

A Natural Future for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough







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Natural Cambridgeshire is the Local Nature Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which brings together the interests of business, land management, health and government in improving our natural environment. Here is our vision for a future rich in wildlife where we live, work and play.

Where nature thrives, it provides us with clean water, fertile and healthy soils, natural flood control, greater biodiversity, natural pollinators ... and much more. Also, places with accessible, wildlife rich greenspaces attract more people to work and live there, improve health and wellbeing and provide leisure and recreation opportunities.

Our vision values the wildlife we have now and the tremendous opportunities presented to build a richer natural environment with benefits for everyone. Working together, we have the means to create that future.

Despite losses, nature is returning and there are wonderful wildlife sights in Cambridgeshire.... see the 'Ten reasons to value our natural environment' throughout this booklet.





Spring-time displays of oxlips and bluebells in our woodlands, and rarities like the black hairstreak and purple emperor butterflies

Ten reasons to value just
1 our Natural environment

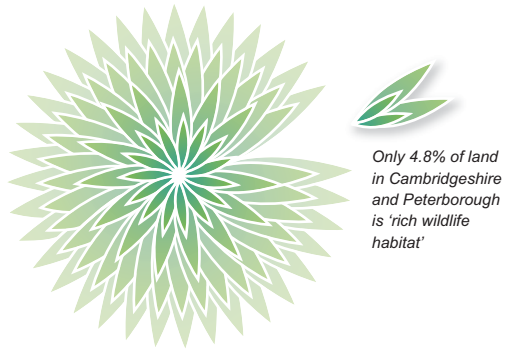


Nature now

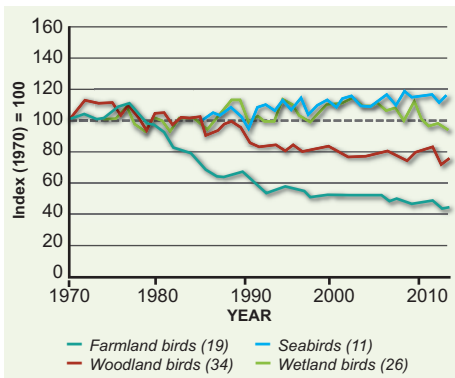
Some 10,000 wild Bewick's and whooper swans and thousands of duck migrate to the Ouse Washes for winter

The best places for wildlife are confined to a scatter of sites across the County. As a proportion of overall land area, the amount of rich wildlife habitats in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is one of the smallest in England.

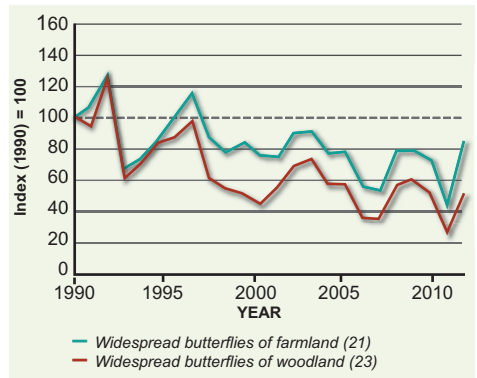
Reversing the continued decline in England's wildlife requires action from all.



English biodiversity indicators



England Wild Bird Indicator, by habitat from 1970 to 2014



Indicator of widespread butterflies of farmland and woodland in England from 1990 to 2013

Source: State of Nature 2016; England.

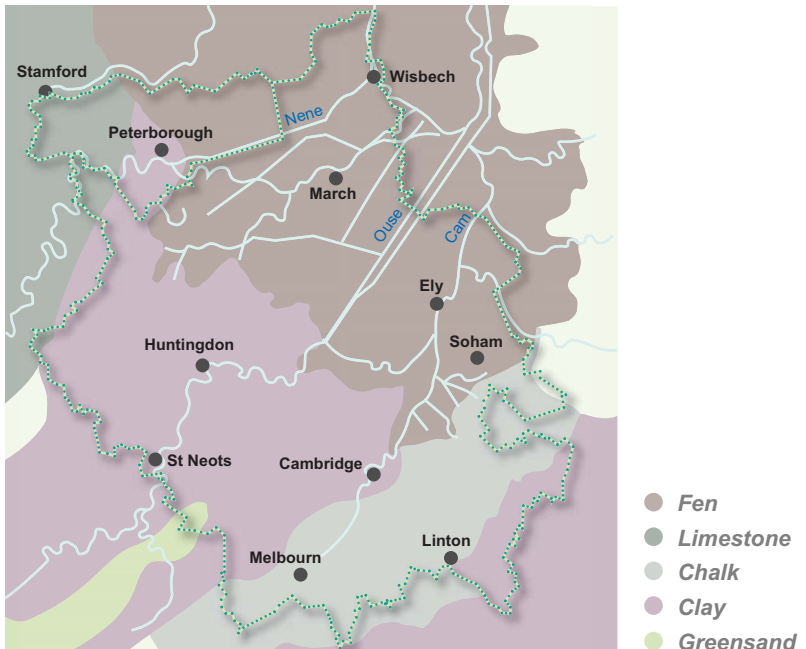


Ten reasons to value
our Natural environment
3

Colourful arable wildflowers such as cornflower and long-headed poppy are still found in Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire's landscapes

