

Plans

HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR WET BROADLEAVED WOODLAND

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CURRENT STATUS

Wet broadleaved woodlands occur on poorly drained or seasonally wet soils. They are generally found along river valley floodplains and in close association with running and standing water, although they may also occur in wet hollows within dry woodland. Large areas of secondary wet woodland have arisen through natural colonisation of old gravel pits and areas of mining subsidence. Plantations of poplar and willow also fall within this action plan.

At least six wet woodland types occur in Nottinghamshire, with rare types being particularly well represented on the Misson Training Area SSSI in the north of the County.

Wet woodlands are generally characterised by a canopy of alder or willow, with a wide variety of plant species making up the ground flora. A high diversity of invertebrates, such as craneflies, hoverflies and snails, are associated with wet woodland, whilst plantations of poplar in the County have been found to harbour a number of scarce moth species. In addition, the habitat provides food and shelter for a wide variety of vertebrates. Insect-feeding birds such as tits find bountiful winter feeding in the trees whilst the dense ground layer and tree roots can provide cover for otters and woodcock. Wet woodland can also provide shelter for fish fry during floods of the main river channel.

Due to its fragmentary nature, it is difficult to quantify accurately the wet woodland resource in Nottinghamshire. Before man began to have a significant impact on the landscape, much of England would have been wooded. With the exception of Sherwood, however, modern Nottinghamshire is not a well wooded County. Ancient woodland constitutes only 14% of the total woodland area, and ancient wet woodland is restricted to isolated fragments. Although riverside tree stands can be quite extensive, they are generally narrow strips and the total extent of ancient wet woodland is likely to be low.

With floodplain modification over the last few hundred years, all ancient woodland has been lost from the floodplain of the main Trent course, leaving stands which are much

Plans

younger and smaller than those which might be found in pristine lowland river systems. A number of examples of old willow holts are still in existence, but many of them are neglected.

THREATS

The main factors currently affecting the County's wet woodlands are:

- The loss of woodland to agriculture, development or mineral extraction.
- Excessive abstraction from aquifers and surface waters, which can take away the water supply for wet woodlands, as can agricultural drainage adjacent to a site. Mineral extraction and river engineering can further disrupt water tables.
- Flood prevention measures, river control and canalisation, leading to the loss of the dynamic river systems which maintained a mosaic of wetland habitats, as well as the direct loss of wet woodland.
- The excessive grazing of wet woodlands, leading to a lack of regeneration.
- The tendency of woodland managers to 'tidy up' by removing dead wood, which is an essential part of any woodland habitat.
- A lack of appropriate management such as rotational felling or coppicing. The decline of pollarding has led to a subsequent decline in dead wood habitats.
- The threat to alder from Phytophthora root disease.
- Invasive or introduced species such as Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed can threaten the flora and fauna of wet woodland.
- Poor water quality, leading to changes in the composition of ground flora and invertebrate communities.

CURRENT INITIATIVES - EXAMPLES

- A national Habitat Action Plan for Wet Broadleaved Woodland has been prepared.
- Many private landowners manage areas of wet woodland, and have a vital part to play in its conservation.
- The Government's England Forestry Strategy (1999) sets a series of national targets and programmes for protecting and restoring woodlands, including a commitment to reverse the fragmentation of ancient woodlands.
- National forestry policies include a presumption against the clearance of woodland for conversion to other land uses, while a felling licence is required for any felling of over 5m³ of timber. Any approval is likely to require the restoration of felled areas.

Plans

- The Forestry Commission provides support for the management of woodlands through its Woodland Grant Scheme.
- A key objective of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme in the Trent and Belvoir Vales is the establishment of wet woodland.
- The Greenwood Community Forest aims to work with partners to create well designed woodland and bring existing woods back into management throughout the Forest area.
- Severn Trent Water and the Wildlife Trusts' Otters and Rivers Project offers advice to riverside landowners. Cover for otters is a critical habitat consideration, and the planting of riverside trees and maintenance of ancient pollards is a priority.
- A partnership of organisations is involved in the Trent Floodplain Initiative to protect and restore habitats along the whole of the Trent Valley.
- The Forestry Commission manage wet woodland at Elkesley Wood on the River Poulter. A project is underway at Rainworth Water to restore wet woodland habitats.
- The Joint Nature Conservation Committee has a national database of woodland distribution, while English Nature have compiled a provisional ancient woodland inventory for the County.

