

# News from the Ecochurch Team



At COP 15 in December countries agreed to a target of 30% of the world's land area and oceans to be in a good state for nature by 2030, but without really reaching an agreement as to how this was to be achieved. Back in 1971 around 100 countries came together in Iran under the auspices of the UN and signed the Convention on Wetlands. There are now 172 signatories committed to designating and caring for wetland sites of international importance (Ramsar sites) in their countries, 2500 in total. However, despite this, more than 35% of wetlands worldwide have been degraded or lost since 1970 showing that talk alone is not necessarily enough.

The UN has designated 2nd February each year as World Wetlands Day to raise awareness globally of the importance of wetlands and the need to care for them. Wetlands are areas which are flooded or saturated for at least part of the year and include lakes, rivers, marshes and peatland inland and salt marsh, estuaries, mangroves on the coast. Human made wetlands such as rice paddies, fish ponds and gravel pits are also important. Wetlands deliver essential services including filtering and storing our water supply, protecting us from flooding, providing habitats for a range of plants and animals and storing carbon.

In the UK there are 180 Ramsar sites of which 5 are in Cambridgeshire the Ouse and Nene Washes and Chippenham, Woodwalton and Wicken Fens. The two washes were built to help drain the Fens and also to store flood water and are now important sites for wintering and breeding birds. The three Fens are different in character but all have a high biodiversity. Wicken and Woodwalton are both expanding to protect the carbon stored in the peat on which they, and surrounding arable land, sits and provide a larger area for wildlife.

The geology of Cambridgeshire is such that over the years removal of large amounts of clay, sand and gravel for construction has left lakes including Milton Country Park and RSPB reserves Ouse Fen and Fen Drayton Lakes. The rivers Cam and Ouse and their tributaries are important, especially where there is washland beside the river.

Why not visit a wetland? Milton Country Park and the River Cam are only a short walk away and Wicken Fen a short drive. You could combine a shopping trip to Ely with a walk by the River Ouse to Roswell Pits or visit WWT Welney before the end of February for a swan feed.

Please pray that governments, including our own, strengthen protection for wetlands and other habitats. Also for the Ecochurch team as they arrange talks on environmental issues.