

## Becconsall Lane Farm: excavated ponds, vegetation monitoring visit April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019

### Introduction

This short report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Phase 1 survey, carried out on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The five ponds visited lie within c. 29-acre plot of agricultural land east of Hesketh Bank and west of the former Becconsall Marsh, reclaimed from saltmarsh long ago.

Since previous visits significant stretches of both the internal and boundary fences have been planted up with hedges of mainly locally native species, still in very early stages of their development.

A Phase 1 habitat Survey of the site was undertaken on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017, in fine dry weather, following the methods laid out in **Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey- a technique for environmental audit**, Revised reprint 2010 © JNCC.

### Pond 1 (TN02 of 2017 report)

Though the water was clear on the visit of 24<sup>th</sup> October 2018, when Horned Pondweed *Zannichellia palustris* was observed, the clarity was diminished on this visit as there is now some disturbance from a resident gander. Some aquatic vegetation was still dimly visible and the *Zannichellia* may well still be surviving, some Rigid Hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum* was retrieved using a grapnel. The open water is still extensive and marginal vegetation is developing, the pond is not now so shaded by the large willow, since it was cut back in 2018. Some minor bare ground patches still remain around the banks, following re-excavation of the pond.

A Small Tortoiseshell and Orange Tip were noted from here.

<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	A
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush	F
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow Foxtail	O
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	O
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb	O
<i>Equisetum fluviatile</i>	Water Horsetail	O
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Floating Sweet-grass	O
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog	O
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Rye-grass	O
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	O
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle	O
<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i>	Rigid Hornwort	R
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Goosegrass	R
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed	R
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye Daisy	R
<i>Potamogeton natans</i>	Floating Pondweed	R
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	R
<i>Veronica beccabunga</i>	Brooklime	R
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Speedwell	R

KEY - D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare

### Pond 2 (TN05 of 2017 report)

In April 2017 this was a circular feature (old bomb crater) totally choked with rush growth, however, by October 2018, this had been excavated and also extended to the East with the new extension still having a very raw appearance. In 2019 the banks of the pond extension have vegetated more fully and the water looked clean and evidently supports life, during the short visit tadpoles, Whirly-gig beetles, diving beetle larvae, pond skaters, groundhoppers and wolf spiders were noted here. A pair of Mallard was flushed from the eastern end of the pond as it was approached.

<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	F
<i>Algae</i>		F
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Floating Sweet-grass	F
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush	F
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	O

<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	R
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog	R
<i>Lemna minor</i>	Common Duckweed	R

KEY - D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare

### Pond 3

This is a newly excavated pond near the base of the slope that once formed the edge of the Douglas estuary. There was water at the time of the 2019 visit, but this scrape was reported to have dried out in the Summer of 2018, despite the deep central sump. Pondlife noted here included: water boatmen, pond skater, wolf spider, Whirly-gig Beetles, water beetle larvae, groundhoppers and Common Frog

<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	A
<i>Algae</i>		F
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Floating Sweet-grass	F
<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>	Fool's Watercress	R
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush	R
<i>Lemna minor</i>	Common Duckweed	R

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### Pond 4

A linear pond, excavated parallel to the slope to the West. Pondlife noted here included: pond skaters, wolf spiders, groundhoppers and tadpoles. Additionally, an adult Common Frog was noted as well as the exuvium of a species of mosquito.

<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	A
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Floating Sweet-grass	A
<i>Algae</i>		O
<i>Callitriche stagnalis</i>	Starwort	R
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	R
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Field Horsetail	R
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush	R
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	R

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### Pond 5

A further linear excavation, to the South of and somewhat deeper than Pond 4. Tadpoles and groundhoppers were noted here.

<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	F
<i>Algae</i>		F
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush	F
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Floating Sweet-grass	O
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	R

KEY - D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare