



Conserving Herefordshire's Ice Age Ponds June 2021 update

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to our summer newsletter! And what a few months it has been for the project. It has been wonderful to see so many of you out and about again and I hope you have all enjoyed the different events over the last few months.

Hello Rose Ellis and Kath Beasley

A warm welcome to Rose and Kath who joined us as Project Trainees back in March! Before joining us, Rose graduated in Physical Geography and then went on to work in corporate sustainability and as a conservation writer, a few of her articles can be found by clicking [here](#). Kath is a placement student studying Ecology and Conservation Biology at the University of Sheffield. In her spare time she writes posts on sustainable living and conservation for her own [blog](#). Both have a real passion for conservation and have thrown themselves into organising, surveying and along with Sarah have been doing wonders for the project.



Training and events

BBC Filming

In June a BBC film crew came to film the Ice Age ponds team at a 'secret location' in Herefordshire. The team were out all evening, looking for newts under logs (thankfully we had success!), pond dipping, augering for peat (more success!) and doing a nighttime safari (slightly less success but we did see a young tawny owl). So keep your eyes out for us appearing on BBC breakfast in the next few weeks. What great publicity for the project!



Pond survey training

After carrying out multiple pond survey training sessions across the past few months, we have trained an amazing 28 volunteers who are now raring to go. As well as equipping our volunteers with the skills and confidence to carry out pond surveys by themselves, these training days have been a great opportunity for volunteers to visit some beautiful sites and quiz our expert team and enjoy some exciting pond dipping finds.

Torchlight newt surveys

Some of our volunteers had the opportunity to join us on two evening torchlight newt surveys at Moccas Park to record the presence of Great Crested Newts, which were a great success despite being so late in their survey season! Across the two nights we recorded 6 Great Crested Newts as well as finding both palmate and smooth newts. We didn't stop at the amphibians, also spotting Diving Beetles (adult and larval forms), water scorpions and a leech to name a few. When we weren't immersed in what was crawling beneath the water surface we took our eyes to the sky and with the help of some bat detectors, recorded common and soprano pipistrelles, whilst listening to the calls of barn and tawny owls.



Wilplay Sessions

We have been working with the engagement team to run Ice Age Pond themed Wildplay sessions at our reserves and in schools. So far, all the children we have worked with have loved getting outdoors and muddy, enthusiastically learning all about pond life and how to identify different species (we all loved seeing the newts and tadpoles!) as well as the formation of Ice Age Ponds and the fauna that roamed the glacial landscape all those thousands of years ago.

Ice Age Ponds in Schools

In May and June the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust engagement team, supported by our trainees went into a number of schools around the county to run Ice Age ponds days for them. Activities included pond dipping, creating a human glacier and forming an Ice Age timeline. The sessions were a big success!

Pond surveys

60 ponds to survey!

It is our aim to have 60 ponds surveyed and we are pleased to say we are well on our way to reaching and exceeding this target, thanks to all you volunteers. Our project team have been working hard to contact landowners so that you can get out to survey the ponds and thank you for your patience whilst we arrange this! With new volunteers joining all the time and enthusiasm high, so far around 12 ponds have been surveyed.



Water quality testing

The University of Birmingham has kindly offered us the use of their water quality testing equipment over the summer. So in May, July and September our trainees will be collecting water samples from 20 ponds around the survey area and delivering these to Birmingham university. The aim is compare how different nutrient levels change in the ponds across the seasons as well as considering the impacts of the land use around the ponds. We look forward to sharing the full results with you once the surveys are completed.

Fingers crossed July's survey is a bit drier than May's when Sarah, Rose and volunteer Emma braved not only torrential rain but overly friendly cows as well!



Geophysical surveys

During this summer MSc student Olivia from Keele University will be undertaking a geophysics research project with the Ice Age Ponds project.

This will see her (and we hope lots of enthusiastic volunteers) visit different types of Ice Age Pond landscapes and investigate the sediments underneath and around the Ice Age Ponds, using lots of different geophysical techniques. This is a fantastic new piece of research, a wonderful legacy for the project and we look forward to sharing the results of this fieldwork later in the year.

