

Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan

FINAL Progress Report for 2011-2018: 4th Tranche of 8 Plans

IN 2018 WE REPORTED ON 8 ACTION PLANS ASSOCIATED WITH WETLAND HABITATS:

MARSH & SWAMP, WET GRASSLAND & WET WOODLAND **CANALS** **REED BEDS**
BITTERN **OTTER** **BLACK POPLAR** **WATER VOLE** **COMMON SNIFE**

IN 2019 WE WILL BE REPORTING ON 9 PLANS ASSOCIATED WITH WOODLAND

OUR ACTION FOR MARSH & SWAMP, WET GRASSLAND & WET WOODLAND

Thanks to the work of the **Habitat Biodiversity Audit** team, 25 sites that include some wetland have been designated as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Targets for management, restoration and expansion of marsh and swamp have all been exceeded and **115ha of wet grassland** and **77ha of wet woodland** have now been recorded.

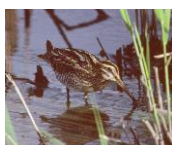


Lesser spotted woodpecker
© BTO

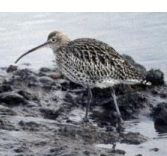
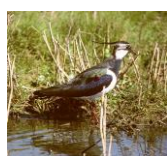


At **Coombe Country Park (Coventry City Council)** the wet woodland around the Main Pool supports the nationally scarce marsh tit, willow tit and lesser spotted woodpecker.

OUR ACTION FOR COMMON SNIFE



The action plans for **SNIFE** and **LAPWING** have been combined and extended into a new **WADING BIRDS** plan to protect two more species, the **REDSHANK** and **CURLEW**. common threats are the lack of suitable habitat due to changes in farming practices and drainage of land, and predation of eggs and young. Photos by Steven Falk



OUR ACTION FOR WATER VOLE

Canal & River Trust and **Warwickshire Wildlife Trust** have achieved an increase in numbers of water voles with the extension of canal banks into the water with planted-up boxes to link populations. **Canal & River Trust** volunteers are using canoes to survey the offside banks of canals for evidence of the presence of voles.

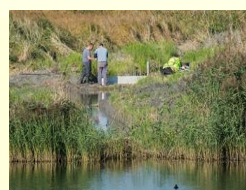
OUR ACTION FOR CANALS

The **Coventry Canal through Coventry** has been designated as the first canal Local Wildlife Site.

Canal & River Trust holds workshops and events on canal management and priority species. Most of the management is done by volunteers. Photos by Mike Slater



OUR ACTION FOR REED BEDS AND BITTERN



Targets for the management and expansion of reed beds have been exceeded, by work at **Coombe Country Park (Coventry City Council)**, **Ladywalk Reserve (West Midlands Bird Club)**, **Brandon Marsh (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)** and four other wetland sites. Reed beds are a habitat for the cuckoo, another nationally scarce bird that lays its eggs in reed warbler nests.

Photos of management and cuckoo at Ladywalk. © Peter Sofley

Sadly, despite the creation of **24ha of new reed bed**, the numbers of bittern has halved at the two over-wintering sites, Brandon and Ladywalk.



OUR ACTION FOR OTTERS

DNA analysis of spraint collected by **70 Canal & River Trust** volunteers has identified **7 individual otters** in the **500km of the Midlands Canals**.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION 2019 - 2020.

There are key plans and actions which are priorities, with the need for further action:

- ❖ **WET WOODLAND:** 77ha has been identified over 12 sites and appropriate management is now needed, including the provision of nest sites for three nationally scarce birds.
- ❖ **SNIFE AND OTHER WADERS / WET GRASSLAND:** 115ha has been identified over 7 sites but it is essential to create more larger blocks of wet marsh habitat to achieve a significant increase in our wading birds.
- ❖ **BITTERN / REED BEDS:** we need to maintain the 24ha of new reed bed in good condition and create a further 76ha by 2026.
- ❖ **BLACK POPLAR:** a source of female cuttings is required to achieve our objective, with opportunities for planting in the Tame Valley Wetlands and along the River Blythe SSSI.
- ❖ **OTTERS:** action is required to tackle roadkill hotspots, e.g. fencing to prevent access to roads and ledges under bridges.
- ❖ **WATER VOLE:** localised project delivery is achieving progress but we need to extend the recovery scheme areas.
- ❖ **CANALS:** sympathetic management of grassland and hedgerow along the canals must be ensured, in particular to meet the habitat requirements of water voles.
- ❖ **MARSH & SWAMP:** good progress especially for expansion. New targets must be set to maintain momentum.

ALSO

- the **FISHES** action plan will be progressed in conjunction with the **Rivers & Streams** plan.
- action plans will be written for **REPTILES (GRASS SNAKE, SLOW WORM, COMMON LIZARD)** and **COMMON TOAD**.

Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan

FINAL Progress Report for 2011-2018: 4th Tranche of 8 Plans

Our 52 Local Biodiversity Action Plans provide a local response to the UK Government's National Action Plans for threatened habitats and species. A county-wide network of over 100 partners, all active in nature conservation, is consulted on these plans and their measurable targets. The partnership works to fulfil the agreed priorities. Most of the plans were written 2002-5 and progress was first reported on in 2007-8. The plans were fully revised 2011-15 and the current reporting programme, in tranches of associated habitats and species, will be complete in 2020.



ACTION PLAN	STATUS 2008-2010	WE ARE REPORTING ON THE FOLLOWING KEY ACTIONS IN 9 OF OUR BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS: Key to status: ↑ Good progress ↑ Some progress ↔ No change ↓ Decline	STATUS 2011-2018	
			ACTION	PLAN
MARSH & SWAMP, WET GRASSLAND & WET WOODLAND	↑ = any progress	Continue to select all qualifying wetland sites as LWSs and enter onto database. 28 sites	↑↑	↑↑
		Ensure that the protection of LWS designated marsh and swamp is included in Local Development and Neighbourhood Plans and any other relevant strategies. In progress	↑	
		Ensure that new minor or major developments aim for net biodiversity gain through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy, No net loss	↑	
		Achieve favourable condition of 6ha of existing marsh and swamp by 2015. 41ha min., at 7 sites	↑↑	
		Restore at least 5ha of degraded marsh and swamp by 2015. 6.5ha min., at 2 sites	↑	
		If suitable sites are identified (see RM1) expand the area of marshland habitat by 1ha by 2015. 43ha min., at 6 sites	↑↑	
		Retain old dead wet wood for nesting sites for lesser spotted woodpecker and willow and marsh tit; supplement with rotten logs with sawdust-filled holes for willow tit nests. 1 site	↑	
		Incorporate wetland mosaic habitat creation and restoration objectives where appropriate, e.g. in minerals and waste strategies as well as in planning casework. 1 site	↑	
		Maintain the age structure of carr woodland by coppicing/ water management. 2 sites min.	↑	
		Monitor condition of SSSI designated marsh and swamp sites, including monitoring of water levels. 3 known sites	↑	
		Record further areas of wet grassland and biodiverse carr woodland. 192ha at 17 sites	↑↑	
COMMON SNIPE	slight ↑	Restore wetland habitats at Brandon Marsh, Ladywalk Reserve, Middleton Lakes, Toft Farm, Lighthorne Quarry, and at other sites with large overwintering populations, to suitable condition for breeding snipe. 50ha min., at 8 sites	↑	↓
		Ensure wet grassland options for breeding waders within HLS are tailored to breeding snipe where appropriate at 4 additional sites. 247ha min., no. of sites not known	↑	
		Develop survey format to identify sites with large overwintering populations , which hold the greatest potential for breeding birds in the future. In progress	↑	
		Conduct wetland assessments at Brandon Marsh, Lighthorne Quarry, Middleton Lakes and Ladywalk and identify any criteria limiting suitability for breeding snipe. No known progress	↔	
REED BED	↑ = any progress	Continue to select all qualifying reed-bed sites as LWSs and enter onto database. 4 sites	↑	↑
		Ensure that the protection of all reed beds is included in Local Development Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and any other relevant strategies. In progress	↑	
		Ensure that new minor or major developments aim for net biodiversity gain through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. No net loss	↑	
		Achieve favourable condition of 6ha of the existing reed beds by 2015 and of a further 13ha by 2026 by appropriate management. Target exceeded with 25ha min. at 11 sites	↑↑	
		Expand the area of wet reed-bed by 31ha by 2015, including 1 site of over 10ha. 24ha at 8 sites, with one site over 10ha.	↑	
		Create reed beds to act as filter for nitrate removal . 1 site	↑	
		Establish appropriate survey and research work to identify potential opportunities for reed bed creation , e.g. Tame Valley Wetlands Living Landscape, including wetland in after-use schemes as a condition of mineral extraction licensing where appropriate. 2 sites	↑	
		Monitor the scale of succession in key reed beds, especially those of SSSI quality, including monitoring of water levels. 1 site	↑	

