

Earthly Matters



Cemex & RSPB Partnership Blog January 2026



Welcome to the January 2026 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

Following on from Jon Randle's interesting article about the birds he has seen at Cemex's East Leake Quarry, I went to visit him last month to meet up in person and have a walk around the site. We saw a good selection of birds. A highlight was a glimpse of a Woodcock flying away from us when we accidentally disturbed it from a woodland edge. The Woodcock is a wading bird, but instead of being seen on wetlands like most waders, it lives in woodlands and feeds at night in fields using its long bill to find worms.

Cryptically camouflaged, Woodcocks rely on their plumage blending into leaf litter when they sit tight on the woodland floor. A typical sighting in winter is when one is flushed up and flies away when you've walked by too close.



Woodcock

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Other birds we saw were ducks on the ponds, including some Shovelers and Wigeon. A male Bullfinch was feeding in a hedgerow along with several Redwings. Thanks to Darren Stevens, Assistant Quarry Manager, for helping to show me around and to Jamie Ewing, Quarry Manager, for welcoming me to site. I look forward to hearing what birds Jon sees at the quarry this year.



Big Garden Birdwatch

23–25 January 2026

Actions for Nature

The RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch this weekend.

It's that time of year again to get ready and take part in this weekend's **RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch**. Last year an incredible 9.1 million birds were counted by over half a million people. It's free, fun and easy to do.

The House Sparrow remained at the top of the rankings as the most commonly-seen garden bird with more than 1.2 million recorded sightings throughout the weekend, but average numbers of these chirpy, cheeky characters are down by 64% compared to the first Big Garden Birdwatch in 1979.

For further information on how to take part this weekend, [click here](#):

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch>

If you took part at a Cemex site we'd be interested to know how you got on.

Focus on Post-industrial Habitats

By Carl Cornish

Areas that have been used in the past for industry and then left can become exceptionally important for wildlife. This is because they have areas of open bare ground, varied topography with nooks and crannies important for insects, and nutrient-poor soil, good for plants. With such sites, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Admittedly, they often don't look pretty, but prettiness and biodiversity importance don't always go hand in hand. Often a disastrous fate for the wildlife of such areas is that sites become tidied up and made to look more visually appealing. In the process, all the important features for wildlife are lost. There is often pressure from the public and planners for this tidying up of perceived waste ground.

Overtime, there will be colonisation by shrubs and trees, changing open habitats into wooded ones. The most sustainable and cost-effective way to manage is through natural browsers and grazers (e.g. deer and rabbits), or introducing grazing (cattle, ponies or sheep) to control woody vegetation. Where that is not possible, management interventions are needed to retain important habitat features such as bare open ground.

Contact Carl

If you would like advice or a visit from Carl Cornish, our RSPB Senior Business Conservation Adviser for the Cemex Partnership, please get in touch: carl.cornish@rspb.org.uk

I've had a couple of visits to Cemex's South Ferriby site, which has an excellent area of post-industrial habitat – a disused landfill. It is a mosaic of open ground, grassland, shallow pools and scattered scrub. On my last visit to see what birds are using the area in winter, I saw eleven Short-eared Owls. I've never seen that many Short-eared Owls flying together before; they are also the only ones I've seen this winter. These will be birds that are visiting lowland Britain from further north or from the Continent. They fly low over grassland searching for Field Voles, their main prey. They are an owl with a wide wingspan (bigger than a Barn Owl). They have two small feather tufts above their eyes, which gives them their name.

Did you know - The collective noun for owls is a parliament.



Short-eared Owl

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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

