



Welcome to the March 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

With some warmer weather and the days starting to become longer, Spring is unfolding across the country. On a visit to the Lowland Heathland areas managed by Cemex at Rugeley, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire I found a basking female Adder. Adders come out on warm, sunny days to heat up. Cannock Chase is an important area for this declining reptile.

Jon Randle at Cemex's East Leake Quarry let me know that he'd seen the first Sand Martins at the site for this year on 17th March. That's a timely reminder that this early summer migrant is returning to the UK to breed and so please follow the Cemex Sand Martin Code (see page 2). The code includes actions to help move this species away from nesting in sand stockpiles and to provide safe nesting areas away from operations.

When not out visiting sites, I've been helping support the planning team with work on planning applications for new quarry areas and developing management advice for non-operational areas.



Photo: Female Adder showing how well camouflaged it is against dead Bracken © Carl Cornish

Actions for Nature

Breeding Bird Guidelines

A reminder that as the bird breeding season has begun, all wild birds in the UK are protected by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended). It is illegal in the UK to intentionally kill, injure, or take wild birds, or to take, damage, or destroy active nests, eggs, or dependent young. Schedule 1 lists some rare species and those which are particularly vulnerable to disturbance; they are afforded a higher level of protection for their nests, eggs and young. For most species, the breeding season is the start of March to the end of August. However, some species will nest outside this period so seek advice if uncertain.

The easiest way to mitigate against negative impacts to breeding birds is to time operations to occur outside the bird breeding season. Examples of operations that can affect breeding birds are hedge cutting, tree works, ground clearance and roof work on buildings. Again, please seek advice if you any concerns.



Sand Martin nest © Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Focus on Hedgerows

Hedgerows are a common feature of the countryside, traditionally used to mark boundaries between fields. Their presence has changed over time alongside farming practices. Many hedgerows were planted during the enclosure of open fields a few centuries ago, although they were not popular at the time. In the last century, however, many were removed as fields were enlarged to suit modern machinery. Today, efforts are being made to restore and plant more hedgerows.

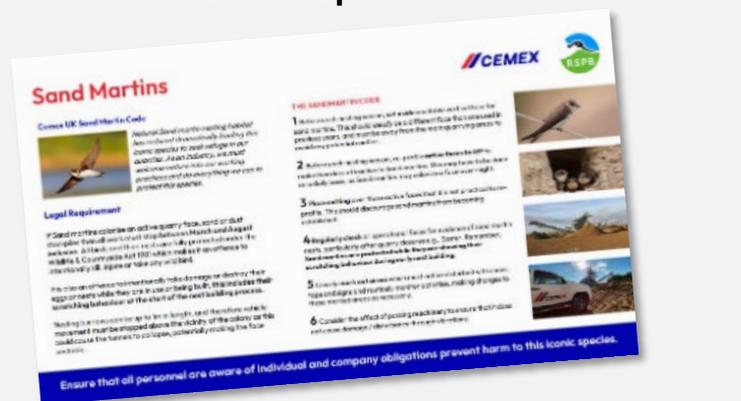
Hedgerows are extremely valuable for wildlife. They provide food, shelter and nesting sites, and act as natural corridors that allow animals to move safely between habitats such as woodlands. Larger hedges, those that are taller and wider, are especially beneficial, and hedgerows that include trees offer even more diverse habitats.

Do You Know the Sand Martin Code?

If Sand martins colonise an active quarry face, sand or dust stockpiles then **all work must stop between March and August inclusive**. All birds and their nests are fully protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird.

>>You can find the Sand Martin Code [HERE](#).

Please display on all workplace notice boards where sites have sand piles.



To protect wildlife, hedgerows should not be cut or trimmed between 1st March and 31st August, as this is the main bird breeding season. Cutting later in the year allows fruits, seeds and nuts to fully develop, providing an important food source for birds and small mammals during winter. Ideally, hedges should be cut only once every two or three years so they can grow thicker and produce more flowers, fruits and seeds.

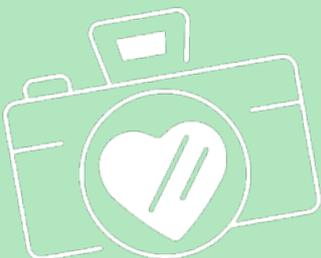
Several bird species of conservation concern rely on hedgerows for nesting and feeding. These include kestrels (which favour hedges with trees), turtle doves, song thrushes, willow tits, linnets and yellowhammers.



Male Yellowhammer singing from a hedge © Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com). Yellowhammers prefer an A-shaped hedge for nesting: one that is thick and wide at the base and which tapers to a narrower top. The Yellowhammer's song is likened to it singing 'A little bit of bread and no cheeseeee' – an easy way to remember the song.

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



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