TARGETS

Falling within the UK Broad Habitat type of Broadleaved, mixed and Yew Woodland, which includes broadleaved stands which have >20% of the cover made up of broadleaved trees. This is also a UK Priority HAP, with the definition of Wet broadleaved woodlands as those that occur on poorly drained or seasonally wet soils. They are generally found along river valley flood plains and in close association with running and standing water, although they may occur in wet hollows within dry woodland. Large areas of secondary wet woodland arise through natural colonisation of old gravel pits and areas of mining subsidence. Plantations of poplar and willow also fall within this HAP. There are at least 6 wet woodland types found in Notts, with rare types particularly well represented at Misson Training area SSSI.

Target Type	Target Text	Units	2005 Baseline	2010 Target	2015 Target
Maintain Extent	Maintain the extent of all existing wet broad-leaved woodland.	Ha	65	65	65
Achieve Condition	Maintain and improve by management existing wet broad-leaved woodland.	Ha	58 (89%, existing habitat in favourable condition)	65 (100% of total habitat resource)	65

Plans

Restoration	Improve the condition of relict habitat so that it qualifies as wet broad-leaved woodland.	Ha		No data	No data
Expansion	Encourage the re-establishment and increase the area of wet broad-leaved woodland.	Ha		No data	No data

PROPOSED ACTION

Policy and legislation

1. Ensure the incorporation of relevant (inter-)national law, policies and guidance into all plans and policies relating to the protection, enhancement and management of wet broad-leaved woodland habitat.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

2. Through planning control or other land use consultation processes, allow no further loss of areas of wet broad-leaved woodland habitat and seek opportunities to enhance existing areas and create new areas through approved development.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

3. Ensure agri-environment, forestry and other funding schemes include appropriate management options and design measures to suit local nature conservation needs.

ACTION: Government Agencies.

Site safeguard and management

4. Review the extent of SSSI coverage of woodland habitat and consider notifying further sites as necessary.

ACTION: Government Agencies.

5. Designate SINC's and declare Local Nature Reserves on appropriate areas of habitat or instigate other appropriate measures for their protection.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

6. Promote the uptake of positive management with owners of SSSIs, LNRs, SINC's and any other areas of wet broad-leaved woodland habitat.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

7. Carry out appropriate habitat management on sites controlled by BAP partners.

Plans

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

8. Ensure sites containing wet broad-leaved woodland habitat have appropriate management plans that are working towards improving site management and condition

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

9. Acquire land to ensure good habitat management or to create habitat.

ACTION: NGO's.

Advisory

10. Provide formal or informal training in management techniques for wet broad-leaved woodland habitat to land managers, site wardens, volunteers, etc.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

11. Establish demonstration sites or projects to demonstrate/publicise good habitat management techniques.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

Future research and monitoring

12. Establish and maintain a monitoring programme (a site register) to determine progress towards county HAP targets.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

13. Ensure that areas of wet broad-leaved woodland habitat are periodically resurveyed to establish extent and condition. Update resulting habitat inventory every 5 years and revise targets and HAPs if necessary.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

Communications and publicity

14. Improve public awareness and appreciation of wet broad-leaved woodland habitat by providing appropriate interpretation, education and access (where appropriate).

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

15. Improve awareness of the value of, and appropriate management techniques for wet broad-leaved woodland habitat among site owners and occupiers.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

What You Can Do

Plans

- If you own or manage areas of wet woodland, contact your local FWAG or FRCA officer for advice on management for wildlife and sources of funding.
- If you are interested in creating wet woodland on your land, contact the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission or Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust for advice.

Species List

The following are examples of species of conservation concern (Appendix A) which are likely to benefit from this action plan:

- Otter
- Bats
- Grasshopper warbler
- Long-eared owl
- Tree pipit
- Woodcock
- Lesser spotted woodpecker
- Dragonflies
- Poplar kitten moth
- Cream-bordered green pea moth
- Alternate leaved golden saxifrage