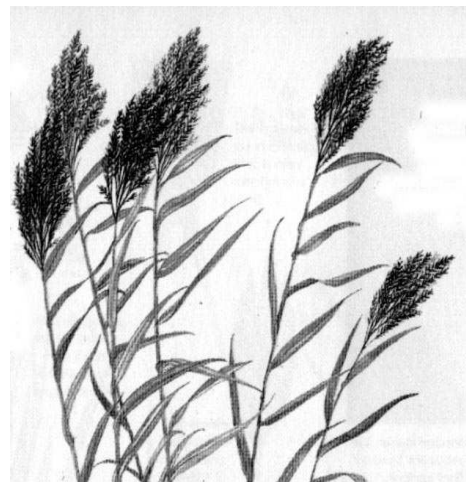




REEDBEDS

1. INTRODUCTION

Reedbeds are wetlands dominated by, but not necessarily composed purely of, stands of the common reed (*Phragmites australis*). They can include areas of reed which are both wet and dry at their base but usually the water table is at or above ground level for much of the year. The UK reedbed resource is put at c.5000ha but only 5.5% of sites are larger than 20ha. Wet reedbeds have more importance for biodiversity priority species. Ideally, wet reedbeds should be encouraged to grade into dry reedbeds, tall fen and carr or wet woodland, as some species require specific parts of the transition zones or require habitat mosaics that incorporate reedbeds.



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In the United Kingdom, four species of birds are highly dependent on reedbeds for their survival: reed warbler, bearded tit, marsh harrier and bittern. They can also provide nesting, roosting or feeding sites for various songbirds, waders, rails and wildfowl. Several raptor species, such as hen harrier, use reedbeds for roosting in winter. In addition, a variety of Red Data Book, Nationally Scarce and Regionally Scarce invertebrate species are closely associated with reedbeds in the sub-region, including the flies *Lipara rufitarsis* and *Anthomyza collini* and various wainscot moths including silky wainscot and brown-veined wainscot.

However, the relatively small and fragmented nature of the reedbeds in the sub-region and their isolation from larger UK reedbeds mean that their biodiversity value, although still very rich, is less than reedbeds in counties like Norfolk and Suffolk. Warwickshire sites are of value as roosting sites for yellowhammer, corn bunting and starling and support breeding sites for water rail, snipe and our few Cetti's Warblers. A few non-breeding bitterns (approximately 5% of the British population) also inhabit a reedbed at one site, and it is hoped that they can be attracted to Brandon Marsh, where the reedbeds are being enlarged.

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|-----------|--|------------------|
| 2. | OUR OBJECTIVES & TARGETS | Target |
| A. | To identify all remaining reedbeds in the county. | by 2003 |
| B. | To maintain the current extent of all reedbeds above 0.5ha | 2002-2015 |
| C. | To maintain the extent and maintain / improve the condition of existing reedbeds with priority given to those holding UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species & Red Data Book species. | by 2005 |
| D. | Seek to ensure all sites above 2ha are managed primarily for their nature conservation interest. | by 2004 |
| E. | To secure at least one breeding pair of bitterns in the county | by 2010 |
| F. | To increase the extent of the habitat by creating an additional 50ha of wet reedbed , two areas of which to be at least 10ha. | by 2010 |
| G. | To promote good management practice and to share knowledge | 2002-2015 |

ASSOCIATED HABITAT PLANS

- Rivers & Streams
- Ponds, Lakes & Reservoirs
- Quarries & Gravel Pits

ASSOCIATED SPECIES PLANS

- Bittern
- Farmland Birds
- Water Vole
- Otter

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

- *Identify and rehabilitate by 2000 the priority areas of existing reedbed (targeting those of 10 ha or more) and maintain this thereafter by active management.*

This target should provide habitat for 40 pairs of bitterns and provide optimum conditions for other reedbed species and should be targeted primarily in the south-east.

- *Create 1,200 ha of new reedbed on land of low nature conservation interest by 2010.*

The creation of new reedbed should be in blocks of at least 20ha with priority for creation in areas near to existing habitat, and linking to this wherever possible. The target should provide habitat for an estimated 60 breeding pairs of bitterns boosting numbers to previous levels. It should be targeted in the south-east of Britain.

