

## **PARTNER REPRESENTATIVE PROFILE: IAN BARKER— ECOLOGIST, NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

Little did I know when I undertook a term studying freshwater ecology at college that I would one day be writing about it in a water based newsletter and working with the conservation charity Freshwater Habitats Trust whose founders helped deliver the course content. At that time Pond Conservation as it was then known was an embryonic organisation which then grew into the successful Freshwater Habitats Trust that we know today as co-host in the Catchment Partnership.

I currently work as an ecologist within the Wildlife and Conservation Team of the New Forest National Park Authority and I am the Authority's lead in co-hosting the New Forest Catchment Partnership. I've known the New Forest for almost 30 years and took up the role of ecologist at the Authority soon after it starting fully operating in 2006. Although I'd been working locally for a number of years, I originally come from Cambridgeshire where my interest in the natural environment began in my youth with visits to

reserves such as Wicken Fen, Hayley Wood and the North Norfolk coast. Since then I've been fortunate to work in a range of conservation roles with the Wildlife Trusts, local Councils, ADAS and the Countryside Commission, however working in the New Forest area is something really special for me.

My position at the New Forest National Park Authority has encompassed a range roles over the years from assessing planning applications and producing strategic biodiversity plans, to practical conservation work and species survey work. The New Forest is such an amazing and intriguing place, it's so varied and there's always something new to learn. It's also great to be able to work with such a range of local experts who bring with them knowledge and insight into the area. That is particularly true of the Catchment Partnership, and I've found that working for the National Park Authority as a co-host has been particularly rewarding.

It was thanks to the enthusiasm of experts such as the Freshwater Habitats Trust and local people that we were able to make a successful bid to the government to become one of only twelve pilot areas to trial the Catchment Based Approach and develop a Catchment Partnership. Our feedback and local expertise has helped shape national best practice and garner government support for the approach.

From a personal perspective though, what I enjoy most is that we have been able to translate the vision of local people and their passion for conserving the Forest's environment into effective action on the ground. Thanks to everyone who has helped support the work of the Partnership over the years in order to achieve this, let's hope it can continue for years to come!

Ian Barker, Ecologist, New Forest National Park Authority.