FULL PROGRESS REPORTS FOR THE 2018 ACTION PLANS AND A LIST OF PARTNERS ARE ON THE WARWICKSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST WEBSITE

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			ACTION	PLAN
BITTERN		Ensure that all known bittern sites are considered for designation as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) , including Ladywalk Reserve at the earliest opportunity. 4 sites		
		Enhance any sites which are important for bitterns by increasing the area and importantly the width of reed-bed which meets the species' needs, including those of wintering birds. 23ha at 7 sites		
		Annually monitor the bittern population. No. of birds overwintering at 2 sites has halved		
		Use the bittern to promote the importance and conservation of reed beds. In progress		
CANALS	= any progress	Continue to select all qualifying canals as LWSs and enter onto database, targeting Coventry Canal, Grand Union Canal (Solihull), Birmingham & Fazeley Canal (Tame Valley). 1 site		
		Ensure that the protection of all LWS designated canals and adjacent areas are included in Local Development and Neighbourhood Plans and other relevant strategies. In progress		
		Ensure that new minor or major developments aim for net biodiversity gain through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. No net loss		
		Continue to implement statutory water objectives for canals through community engagement. Some progress		
		Maintain favourable ecological condition of all canals and adjacent habitats by ensuring the appropriate management of all sites. 3 sites		
		Initiate programmes of positive management to improve canal habitats, particularly in urban areas 3 sites		
		Create additional habitat wherever there are suitable opportunities, e.g. on CRT-owned land adjacent to canals, accounting for the needs of 4 priority spp./ groups. 3 spp./groups		
		Ensure biodiversity is protected and enhanced during all activities including restoration and management. Canal & River Trust to increase biodiversity by 10% by 2025		
		Improve/maintain water quality in line with the Water Framework Directive. 1 canal		
		Where found on the canal systems, monitor otter, water vole, white-clawed crayfish and bats and review data every 5 years. 3 priority spp./ groups		
		Assess connectivity of canals with adjacent wetland habitats, to identify key landscape areas to improve. 2 canals		
		Continue trials and research into soft bank protection and 'dressing up piling'. 2 canals		
		Research water quality at locations where there is a potential or known impact on wildlife, e.g. Earlswood Lakes, in partnership with EA and landowners. 2 sites		
OTTER	= any progress	Undertake practical habitat management to benefit otters, including creation of 3km of buffer strips at least 6-12m wide. 32ha min. and 40m bank at 9 sites		
		Construct at least 3 artificial otter holts per year, either repair of existing holts or building of new ones. 10 holts		
		Identify sites of repeated road kills to direct the installation of under-road pipes. 1 site		
		Consider the habitat requirements of otters in the management agreements of agri-environment schemes in the vicinity of water courses. 160ha min.		
		Monitor otter distribution annually through regular catchment based surveys. Achieved		
		Identify areas for river and wetland habitat restoration and creation . 1 site		
WATER VOLE		Maintain existing populations of water voles on Coventry watercourses, Long Marston and Lower Quinton, R. Anker and Ashby, Coventry and Oxford canals. 3 areas		
		Consider the habitat requirements of water voles in site management plans, e.g. ditch bank management, including agri-environment schemes. 160ha min.		
		Expand existing populations through the sympathetic management and restoration of adjacent habitat, targeting action to particular locations. 11 sites		
		Connect existing wetland corridors around the Hawkesbury and Marston junctions of the Ashby, Coventry and Oxford canals. 4 sites		
		Trial and monitor the use of low-cost habitat improvements , especially on the hard engineered canal side. 1 project		
BLACK POPLAR	progress = any	Since this plan was written in 2002, the local status of the species has changed remarkably. Thanks to the launch in 2005 of the Big Tree Hunt of Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull by Steven Falk, by 2011 the initial list of 30 confirmed specimens had swelled to almost 600 records, one of the highest figures for any county (Falk, 2011). In view of our greater knowledge of the status of the Black Poplar in Warwickshire in 2012, the action plan has been altered to focus action on veteran specimens and increasing the number of females.		