Ice Age Ponds exhibition

The Ice Age Ponds exhibition has been hosted by Queenswood throughout June. The exhibition consists of the information boards previously at Hereford museum and some amazing artwork by Amanda Attfield, who has kindly donated this artwork to the project (this is available to purchase with proceeds going to the project, if you are interested in any of the pieces please do get in touch).

Thank you also to the volunteers who have helped to run the exhibition throughout the month, we couldn't have done it without you.



Social media and blogs

Hopefully you have all been enjoying the fortnightly blogs going out, we have certainly enjoyed writing them. Click [here](#) for a link in case you have missed any. If there are any topics you'd like covering or if you'd like to contribute an article, please get in touch.

We have also been having a big push on social media and it's proving very worthwhile, with engagement going through the roof and follower count increasing all the time. If you aren't already, please follow us [@herefordshirewildlifetrust](#) and [@earth_heritage_trust](#) on Instagram, [@HerefordshireWT](#) on Facebook and [@HerefordshireWT](#) and [@BuildingStones](#) on Twitter and show us some support too, commenting helps with the algorithm (don't ask us why!) [Here](#) is the most popular Ice Age Ponds post on Instagram so far with a whopping 170 likes!

Geocache update

Trainee Sarah and volunteer Nic have been working hard on the geocache trail. Part of the trail is now active with walking routes around the Sturts, Birches and Titley reserves. If you haven't ever been geocaching then why not give it a go, you can find out how to via the website [here](#). It's a treasure hunt everyone can get involved with!



Pond management

Our team have been working hard with landowners to plan the pond management for the remainder of the year and it has been wonderful to get many new landowners onboard with considering how to look after their ponds.

Ghost pond restoration

In our last newsletter we told you about a proposed site for a 'ghost' pond restoration on a farm near Blakemere and we are pleased to let you know that this progressing well. The landowner is on board and keen to maximise the benefits of the restoration, including a large buffer around the pond and allowing a nearby hedge to 'grow out' into the field to help protect the pond from a road. We are really looking forward to getting started with this work in the coming months.

Putting in a pond at this location will add hugely to the biodiversity of the farm and it may also help to capture carbon into the future!

In addition to this we will also be excavating one of the ghost ponds at the Sturts Nature Reserve, adding a new pond to the many existing ponds on the site. Well you can never have too many ponds!

Legacy Ponds

We have been working to identify 5 'legacy' ponds, these are ponds where we can't complete the management within the scope of the project but where the landowners are keen enough to consider their management themselves. Our team have been working closely with the landowners and writing management plans for the individual ponds. This will help to ensure that these ponds are cared for after the project finishes.

Website updates

Training went ahead on zoom and the response to this was fantastic. Catch any that you missed by clicking [Training events & resources](#) for a range of geology and ecology topics and also a video on filling out the survey form if you need a little reminder on anything.

If you're interested in exploring more of Herefordshire's Ice Age Ponds then head to our new pages called '[Visit the Ice Age Landscape of North West Herefordshire](#)' and '[Visit an Ice Age Pond](#)'.

Also new to the website and project is the [Ice Age Geocache Trail](#) which saw people finding the hidden caches before Sarah had even read the email to say her application had been successful – now that's commitment! If you fancy a sort of Ice Age Pond treasure trail, then this one is for you.

Coming soon

Coming soon to both Hereford and Leominster is our Ice Age Ponds town trail. Kicking off the trail will be [The Big Green Family Festival](#) in Leominster on 3rd July, before moving to Hereford after about a week for another week there. A short walk will take you around the towns, with each shop window giving you a letter and a clue as to what the secret word is. Once you know the secret word you can enter our prize draw for a huge mammoth! We hope to see some of you there, more details will follow...

Events for the Calendar

Saturdays and Sundays in June at Queenswood 11-3pm – Ice Age Ponds Exhibition

26th June –Malvern Science Festival – **mammoth activities with** Earth Heritage Trust

3rd July-mid July – Town Trail in Leominster and Hereford

24th July – [IAP Family Day](#) at Birches Farm Nature Reserve

25th July – [IAP Family Day](#) at Birches Farm Nature Reserve

TBC – Geophysical surveys