

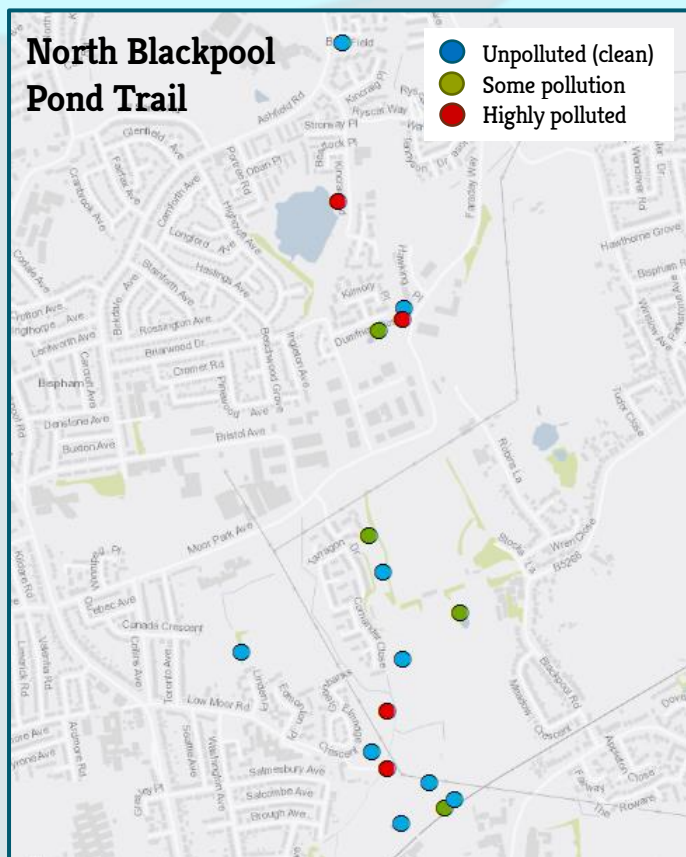
# North Blackpool Pond Trail

## What is Clean Water for Wildlife?

Clean Water for Wildlife is part of a Heritage Lottery Funded nationwide project to raise awareness of the critical importance of clean water for freshwater wildlife. In the first national survey of its kind, we're using the power of citizen science to gather results from all kinds of freshwaters including ponds, lakes, rivers, streams and ditches, all of which are important for freshwater wildlife. The survey uses 'quick kits' to assess the level of nitrate and phosphate pollution; two nutrients which can pose a major risk to wildlife if they are above natural levels.

## Our aims

- To engage many thousands of people to help them learn about, participate in, and enjoy their freshwater heritage
- To create a map of water quality from over 10,000 freshwaters, and uncover the best, most unpolluted habitats
- To make a significant difference to the protection of freshwater biodiversity in the UK.



## Clean Water Case Studies

All the results from the Clean Water for Wildlife survey are available to view and download from WaterNet, the data hub for the People, Ponds and Water project. But, we are also producing a series of case studies which illustrate some of the most interesting results. This case study concentrates on the North Blackpool Pond Trail.

## Description of the survey area

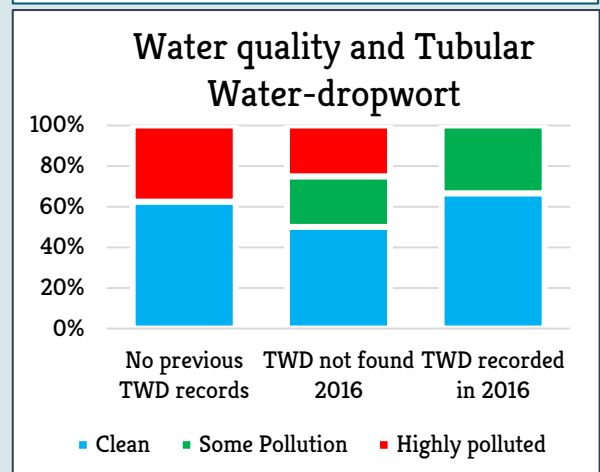
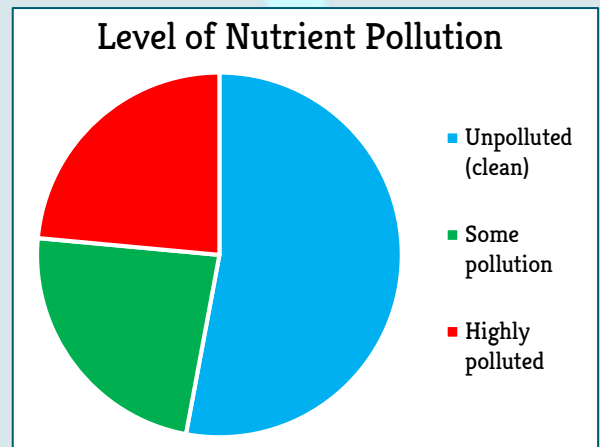
The North Blackpool Pond Trail is a green corridor (21 ponds, a lake, ditches and a reedbed) which runs through Bispham, on the outskirts of Blackpool. The ponds were once part of an extensive wetland area and many still retain important features and species of significant conservation importance including the scarce pond plant Tubular Water-dropwort and European protected Great Crested Newt.

