Eutrophic standing waters

Current UK status and trends
No accurate estimate exists for the total area of this habitat in Britain, but there may be around 54,000 hectares in England. Overall trends are not clear but new eutrophic standing waters have been created in many areas through quarrying in floodplains and reservoir construction. Fully natural lakes are now quite rare.

Estimated current Northamptonshire resource
There are at least 1600 hectares of standing open water in Northamptonshire ranging from small lakes to Pitsford Water. The proportion of this classed as eutrophic is unknown but will be significant.

Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015
Many of Northamptonshire's large open water bodies are protected as LWS and/or SSSI. Since 2011, most gravel pits in the Nene Valley are also protected as a Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. Efforts are under way to understand and deal with direct and indirect threats to this habitat, including recreational disturbance.

Lead partner
Natural England

Target areas

Habitat Description

Eutrophic standing waters are highly productive because plant nutrients are plentiful, either naturally or as a result of artificial enrichment. In their natural state eutrophic waters have high biodiversity; planktonic algae and zooplankton are abundant in the water column, submerged vegetation is diverse and numerous species of invertebrate and fish are present, in turn supporting a diverse breeding and wintering bird assemblage and other species like otters. This habitat includes lakes, reservoirs and canals.

To prevent overlap with the Pond Action Plan, Eutrophic Standing Waters should be considered as areas of open, standing water over 2 hectares in size.

Main issues and threats

- Diffuse pollution from agricultural and urban runoff, causing nutrient enrichment
- Overstocking with coarse fish

- Disturbance and habitat degradation from water-based recreation and inappropriate shoreline development
- Recreational disturbance driven by nearby urban growth
- Impacts on native wildlife of alien species introduced accidentally or intentionally, *e.g.* signal crayfish, zander, Japanese knotweed, mink

General strategy

- There is no urgent need for large new open water bodies to be created
- The existing resource needs to be managed carefully to reconcile demand for recreation and leisure opportunities with wildlife value. Open water habitats play a key role in managing landscape quality and delivering green infrastructure opportunities.
- The impacts of introduced species need to be monitored carefully and mitigation measures incorporated into site management plans if necessary. Management of some introduced species will require a coordinated catchment-wide strategy to be effective.
- The effects of diffuse pollution on eutrophic standing waters in the county should be kept under review. Agri-environment schemes and the planning system should be used as appropriate to control and where possible reduce diffuse pollution problems.

Targets

1. Maintain the condition of all eutrophic standing waters of known conservation importance currently judged in good condition and bring into good condition all LWS and SSSI eutrophic standing waters not currently so

Actions

A.	Provide conservation and enhancement advice to landowners though LWS and SSSI work	Wildlife Trust Natural England
B.	Produce SPA Supplementary Planning Document	Natural England RSPB
C.	Respond to all planning applications and other proposals subject to a consenting scheme where these have the potential to damage or destroy the features of interest of a eutrophic lake designated as LWS, SSSI or SPA	Natural England Wildlife Trust Local authorities RSPB
D.	Monitor the occurrence and impacts of invasive non-native species (*e.g.* mink, signal crayfish, Crassula) in eutrophic habitats and where necessary, identify control measures in management plans and implement accordingly	Natural England Wildlife Trust Environment Agency NBRC
E.	Maintain a register of occurrence of invasive non-native species	NBRC County Recorders
F.	Research the effects of diffuse pollution on designated eutrophic standing waters in Northamptonshire and produce recommendations with an action plan as necessary	Environment Agency Natural England Anglian Water

G.	Help landowners to extend and create semi-natural habitats around the margins of eutrophic standing waters to help buffer the effects of diffuse pollution and silt, particularly through effective use of agri-environment schemes	Wildlife Trust RSPB Natural England
H.	Provide advice and help landowners implement measures to address diffuse water pollution through Catchment Sensitive Farming and other schemes	RNRP Anglian Water Environment Agency

Flagship Species

- Common toad
- Grass-wrack pondweed
- Otter
- Water vole

Further information and management advice

- ► Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust
- ► Flora Locale restoration library
- ► Information on canals and wildlife from Canals and Rivers Trust
- ► Nature after minerals – grassland creation advice (from RSPB)
- ► Buglife's management advice for invertebrates