lot of fun but hard work!

I recently spent a full week at Brockhampton Primary School doing a range of pond based activities with each year in the school, thus reaching over 120 children. We have put pond dipping kits in place in the school's resource boxes.

Over the coming months we need to 'fine tune' the work of the diggers, this will involve getting our hands and feet muddy. We need as many people as possible to get involved with the project so please please get in touch if you would like to help.

Next spring we will be running training sessions on how to survey our newly restored ponds. We will also be running courses on tree bog (compost toilet) construction in co-operation with The Cart Shed and practical pond conservation techniques. All training is free.

There are lots of exciting things taking place in the Bromyard, Bringsty and Brockhampton area, be sure to get involved even if it's just for one day. We have a number of work party days planned for the New Year, some of these are on Tuesdays and some Sundays. It would be great to see some HART members pop along and get muddy!

If you would like to get involved with the Ponds Project please contact Jane Čabara at the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust on 01432 356872 or j.cabara@herefordshirewt.co.uk

Pooling Together work party days: December - March 2015/16

Tues 8th December 2015: Ash Track/Linton Pond
 Tues 12th January 2016: Bromyard Downs
 Sun 24th January 2016: National Trust - The Grove
 Tues 2nd February 2016: Bromyard Downs
 Tues 23rd February 2016: Bromyard Downs
 Sun 28th February 2016: National Trust - Top Park
 Tues 15th March 2016: Bromyard Downs
 Sun 27th March 2016: National Trust - The Grove

We will meet at the Bromyard Downs Main Car Park at 9:30am.

Please wear suitable outdoor shoes and clothes. Remember to bring a packed lunch. If possible please let me know if you can attend - we need enough biscuits (and tools) for everyone!

If you would like to get involved or for more information please contact Jane Čabara:

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Find us on Facebook: Pooling Together Project or Herefordshire Amphibian and Reptile Team (HART)

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