Cambridgeshire's landscape consists of a rolling lowland plateau of chalk, clay and small areas of greensand and limestone, dissected by the valleys of the Cam, Great Ouse and Nene, which run out into the flat expanses of peat and silt soils of the Fenland basin.



Clay soils

Cambridgeshire has a cluster of ancient woodlands on the clay soils which, with the historic parklands, are important wildlife sites. However, many of these sites exist in isolation so there are limited opportunities for wildlife to move across the landscape to establish larger or new populations. Along the river valleys, huge new wetland nature reserves are being created as large scale gravel extraction is completed.

Vision:

- Woodland management leads to more and richer wildlife
- Bat, dormice, amphibian and reptile populations are expanding
- Flower-rich field margins, lanes and hedgerows help wildlife move across the landscape and colonise new areas
- In the river valleys, restored meadows play a vital part in managing flood and water quality, and colour the landscape with their flowers
- New reed beds and lakes have matured and hold large numbers of bittern, bearded reedling and marsh harrier



Purple emperor



Daubenton's bat



Oxlip



Chalk

The open, rolling chalk landscape is important for agriculture and for aquifers that provide essential water supplies to springs, streams, ponds and fens. The rich wildlife sites tend to be small and isolated, often found alongside important archaeological heritage or on road verges.

Vision:

- Flower-rich grasslands that protect water supplies and our spring-fed habitats
- Chalk streams are in a healthy state, their clean, flowing waters support native crayfish, trout and breeding lamprey
- Corn bunting and the rare stone curlew are returning to the arable fields



Chalkhill blue



Twayblade



Corn bunting

Fens

Before being drained, the Fens were the largest wetland in northern Europe and are now England's most important agricultural area. Only very small pockets of original fen remain, but the wildlife in those is outstanding. The farmed land is interlaced with drainage channels, many rich with wildlife as well as providing a passage for nature to move within the farmed landscape. The peat has also preserved an exceptionally interesting and important archaeological record.

Vision:

- New and expanded areas of reed and wet grassland support healthy populations of crane, egret, bittern, marsh harriers, snipe, black-tailed godwit and wildfowl
- The rivers and the many watercourses and their margins are home to a rich variety of plants, mammals, fish and invertebrates, such as the rare fen violet, otter, water vole, spined loach, compressed mussel and tansy beetle
- Risks posed by invasive species such as mink and floating penny-wort are controlled
- Large areas of farmland are managed in new ways to preserve the remaining peat soils and enable space for healthy populations of wildlife within a sustainably farmed landscape



Compressed mussel



Tansy beetle



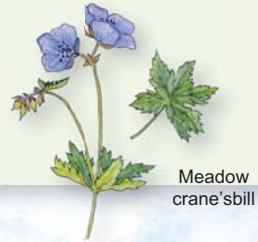
Marsh harrier

Limestone

West of Peterborough are the woodlands and grasslands that inspired the poet John Clare. Once part of the extensive Rockingham Forest, this remains a rich natural landscape.

Vision:

- A network of flower-rich limestone grasslands
- The fragments of meadow, woodland, wetland and old limestone workings have been extended and linked
- Pyramidal orchids, clustered bellflowers, common lizard and green tiger beetle, all loved by the poet, have a place to call home, long into the future



Homes and Gardens

Green spaces and mature gardens in our towns and villages are already providing homes for wildlife. Using simple, easy methods, new housing and work place developments can provide even more spaces for plants and animals, enriching our built environment and quality of life.

