

Ponds

Current UK status and trends

Around 500,000 in England and Wales. Historic decline in numbers but on the increase through the Million Ponds Project.

Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

Within Northamptonshire's Local Wildlife Sites 153ha of open water in is classified as pond. There will be many more across the wider countryside, however the number that would qualify as BAP habitat is unknown.

Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

Wildlife friendly ponds have been created across the county, including 39 through HLS

Lead partner

Natural England

Target areas



Habitat description



Ponds are defined as small water bodies between 1m² and 2ha that hold water for more than four months in a year. Ponds can be formed naturally in depressions created by glacial activity, natural subsidence or river activity. They can also be artificial, in gardens, village greens and rural areas, created by landowners for fishing, shooting, livestock watering, aesthetic or amenity purposes. The pond habitat includes the open water zone, which may contain submerged, free floating or floating-leaved vegetation, and water fringe vegetation. It also includes adjacent wetland habitats with

contiguous water levels that are less than 0.25ha.

To be considered BAP habitat a pond must meet the above description and one of the following criteria:

- Habitats of international importance: ponds that meet criteria under Annex I of the Habitats Directive
- Species of high conservation importance: ponds supporting Red Data Book species, UK BAP species, species fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedules 5 and 8, Habitats Directive Annex II species, a Nationally Scarce wetland plant species, or three Nationally Scarce aquatic invertebrate species
- Exceptional assemblages of key biotic groups: ponds supporting exceptional populations or numbers of key species. Based on (i) criteria specified in guidelines for the selection

of biological SSSIs (currently amphibians and dragonflies only), and (ii) exceptionally rich sites for plants or invertebrates (i.e. supporting ≥ 30 wetland plant species or ≥ 50 aquatic macroinvertebrate species).

- Ponds of high ecological quality: ponds classified in the top PSYM category (“high”) for ecological quality (i.e. having a PSYM score $\geq 75\%$).¹
- Other important ponds: individual ponds or groups of ponds with a limited geographic distribution recognised as important because of their age, rarity of type or landscape context e.g. pingos, duneslack ponds, machair ponds.

In 2015, 115 Northamptonshire Local Wildlife Sites included at least one pond. Ponds provide habitat for invertebrates, which in turn attract foraging birds and bats. Managing ponds for biodiversity provides areas for water voles to feed, dragonfly larvae to develop and for newts to breed and lay their eggs.

Main issues and threats

- Lack of management leading to gradual loss of open water through siltation, build up of dead plant material and expansion of marginal vegetation
- Infilling of farm ponds that no longer have a specific function
- Nutrient enrichment (eutrophication) resulting from agricultural runoff and leaching
- Declining water quality and increasing pollution, both point source and diffuse
- Unrestrained livestock grazing can result in the loss of fringe habitats and marginal zones of farm ponds
- Invasive and non-native garden plant and fish species can seriously affect indigenous flora and fauna

General strategy

- Improve the ecological value of ponds by promoting management for nature conservation
- Reintroduce management of existing ponds and create new ponds, funded primarily through the Countryside Stewardship or Million Ponds Project (advice can be provided by The Wildlife Trust or Freshwater Habitats Trust)
- Create a full range of successional stages at every pond, from open water, through marginal zones, to scrub, woodland or grassland
- Maintain water quality by controlling agricultural inputs and point source pollution
- Recognise the value of temporary pools and protect them from infilling or excavation

Targets

1. Maintain the current extent of at least BAP habitat ponds
2. Achieve wildlife-friendly management of 50 ponds

¹ PSYM = Predictive System for Multimetrics, a method for assessing the biological quality of still waters in England and Wales. Plant species and/or invertebrate families are surveyed using a standard method. The PSYM model uses environmental data to predict which plants and animals should be present in the waterbody if it were pristine. It then compares the predicted and actual survey data to provide a single value which summarises the waterbody's overall ecological quality.

3. Create 50 wildlife-friendly ponds

Actions

A.	Re-introduce management and restoration of existing ponds through appropriate Countryside Stewardship (CS) prescriptions for target habitats/species	Natural England RNRP Wildlife Trust
B.	Through Section 106 agreements/new developments ensure that ponds of LWS standard are created, restored or enhanced wherever appropriate	Developers Local authorities Wildlife Trust
C.	Encourage the creation of new ponds through the use of CS and other funding streams. A full range of successional stages should be created at every pond, from open water, through marginal zones, to scrub, woodland or grassland.	Natural England Froglife Wildlife Trust

Flagship species

- Common toad
- Grass snake
- Great crested newt
- Water vole

Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Freshwater Habitat Trust research library](#)
- ▶ [Flora Locale's restoration library](#)
- ▶ [Just Add Water pond creation leaflet](#) (from Froglife)
- ▶ [Pond Creation Toolkit](#) (from Freshwater Habitat Trust)
- ▶ [Managing farmland for invertebrates – ponds and ditches](#) (from Buglife)