

# Wet woodland

## Current UK status and trends

A rough estimate of UK wet woodland habitat is between 50,000 and 70,000ha

## Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

Approximately 170ha

## Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

16ha of wet woodland brought into management under environmental stewardship

## Lead partner

Wildlife Trust

## Target areas



## Habitat description



Wet woodlands occur on poorly drained or seasonally wet soils, usually with alder, birch and willows as the predominant tree species. It is found on floodplains, as successional habitat on fens and bogs, around water bodies and along stream and hillside flushes. Boundaries with dry woodland may be sharp or gradual and can change over time though natural processes or as a result of human influence. Wet woodlands are often found in mosaic with other key woodland habitats. There are 7 NVC wet woodland communities: W1 – 7.

Wet woodland has a canopy usually dominated by willow (*Salix* sp.), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) or birch (*Betula* sp.) but stands vary considerably in their overall appearance. Riverside trees are also included, and are individuals that line the riverbanks throughout the county. These are important landscape features and support a wide range of invertebrates and other species.

## Main issues and threats

- Very little remaining in Northamptonshire. Much is isolated in small fragments, dangerously reducing species' population sizes and making it impossible for individuals to move between them.
- Alteration of hydrology: flood prevention measures and water table lowering through drainage or abstraction lead to succession away from wet woodland
- Damage from mechanical operations, which have a detrimental effect on ground flora
- Over-tidiness resulting in the removal of dead trees and fallen dead wood
- Diseases such as Phytophthora, a root disease of alder

## General strategy

- Detailed survey to identify wet woodland sites and those that could support wet woodland
- Sympathetic management and restoration of existing sites, funded primarily through Countryside Stewardship (advice can be provided by The Wildlife Trust)
- Maintain as a successional stage between open wetland areas and drier woodland. Particularly important within wet woodlands is a mosaic of habitats including lichen and moss covered trees, areas of higher ground, bare mud, stands of mature trees, clearings and rides, transitional edge habitat, fallen, submerged and standing dead wood and water bodies

## Targets

1. Maintain the current extent of wet woodland priority habitat
2. Achieve favourable condition on 20ha of wet woodland habitat by 2020
3. Restore 10ha of degraded (i.e. dried out) wet woodland habitat to LWS standard by 2020
4. Create 10ha of LWS-standard wet woodland on non-wooded or plantation sites by 2020

## Actions

<b>A.</b> Ensure that existing wet woodland within designated sites is maintained in good condition through the control of water levels	Wildlife Trust Natural England Environment Agency
<b>B.</b> Identify the location of all wet woodland outside of designated sites, identify new Local Wildlife Sites and provide advice to landowners	Wildlife Trust NBRC
<b>C.</b> Provide management advice and incentives (through Countryside Stewardship) to owners of wet woodland outside of designated sites in order to achieve LWS condition	Natural England
<b>D.</b> Create and restore areas of wet woodland through succession from open water bodies in the Nene Valley by 2020	Wildlife Trust
<b>E.</b> Create and restore wet woodland through conditions on planning applications by 2020	Developers Local authorities Wildlife Trust

## Flagship species



Stefan Bengtsson

FC Franklin

Graham Canny

- Lesser spotted woodpecker
- Marsh tit
- Willow tit

### **Further information and management advice**

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat information from Natural England](#)
- ▶ [Management advice from Forestry Commission](#)
- ▶ [Management advice from Devon Biodiversity Records Centre](#)
- ▶ [Management advice for invertebrates](#) (from Buglife)