

Seaford Head Dewpond

Although there has been a pond on Seaford Head since at least 1865, it was only after the establishment of the Local Nature Reserve in 1988 that a proposal to restore the 'disused dewpond' was acted upon by the Management Committee of the reserve, and maintained as such, until 2010.

During that period the dewpond was relined in 1996, and re-fenced in 2002, and although it's value, ecologically, historically and culturally was recognised, by 1998, the non-native weeds New Zealand Stonecrop and Parrot's Feather were invading strongly, and having to be regularly removed, the last of such work being undertaken in 2010. From that time until 2022 the dewpond was completely neglected.

The project to renovate the dewpond was first suggested by Seaford Natural History Society (SNHS) in 2020, and developed with support from Seaford Town Council, who own the land, and with support and advice from South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). An Ecological Assessment to guide the work and confirm that it would be worthwhile, was funded by the SDNPA Ranger for the area – Tim Squire – who also provided invaluable management advice. The resultant grant application to the South Downs Trust was successful, and the first work party waded in, in early May 2022.

The project focussed on maximising the biodiversity of the dewpond, and its benefit to wildlife. It involved establishing a local volunteer group to extract and control the invasive weed, dry it pond-side, and then burn it, which was essential avoid it's spread to other areas. Over the course of the project, the volunteers clocked up over 500 hrs of work during 10 work parties each month.

A huge amount of invasive weed has been removed and burnt, not without difficulty sometimes, but we are fully aware that we will never remove all of it, and that it has the potential to recover quickly. Nevertheless, the dewpond now boasts that almost half of its surface is now open water, where none existed previously. The edges of the pond have been revealed, rank, coarse grasses and bramble have been cleared from the bank, and a narrow surrounding path created, along with two hibernacula, to provide winter protection for reptiles and amphibians. The enclosed dewpond has been surveyed for wildlife species, accumulating to a total, so far, of just over 200, including a UK 'first' and other rarities.

With the funded project now finished, within budget, the volunteers have formed a 'Friends Group' to continue with the pond management and further development into the future, to endure the on-going benefits to local wildlife.