Earthly Matters

Cemex & RSPB Partnership Blog

August 2026

Welcome to the August 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

In August, I attended several meetings and site visits to discuss the management of non-operational quarry areas.

At Dove Holes Quarry, I met with the planning team, quarry manager and ecological consultant to refine a management plan aimed at increasing the diversity and abundance of flowering plants in grazing fields. This will provide more natural food sources for birds, particularly Twite, a small finch that relies on flower seeds. We also met with the tenant farmer to ensure the proposals were practical and achievable.

Photo by Carl Cornish

Successful management plans must be realistic and shaped by those responsible for delivering them.

I also visited Berkswell Marsh SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) with RSPB colleague Alistair Smith, Team Leader for the RSPB's Ecology and Land Management Services consultancy. Cemex commissioned Alistair to undertake a condition assessment of the site's grassland and marsh habitats. Trained by Natural England in the official methodology, Alistair assessed habitat structure, the presence of positive indicator species, and the occurrence of negative indicator plants and invasive non-native species.

Despite the exceptionally dry summer, the survey identified several marshland indicator species, highlighting the site's ecological value and resilience.

Image: Touch-me-not-Balsam is a locally distinct species at Berkswell Marsh SSSI. It's a native balsam species with a very restricted distribution, but the population on site is probably a naturalised one. Dozens of plants were seen in flower on the site visit. It derives its name from the dry, ripe seed pods 'exploding' to release seeds when touched.

Take Action for Wildlife

In the hot, dry weather we've been having wildlife needs water. Even a small bowl of water can be a wildlife-saver. There's been a little rain recently where I live, but with another heatwave forecast in September the simple act of providing water will make all the difference.

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

Focus on Inland Cliffs

Life on the ledge

When we think of cliffs, we often picture dramatic coastal landscapes. But inland cliffs and rock faces can be just as valuable for wildlife. Created millennia ago, by the action of rivers, glaciers and weathering, or more recently by quarrying, these rocky habitats provide conditions that are difficult to find elsewhere.

It's a habitat that seems a precarious and inhospitable place, but many species have adapted to life on the edge, or life on the ledge. Challenges for wildlife are increased exposure to the weather, winds, sun and rain, with little shelter from extremes of the elements. There is no, or only skeletal soils for plants to grow in. But there are advantages for plants with few grazing animals able to reach them.

Several plant species occur on cliffs and the species will depend on the geology of the rock. Some are generalist species that can survive where favourable conditions permit, and others are specialist species that have evolved to survive in cracks, ledges and thin soils. Specialist plants include Limestone Fern, Green Spleenwort, Wall-rue, Mossy Saxifrage and species of Whitebeam trees.

Inland cliffs are also valuable for animals, which are safer from ground predators. Crevices and ledges provide nesting sites for Peregrines, Ravens, Kestrels and Wheatears, while cracks and caves can offer roosting places for bats. The surrounding scree and flower-rich grassland support insects and butterflies, creating feeding opportunities for birds and other wildlife. At Cemex's Raynes Quarry, the rare Chough nests on the cliffs.

The cliffs and associated habitats created during rock quarrying can develop significant ecological value. Carefully planned quarrying can create a mosaic of vertical faces, ledges, scree, bare ground, grassland and ponds. Importantly, restoration does not always mean covering rock faces with soil and planting trees: allowing some areas to remain open and naturally colonise can benefit specialist species. Unwanted invasive non-native plants, such as Buddleia and Cotoneaster species, can colonise cliffs and need management, which is when goats can come in handy!

Cemex Raynes Quarry with a disused cliff face become vegetated and calcareous grassland scrub mosaic in foreground.
Main Photo by Carl Cornish. Inset photo - Chough

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