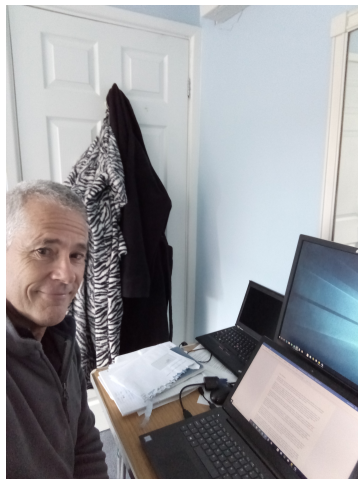


Conserving Herefordshire's Ice Age Ponds August 2020 update

Dear Volunteer,

We know that it has been a very different start to our Ice Age Ponds project, than the one we had hoped and planned for. We have very much missed being able to see and work with everyone but we wanted to let you know what we have been up to and what we hope to do soon.

Beth, Dave, our ecologists Giles and Will and the steering group have continued to work at home. Our hours are slightly reduced and a bit variable, but we are still working and making the most of being at home (occasionally with feet in the paddling pool to cool down, possibly in pyjamas or with breaks for bird spotting and cake). We have just about mastered using Zoom for our meetings and while it isn't the same as in person, not having to commute does save quite a bit of time.



A huge thank to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, who have provided support and advice to help us keep our project going at this difficult time.

Project website and social media

We have put lots of information about our project on our website <https://www.herefordshirewt.org/iceageponds>. We will keep adding to this throughout the project, so please do keep visiting back to find out more about our discoveries and activities.

We are also using social media, on twitter @buildingstones or @iceageponds or @HerefordshireWT. Instagram @earth_heritage_trust and @herefordshirewildlifetrust so please do follow us to find out what we are up to, especially now that we are visiting more sites.

Ice Age Herefordshire Exhibition

Our exhibition at Hereford Museum was postponed in March. We are pleased to say that they are now going to re-open in August until 31st October. For full details please visit https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200172/history_lives_here/891/ice_age_exhibition. We are working on making much of the exhibition available online for those not able to visit the museum in person, including fun family activities to try at home.

As part of the setting up process Dave and Beth went to Dudley Canal and River Trust museum to help the museum staff collect the exhibition centrepiece. This mammoth jigsaw need to be taken down, loaded onto the van and then driven back to Hereford, before being reassembled. Although hard work, we are delighted to say that all went according to plan and she is now proudly in her temporary home. Once the exhibition is open you can visit and take your own #mammothselfie to share with the world.



Map Surveys

To try and make the most of our cancelled survey plans, we have created an alternative activity that has provided wonderful results. Several volunteers have spent spring looking at the 1st edition OS maps to spot ponds within the project area. They have done magnificently and have recorded over 700 ponds. By comparing these with the modern satellites photos and maps, we are able to get an idea of how many of these ponds have survived and where to survey next.

While maps and aerial photos will help spot ponds, many will get missed off our list, so the next stage is for people to conduct a simple walking survey of these ponds. The task will be to take a walk within a set area, to see how many of the ponds on our maps are still there. You will then record this on a very simple questionnaire, survey or app. The maps are still being prepared but should be ready soon, so if you fancy taking a gentle summer stroll around some of the beautiful Herefordshire countryside then please do get in touch (e.andrews@worc.ac.uk) and we can contact you when they are ready to go.

Pond Surveys

Although we were not able to go out and complete our planned spring pond surveys, following detailed planning and risk assessments we are now ready to go out again and complete some pond surveys. There will be some changes to the format compared to last year, both to keep everyone safe and because people recommended ways to make the forms easier to use. The biggest change is that we are currently limiting numbers attending these outdoor sessions to no more than 4 volunteers, depending on space available at each site, so that we can maintain social distancing throughout our session. We have also reduced the amount of equipment people need, and brought in a more thorough cleaning of equipment and changes to our preparation methods in-line with our risk assessments.

Our first two refresher sessions will be

Thursday 20th August – Croft Castle 2 volunteers

Thursday 27th August – Titley Pool, 4 volunteers

These first sessions are for our volunteers who completed the pond survey training last year. There will be more sessions announced in the next couple of weeks, as we sort out parking and access for them.

For those not able to come along we will be making our training available online through our project website, so that you can do a refresher session at home – on comfy chairs, possibly with a coffee and cake. This will include details of the changes we have made to the forms following your feedback, and also details of how our new training sessions will run. We will let you know when these are available to try, at present we are still getting to grips with the technology needed to do this.

Ice Age App

As part of this project we are producing an app to help visitors understand the Ice Age landscape of Herefordshire and to help guide people around 2 sites. We are looking for people to help test and develop these apps. We need to know if they work and if they are fun to do, so if you like apps, guided walks, and are interested in learning more about Ice Age Ponds, please get in touch (e.andrews@worc.ac.uk) and you can join our development team.

Practical pond management

We have also started meeting contractors and landowners to prepare for practical pond conservation in early autumn. We will keep you up to date with the work and any opportunities to get involved as they come up.

Thank you for all your patience while we find our way forward with our project. We are really excited to be back out in the field looking forward to working with you again soon.

Dave, Beth and the whole project team.