4. CURRENT STATUS

Reedbeds are not common or extensive in the sub-region, being mainly associated with sand and gravel extraction within certain river valleys (e.g. the Tame and Avon), some water-filled limestone quarries, a few mining subsidence pools and formal lakes in country house estates, and occasionally as narrow fringes of reed along rivers, canals and ditches.

There are dozens of small reed beds, though large ones (i.e. those shown in the Habitat Biodiversity Audit maps) are few in number and probably only account for 20-25ha. Brandon Marsh SSSI supports the largest area (about 12ha). Other important sites include Coombe Country Park, Ladywalk Reserve, the Kingsbury Water Park-Middleton Hall complex, the Alvecote Pools complex, Warwick Castle Park, Claybrookes Marsh and Bishops Bowl Quarry. Some small fragments of reedbed, mainly surrounding open water pools occur at Ufton Fields – an important site for wainscot moths.

At Brandon Marsh SSSI, development of a new 8ha reedbed commenced on Coventry City Council-owned land during 1998 with financial support of the Environment Agency and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This project was completed in 2003 under the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme via Waste Cycling Environmental Limited (WREN). Additionally, in 2006 a further reedbed development was completed on the reserve's West Marsh with support from the Environment Agency. New fringing reedbed development is also planned for Kingsbury Water Park. At Middleton Lakes on the county border adjoining Staffordshire, the RSPB are taking over from Hanson Aggregates the former sand and gravel quarries, developing a reserve with a variety of wetland habitats including areas of reedbeds, the majority of which will be in Warwickshire.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

Few of the reedbed sites are notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The largest reedbed SSSI being at Brandon Marsh. Other significant ones include Coombe Country Park and Claybrookes.

Several other reedbeds are classified as actual or proposed SINC's (e.g. Ladywalk and New Waters), or are included within Country Parks such as Kingsbury Water Park. The new reedbeds at Middleton Lakes will be within the new RSPB reserve established during 2007.

4.2 Current Factors Affecting The Habitat

- **Small total area of habitat** and small population sizes of several key species dependent on the habitat
- **Small size and often isolated nature of individual reedbeds** – can limit the number of unusual and specialist species present and reduce their ability to colonise other reedbeds or survive adverse conditions such as drought (many of which require larger reedbeds).
- **Lack of, or inappropriate management** of some of the existing reedbeds leading to drying out, scrub encroachment and succession to woodland.

- **Recreational pressure** – can reduce bird populations, either through noise or physical disturbance; litter and arson have also been problems at some sites.
- **Development pressure** and land use change.

5. CURRENT LOCAL ACTION

- Further new reedbed creation schemes are possible based on present or proposed new nature reserves, flood control projects in river floodplains, as a result of sand and gravel extraction and urban surface water drainage schemes.
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is actively managing an area of some 9ha of reedbeds at the Brandon Marsh SSSI. A windpump was installed (Spring 2002) to transfer water from the Avon floodplain to the above higher level area. Additionally, an 8ha reedbed creation scheme on the Newlands area of the site began in 1998.
- A new fringe reedbed has been planted at Kingsbury Water Park as part of the enhancement of its nature reserve. (WCC)
- At Coombe Country Park the present reedbed of 1ha is being extended with the planned development of additional fringe reedbeds around parts of the large water body. (CCC)
- A new wetland development at the Leam Valley Local Nature Reserve will involve the creation of a mosaic of some 4ha of wetland habitats including reedbeds. The project is jointly being managed by Warwick District Council in partnership with WWT.
- RSPB have taken over the Hanson Aggregates site where some 23ha of wetland habitat, including reedbeds at Middleton Hall which straddles the Warwickshire/Staffordshire county border, result from restoration following sand and gravel extraction
- Statutory conservation agencies, FWAG, WWT and RSPB staff can provide advice on appropriate management, rehabilitation, extension and creation of reedbeds.
- Many of the reedbeds, particularly those of SSSI status, will be subject to water level management plans prepared by the operating authority under a DEFRA initiative.
- The monitoring/recording of various invertebrate groups and birds has been taking place at many reedbed sites through the activities of Warwickshire and Coventry Museums and amateur naturalists (especially ornithologists).