Vision:

- Everyone enjoying birds and their songs near their home and work place
- Children excited to discover frogs, toads, newts and hedgehogs where they live and play
- Summer skies enlivened by swifts, house martins and bats that share our homes
- In winter, murmurations of starlings sweep over our countryside, towns and villages

Peacock butterfly



Common frog



House martin





Snakes head fritillary flowers and the rare scarce chaser dragonfly are found at Portholme, England's largest flood meadow

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4
our Natural environment



Water-vole, otter and rare aquatic plants, fish and mussels have their stronghold in the waterways across the Fens



Case Studies

Landscape scale – The Great Fen

The Great Fen is a 50-year project to link two National Nature Reserves, creating a huge wetland across 3,700 hectares. In one of the largest restoration projects of its kind in Europe, the landscape of the Fens between Peterborough and Huntingdon is being transformed for the benefit for both wildlife and people. This partnership project will provide a fenland wildlife haven, as well as new solutions to managing water, tourism opportunities and diversification of local businesses.

Green infrastructure in the Cambridge Southern Fringe

The housing projects at Trumpington Meadows and Great Kneighton on the southern fringe of Cambridge were planned jointly by the local councils. Working to an agreed framework, developers are creating new neighbourhoods with 4,000 new homes, community facilities and strategic green infrastructure. The green spaces were designed to link the existing green corridors through Cambridge to the countryside beyond. The natural green spaces include large areas of new wildlife habitats appropriate to the local landscape, and include Trumpington Meadows, which will be managed in perpetuity by the Wildlife Trust for wildlife and people.



With 13,500 different species of plants and animals and 25% of the country's rarest wildlife, The Fens are one of Britain's best areas for nature

