



Cemex & RSPB Partnership Blog May 2025



Welcome to the May 2025 edition of **Earthly Matters**, the blog dedicated to the partnership between Cemex and the RSPB.



Partnership Update

By Carl Cornish,
RSPB Senior Business Conservation Adviser

The warm sunny weather in early May was ideal for seeing butterflies. Cemex has undertaken successful conservation work for butterflies at its two quarries, supplying the cement business – Kensworth and Southam. I visited both quarries with Sean Cassidy, Cemex EMEA Biodiversity Manager, to survey areas for butterflies, assess habitat condition and identify work to sustain the habitat created and support butterfly populations. At Southam we met Mike Slater from the Warwickshire Butterfly Conservation. He has been driving conservation work for butterflies at Southam and has been monitoring butterfly populations there for many years. We were fortunate to see all the Springtime priority butterfly species – Small Blue, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreak and Small Heath. Small Blue is a localised butterfly and key to its survival are the patches of Kidney Vetch, the larval foodplant. It needs open grassy areas so controlling encroachment by bushes and trees is critical.

The nature reserve at Kensworth Quarry is also important for butterflies. It also has Small Blue and other scarce butterflies such as the Duke of Burgundy, which we saw. Dukes are very fussy butterflies. They lay their eggs on Cowslips, which the caterpillars feed on. But they don't like Cowslips that are in the open and get too much sun. Like Goldilocks, they need things to be just right: Cowslips in a partial shade and longer vegetation. Loss of these habitat conditions has led to declines in this butterfly and illustrate how ensuring correct habitat management is important.

After quarrying has been completed, an area of Kensworth has been left to naturally colonise as chalk grassland. There is now lots of Kidney Ketch and we were pleased to find the first Small Blues recorded there. We believe they've moved from the nature reserve. A female was watched egg-laying in the flower heads of Kidney Vetch so we're delighted to see a colony being established.



Photo: Small Blue on Kidney Vetch © Keith Warmington, Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire



Duke of Burgundy © Carl Cornish



Langley Visitors: Over at our Langley Quarry, the team were investigating a screen breakdown when they found a wagtail nest with baby chicks tweeting away. Due to the nest's location and the protected status the team were unable to commence with screen repairs and needed to wait until the young chicks fledged. The UK Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 which makes it illegal to disturb, damage, or destroy a wild bird's nest while it's being built or in use, as well as intentionally disturbing nesting birds.

Bird Migration

One of the wonders of the natural world is bird migration and the British Isles is on major bird migration routes. We are, therefore, fortunate to have birds visiting to breed in the spring and summer, birds visiting in the winter to escape colder areas and birds passing through on their way to and from places further north and south. Birds migrate to find areas with more food and more daylight to find food. In the past, bird migration was a mystery – (where did the birds go?) and led to theories such as Swallows hibernating in the mud at the bottom of ponds.

Bird ringing – fitting a small metal ring to the leg of a bird started back in the early 20th century and helped unlock the mysteries of bird migration. It is still used today along with colour ringing, fitting combinations of colour rings to a bird's leg that show when and where it was ringed. The metal rings used have a unique code, but it needs another ringer to catch the bird to read it. The advantage of colour ringing is that birdwatchers and photographers can record the combinations so providing more records.



Avocet with a yellow leg flag coded 7A and a yellow colour ring. This unique combination identifies the individual bird
© David Seagrave

Avocets are a conservation success story and as their numbers and range continue to increase, they move to new areas. They also move around Britain with a post-breeding dispersal and winter on estuaries on the east and south coasts.

David Seagrave, Assistant Quarry Manager at Cemex's Cromwell Quarry, photographed a colour-ringed Avocet at the quarry this May. He found out that it was ringed as a chick in June 2021 in Cumbria near the Solway Estuary. It has then been seen on the Lincolnshire coast in Autumn in 2021, 2023, 2024. It was seen near Skegness in early May this year and then at Cromwell Quarry five days later – the first time it's been seen anywhere other than Cumbria and Lincolnshire. Cromwell Quarry is in the Trent Valley, a major migration route and birds will use quarries to stop off to rest and feed on migration. Sand and gravel quarries are also potentially suitable breeding sites for Avocets.

Actions for Nature

OK, so it's started raining as I write this. However, we had a prolonged dry spell, and may get more, when wildlife can struggle to find water. An easy action you can take to help wildlife is to provide water. You can get bird baths, but anything that holds water and wildlife can access is OK. I have a large flowerpot saucer placed on the ground. I've put a two pence piece in the water because it's supposed to stop algae growing.



Young Starlings bathing – Photo by Tina Baxter

Enter our Homes for Nature competition by end of June

We're excited to invite you to take part in the 2025 Cemex/ RSPB Partnership Competition: **"Giving Nature A Home"**.

Across our Cemex UK sites, whether quarries, plants, wharfs, or offices, many of you have taken fantastic steps to support wildlife and biodiversity, from installing bird feeders and bug hotels to creating reptile refuges and wildflower planters. This new competition is all about celebrating these efforts and encouraging even more ways to give nature a home!

Scan QR code or click [HERE](#) for full details:



Send us your stories and photos

We are looking for staff stories to include in upcoming blogs, these can be experiences from work or home. We would love to share them in an upcoming blog.

Send them in to: gb-communicationsandpublicaffairs@cemex.com