

Successful Campaign Award

Shortlisted: Norfolk Ponds Project



(Picture: Restored Pond on farmland near Heydon)

This Norfolk Ponds Project (NPP) was formed in 2014 and is a partnership between Norfolk FWAG, University College London, local farmers, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, Norfolk Rivers Trust, Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative, Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service, National Trust, Norfolk County Council and Natural England.



Norfolk has 23,000+ farmland ponds, more than any other English county, but despite this its ponds are in a poor state, with some 8000 having been filled-in since the 1950s and with those remaining generally dominated by dense scrub. Inspired by the spectacular conservation work of award-winning farmer, Richard Waddingham of Manor Farm, Briston, the NPP aims to reverse the decline of Norfolk's ponds lost and threatened by land reclamation, ecological succession and pollution.

The vision is the restoration and management of networks of clean water ponds, at different stages of succession, to help support aquatic and wider farmland wildlife. On a landscape scale, ponds provide a network of stepping stones, facilitating movement across farmland and act as refuges to many protected species.

A principal approach of the project is to deliver and provide advice on the restoration and management of ponds, especially scrub and sediment removal and the re-excitation for in-filled 'Ghost Ponds'. Through this, the project is very successfully promoting the conservation of protected and priority pond species (great crested newt, crucian carp, water vole, stoneworts) as well as declining pollinator and farmland bird species. A further key aim is the education and engagement of farmers, the public as well as conservation professionals and policy-makers with regards to the neglected, but huge value of ponds in the farmland environment.



(Pictures: left - a silted up pond before restoration right - once you know what to look for you see them everywhere)

Since 2014 the NPP has delivered 40 pond restorations with spectacular measured benefits for farmland wildlife. This work has created two vibrant, restored pond mosaics in the villages of Heydon and Bodham-Baconsthorpe that are now used as demonstration sites. All work has been undertaken by volunteers with academics, students, gamekeepers, farmers and local people all working together, sharing much knowledge and fun. It has delivered advice to hundreds of farmers via phone calls, e-mails and field visits and has hosted a whole range of outreach events, including several field-based farm restoration workshops for farmers (x6), agri-environment and conservation professionals (x10) and the public (x6). The NPP has given some 35 talks on the project to farmer, local interest and conservation groups and has lobbied Natural England and Defra for greater consideration of farmland ponds in agri-environment policy. It has run three pond Bioblitz events and has attended five Norfolk Show events. Finally, and importantly, the NPP has established a successful and continuing community restoration and citizen science project in Bodham (the "Great Twin Pond Dig") where a group of local people are trialing an 'Adopt a Pond' approach and monitoring ponds before and after restoration.

The NPP aims to be long-lived is seeking funding to help deliver pond restoration on a bigger scale. Funds have already been secured by partners to restore another 40 ponds in the next 2-3 years.

