

Brackenhurst Campus Mitigation Ponds

Site Introduction

The 200ha Brackenhurst Estate is 1.5 miles to the south of Southwell in Nottinghamshire. It includes the 18th century, Grade II-listed Brackenhurst Hall, gardens, parklands and numerous ponds. Brackenhurst has been a centre of Education and Training for 60 years, and is part of Nottingham Trent University.

The ponds nearer the hall and within the campus buildings have a significant population of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and the gardens including the dew pond have been designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

Project

South East of the main hall at Brackenhurst Farm House is the Animal Unit and associated fields. There were two small fields with a small, round, man-made pond. The University proposed developing the site with an expansion of the Animal Unit which would result in the loss of the pond.

Ecological surveys recorded great crested newt, therefore to mitigate for the loss of the pond, three new ponds were proposed, along with the restoration of a fourth pond. Hibernacula, hedgerows and a grassland seeded with a wildflower wet grassland mix were also included within the proposed compensation measures. Temporary Amphibian Fencing (TAF), trapping and translocation of great crested newt was undertaken by another ecology company (although we have carried out projects involving the installation of TAF at various sites across the country) prior to our involvement on the project.

The proposed plans were for three ponds west of the development with four hibernacula and a mix of hedgerow tree species planted along the north and western edge. The fourth pond was deepened, re-profiled and lined to ensure it held water.



One of the three new ponds in process of lining



Ponds six months after completion



Dry pond, being lined after deepening and re-profiling

In addition a large earth and rubble bank (including hibernaculum) was positioned to divert any overflow of water into a ditch and prevent flooding of an adjacent artificial badger sett (built by the University previously, but un-used due to frequent flooding). The hibernaculum and surrounding land were seeded with an 80/20 wildflower mix.



The previously dry pond, six months after completion

The project also included the planting of a 250m hedgerow to create connectivity between the new ponds and existing ponds in the south of the site. The hedgerow was planted in a double line with a diverse mix of native two-year old, 50 – 80cm whips, with spiral tree guards and canes, at six plants per metre.

Monitoring and maintenance was not required as the University incorporates this into their conservation courses and allow students to maintain ponds and hedgerows. However during spring 2017, one of our year-long placement students was involved with surveys of the ponds, and bottle trapping surveys recorded great crested newt in all ponds.

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