## Survey aim and results

Members of the North Blackpool Pond Trail Friends Group collected water samples from 15 ponds, Kincaig Lake and the Flowering Dyke in July and August 2016. The aim was to count the number of Tubular Water-dropwort plants at each site and use water quality as one of the metrics to assess pond quality.

Nine ponds (53%) showed no evidence of nutrient pollution. Four ponds showed some evidence of phosphate pollution (0.05-0.1 mg per L). The remaining two ponds, Kincaig Lake and the Flowering Dyke had high levels of phosphate pollution. There was no evidence of nitrate pollution on the North Blackpool Pond Trail.

In 2016, Tubular Water-dropwort was recorded from ponds which were mostly unpolluted. The pond with the highest number of plants (c. 2000 individuals) had phosphate levels less than 0.02 mg per L. The pond with the lowest Tubular Water-dropwort abundance had some evidence of nutrient pollution, only 15 plants were recorded.



Tubular Water-dropwort was not found at four ponds where it had been recorded in 2011. These were a mixture of unpolluted, some evidence of phosphate pollution and polluted sites. Sites where Tubular Water-dropwort had never been recorded, were a mixture of unpolluted and polluted sites.

### Understanding the results

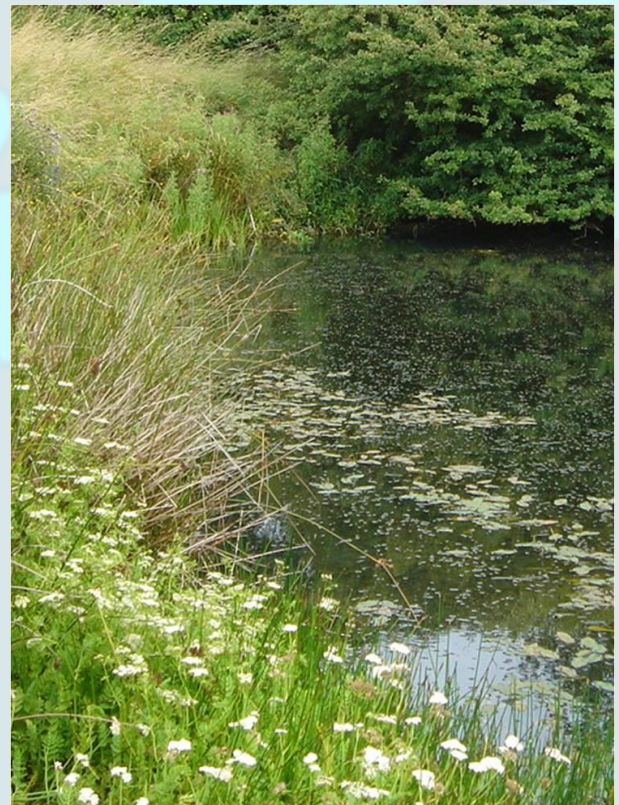
As with many urban fringe sites, the ponds and other waterbodies of the North Blackpool Pond Trail are under threat from development, invasive species, rubbish dumping, disturbance and pollution. It is encouraging to find that so many of the ponds remain unpolluted and free from nutrient pollution. These ponds remain an incredibly valuable refuge for freshwater wildlife at a local, regional and national level.

Unfortunately, some ponds are impacted by phosphate pollution. In this area, sources of nutrient pollution will include road runoff containing detergents and animal waste (including from pets), food thrown in for fish and wildfowl, and fish and duck excrement where they occur in large numbers.

The re-survey of known sites has shown that Tubular Water-dropwort is thriving in the cleanest pond in the pond trail, but it is declining in ponds with nutrient pollution. The survey has identified the ponds which need protection.

Tubular Water-dropwort has declined from some ponds where nutrient pollution was not a problem. We have identified that dominance by other plants may be restricting its growth at these ponds and that management may help Tubular Water-dropwort to recover at these clean water ponds.

Given the value of the North Blackpool Pond Trail for Tubular Water-dropwort we are also considering introducing it to other suitable ponds in the pond trail. The clean water survey has helped to identify ponds which may be suitable because they are free from nutrient pollution.



*More than 2000 Tubular Water-dropwort plants were recorded from this clean water pond on the North Blackpool Pond Trail in 2016*

The Clean Water for Wildlife data was collected as part of Freshwater Habitats Trust's Heritage Lottery Funded project 'People, Ponds and Water' [freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/people-ponds-water](http://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/people-ponds-water). The North Blackpool Pond Trail is also one of 70 Flagship Pond Sites we are working on as part of the People, ponds and Water project.

Flagship Ponds are the very best pond sites in England and Wales; identified because they support populations of the some of the UK's rarest species and because they represent some of the least impacted most diverse pond habitats remaining in the country. The aim is to work on a bespoke basis, to support site managers and volunteer groups to best ensure site quality and key species can be maintained and enhanced.

### The North Blackpool Pond Trail partnership

The conservation work on the North Blackpool Pond Trail has been achieved by the work of Blackpool Conservation Team (a partnership between Groundwork and Blackpool Council), which includes members of the North Blackpool Pond Trail Friends Group. For more information visit their Facebook page "[North Blackpool Pond Trail](#)".



Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan is a charity which supports the protection and improvement of the physical, natural and social environment of the region. Special thanks must go to Pauline Taylor of Groundworks and the other members of the Friends Group who have worked tirelessly on the North Blackpool Pond Trail to manage the ponds and raise the profile of this special place for freshwater wildlife.