Ten reasons to value our Natural environment

6



Trout, bream and fringed water lilies flourish in our chalk streams

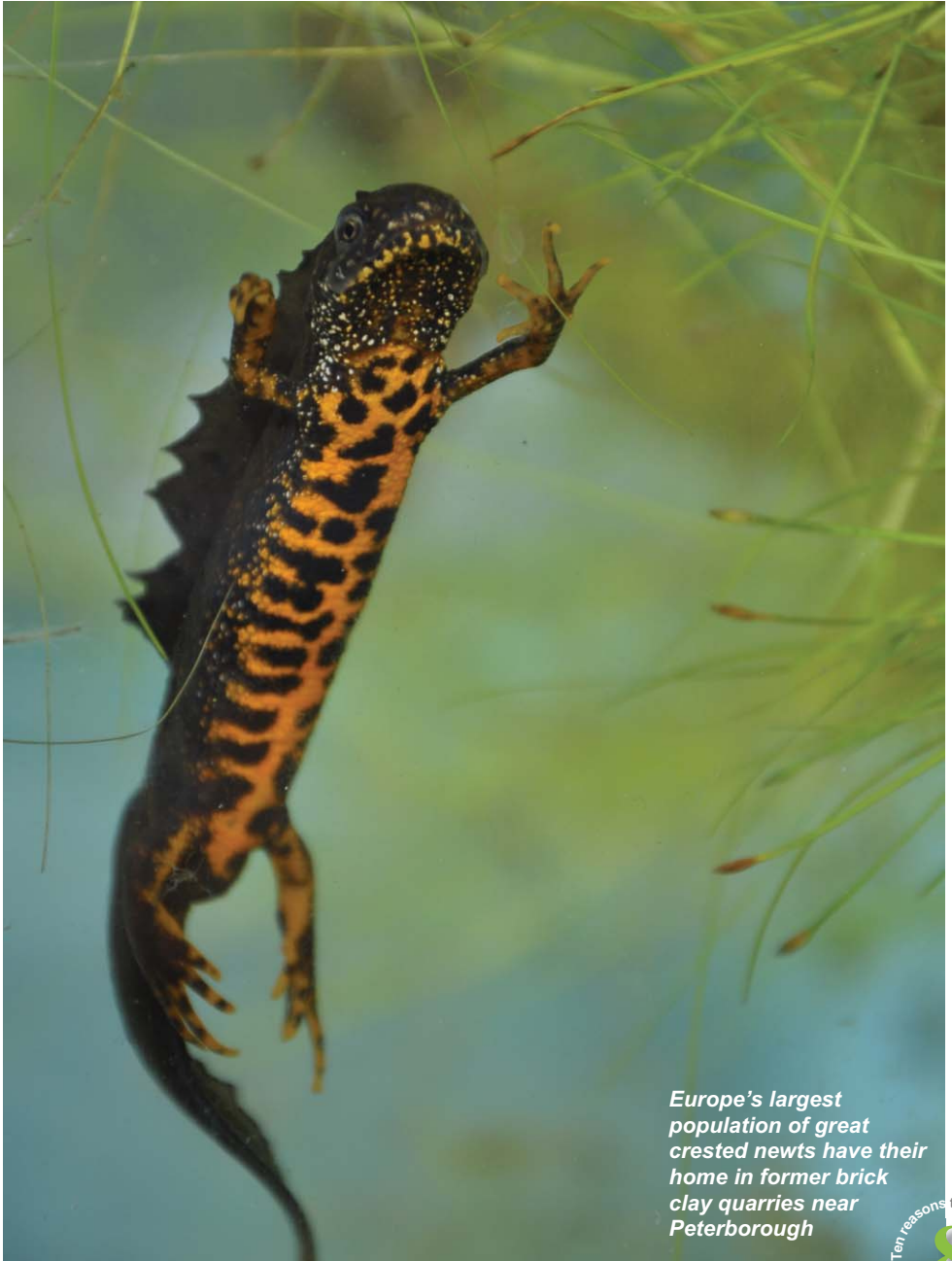
Case Studies

Farming and wildlife – Thorney Farmland Bird Project

Farmers working together across some 4,000 ha of arable land surrounding the village of Thorney, north of the River Nene, are creating a richer environment for wildlife. This is helping to restore and increase populations of farmland birds in Cambridgeshire including grey partridge, turtle dove, lapwing and corn bunting alongside successful farming businesses. As a model of good practice, this is encouraging farmers to work together in a similar way in other areas.

Minerals restoration at Ouse Fen

The RSPB is working with Hanson and Cambridgeshire County Council on a ground-breaking 30-year partnership project, which began in 2001, to create a vast nature reserve in the aftermath of gravel extraction. When complete, Ouse Fen nature reserve will cover 700 ha, including Britain's largest reedbed, a rare and extremely valuable habitat for wildlife. As well as helping restore wildlife such as bittern, bearded reedling, marsh harrier, otter and water vole, the project will create great opportunities for local people to enjoy the natural world with the proven health and wellbeing benefits this provides.



Europe's largest population of great crested newts have their home in former brick clay quarries near Peterborough

Ten reasons to value
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8



Increasing numbers of marsh harriers, booming bittern, other waterbirds and dragonfly thrive in the vast reedbeds and open water created after gravel extraction in our river valleys



Buzzard

Nature on the way back



Wasp spider

Polecat, crane, bittern, buzzard, little egret and red kite are just some of the species recently returned to Cambridgeshire. Others like the great white egret, wasp spider, great green bush and long-winged cone-head crickets, and small red-eyed damselfly are moving in as the climate warms. Given the chance, wildlife can spread to new areas and, with other plants and animals returning, we can have more and richer wildlife in our countryside. Lapwing, corn bunting and common lizard could become more abundant. Also, if we provide the space and opportunity, the swallowtail and large copper butterfly, Norfolk hawk dragonfly, pool frog and burbot might return to the numbers that used to occur in Cambridgeshire.



Swallowtail butterfly

10-point plan to achieve a natural future!

You need nature and it needs you – so we shouldn't take nature for granted! Nature and people need their own spaces, but they can share spaces and live in harmony too. By choice and good planning, we can have both rich wildlife and economic growth. Nature will thrive given space and time; our prosperity and well-being depends upon its provision of clean water, pollinators, recreation and so much more. The means to achieve this are well within our grasp:

- 1 Promote wildlife rich greenspace so that everyone can play, exercise or just quietly enjoy nature near where they live
- 2 Inspire wildlife friendly management of gardens, public parks and road verges
- 3 Encourage good quality housing and other developments that result in an overall gain for nature
- 4 Ensure all new road and rail developments help us better connect wildlife as well as people
- 5 Champion more large-scale creation of natural habitats delivering a range of benefits for people
- 6 Manage our woodlands, hedges, watercourses, ponds and lakes sensitively to provide good wildlife habitats and provide green spaces and corridors in the countryside
- 7 Maintain, enhance and expand the areas of wildlife on farmland
- 8 Support new ways of farming that deliver better environmental outcomes
- 9 Develop ambitious visions for nature and work towards these together
- 10 Stimulate community action to help measure our progress towards this vision for a natural future



Ten reasons to value
10
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Natural Cambridgeshire will be developing targets that allow us to measure our progress towards this vision and the plans that will make it happen.

If you would like to find out more about the work of Natural Cambridgeshire or support us in creating a richer natural environment here, please contact info@naturalcambridgeshire.org.uk

Swathes of orchids and locally special plants such as perennial flax, moon carrot, and great pignut bloom in our chalk grasslands



Additional cover photos:

Bullfinch © Allan Drewitt/Natural England,
Banded demoiselle © Allan Drewitt/Natural England
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Cambridgeshire**
putting nature at the heart

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Design & illustration:

Coral Design Management 07821 198114.

Printed by Printboxuk Limited 2018.

on sustainably sourced material using an
eco-friendly process.