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS (some dates amended – Core Steering Group – Feb 2008)

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By	Meets objective
Policy & Legislation				
PL1. Ensure that all relevant habitat policy is included in Local Planning Documents (see ODPM Planning Policy Statement PPS9).	LBAPSG	NWBC WDC SDC CCC RBC	2002-2015	A
PL2. Ensure that any site meeting the relevant criteria is considered for designation as an SSSI.	NE	WWT BC CCC EA FWAG WMBC LA LBAPSG NWBC AC RBC WSP RSPB STW SDC WCC WDC WM HBA	2002-2015	A
PL3. Review and renotify all qualifying reedbed sites as SINCs and enter onto database.	WSP		2005	A
PL4. Encourage the creation of a funding scheme available for reedbed creation and expansion projects.	NE	STW WCC	2003	B,C, F
PL5. Promote the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes in all new development.	LBAPSG	WWT NE SDC WDC RBC CCC NWBC EA	2003-2015	F
Site / Species Safeguard & Management				
SM1. Actively work to ensure development proposals do not affect the integrity of conservation of existing and proposed reedbeds.	RBC	WWT EA NWBC SDC WDC CCC	2002-2015	B,C, G
SM2. Determine priority sites for reedbed extension. Support proposals to extend Ladywalk reedbed.	WWT	WMBC	2005	F
SM3. Ensure that water level management plans prepared for all reedbed SSSIs are designed to provide optimal water, including the water table and management conditions and implement fully.	NE	WWT EA WDC RBC NWBC SDC CCC	2002-2015	B, G

SM4. Promote inclusion of reedbed habitat in after-use schemes as a condition of mineral extraction licensing where appropriate.	LBAPSG	WM WCC WWT ACs	2003-2015	B, G
SM5. Attempt to secure at least one pair of breeding bitterns in the sub-region.	WMBC	RSPB	2010	E
SM7. Actively recommend measures to increase the extent of connectivity and maintain options to expand area of habitat.	LBAPSG	WCC LAs NE WWT	2008-2015	F, G
Advisory				
A1. Inform landowners of their reedbed resource and advise accordingly. Seek to target landowners on suitable grant aid.	FWAG	RSPB EA NE WWT	2002-2015	E
A2. Make landowners aware of sources of information, advice and grants in relation to Best practice for reedbeds.	FWAG	WWT EA	2003	B
Research & Monitoring				
RM1. Establish appropriate survey and research work to define priority sites and identify potential opportunities.	NE	EA RSPB WWT	2003	E
RM2. Establish an accurate database on the County's reedbed sites to be transferred to GIS when available.	HBA	EA WWT	2005	A
RM3. Review the monitoring of key species of birds and invertebrates and seek to address any gaps in monitoring requirements.	WM	BC RSPB WMBC	2005	C, D
Communication, Education & Publicity				
CP1. Increase public awareness of the importance of, and threats to reedbeds and the need for conservation action.	WWT	NE EA RSPB FWAG	2002-2015	B, G
CP2. Organise and deliver reedbed management training days to reedbed owners in order to illustrate best management techniques.	WWT	FWAG EA RSPB FWAG	2003	B, G
CP3. Raise profile of reedbeds in the county by appropriate local publicity around surveys and advice.	WWT	FWAG	2002-2015	B

CP4. Determine the potential for and promote the creation of reedbeds >0.5ha as a filter for nitrate removal, where practicable.	STW	NE WCC WWT	2010	C
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Abbreviations: AC – Aggregate Company, BC – Butterfly Conservation, CCC – Coventry City Council, EA - Environment Agency, NE – Natural England, FWAG – Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit, LA – Local Authority, LBAPSG – Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, NWBC – North Warwickshire Borough Council, RBC – Rugby Borough Council, RSPB – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, STW - Severn Trent Water, SDC – Stratford District Council, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, WCC – Warwickshire County Council, WDC- Warwick District Council, WM – Warwickshire Museum, WMBC - West Midland Bird Club, WSP – Wildlife Sites Project.

7. REFERENCES (see LBAP Bibliography web page)

8. FURTHER INFORMATION (see separate Links web page for links to web sites)

UK Reedbeds Biodiversity Action Plan no.19:

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Buglife (2004) Information on the habitat-management requirements of key invertebrates . CD-Rom £34.99 from Beverley Doyle by email at:

beverley.doyle@buglife.org.uk

9. CONTACT

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