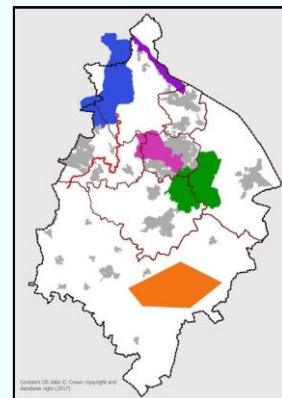
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LANDSCAPE SCALE SCHEMES

These are active on the ground, delivering the first phases of a 50 year vision, and comprise:

- ❖ **Tame Valley Wetlands:** a £2.5m landscape partnership scheme in delivery 2014-2018, led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and a wide partnership of charities, local groups, councils and statutory bodies. In this regionally important area for wildfowl and wetland species, the vision is to create a landscape rich in wildlife and accessible to all. With funding support from HLF and Environment Agency and the donation of 23,500 volunteer hours: 1,949m of hedgerow and 35ha of wetland habitat have been created or restored; 2km of watercourse restored or enhanced; over 6km of footpath improved; 74km of footpath made more accessible through the creation and promotion of 10 new circular trails. Funding for the next phase of the landscape work is being sought. **Key themes identified for future projects are:** landscape scale habitat enhancement; opportunities from strategic planning; community engagement; development of TVW as a visitor destination with projects and events.
- ❖ **Dunsmore Living Landscape (formerly Princethorpe Woodlands)** a wide partnership focussed on managing and restoring ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows. Led by WWT, the partnership's application to HLF was approved in 2016, bringing over £1m grant over 4 years delivery. In June 2018, the project undertook a second approved release of 38 dormice into one of the woodlands, led by the People's Trust for Endangered Species; subsequent monitoring has shown that breeding has occurred, and the dispersal of the dormice through the woodlands will be tracked in 2019 using footprint tunnels.
- ❖ **Southam Lias Grassland Landscape Area:** Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire, supported by VEOLIA & CEMEX, is undertaking a species recovery programme for the small blue butterfly in the Southam area. The project is also helping other rare butterflies such as grizzled and dingy skipper, and the chalk carpet moth.
- ❖ **River Blythe SSSI:** Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is helping to deliver the river restoration implementation plan, commissioned by Environment Agency and Natural England in 2017, and has written monitoring and communication plans.
- ❖ **Anker Valley Living Landscape** and **Sherbourne Living Landscape:** active partnerships have been developed in these areas, including landowners, local authority, the voluntary sector and agency representatives. Initial projects have been identified and mapped. Funding applications are being developed and submitted, and support is sought for these projects.



The Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) Partnership

- ❖ Was established in 1996 by WWT, working with the 7 Local Authorities across Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull, Natural England and the Environment Agency. It is managed by WWT and based at Warwickshire County Council's Ecology Unit in Warwick.
- ❖ Provides up-to-date biodiversity data by surveying all habitats to Phase 1 methodology and to map digitally, with 20% of the area re-surveyed every year. The partnership has been expanded with Kier, managing agents for trunk roads in the sub-region for Highways England.
- ❖ Carries out detailed ground truthing of areas previously mapped from aerial photography has identified further sites, e.g. unrestored calcareous grassland.

The Wildlife Sites Project (LWSP)

- ❖ Began in 1999 to develop and maintain a formalised Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) system for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull, and is part of the HBA Partnership.
- ❖ Designates sites following detailed site habitat survey (Phase 2) and review by a panel of experts. This has been expanded with 2 further local specialists.
- ❖ To date there are a total of **603** LWSs, covering **6873ha** across the sub-region, ranging from woodlands, grasslands, post-industrial sites, hedgerows, rivers and canals. 50% of these are managed; the rest are not managed or information is not available to determine.
- ❖ Ensures that all LWSs receive management guidance and have a detailed site plan, to monitor the success of the management, and to assess their current condition on a 5 year rolling programme.

The Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Local Nature Partnership (LNP) was recognised by Government in 2013

It was established to:

- ❖ Drive positive change in the local natural environment, taking a strategic view of challenges and opportunities.
- ❖ Contribute to achieving the Government's national environmental objectives locally, including identification of local ecological networks.
- ❖ Become local champions influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes.

The LNP works strategically and has Board Members from many sectors: Local Authorities, statutory agencies, Public Health, environment, NGOs and business.

Strategic Aim Themes: improving the quality of life, maximising benefits for society, restoring biodiversity and water quality improvements.

The LNP Board has endorsed a programme of landscape scale habitat restoration projects developed by the LNP Implementation Group, developed the NIA criteria and started to engage business contacts.

NIAs recognised in Warwickshire:
In 2016 the Tame Valley Wetlands became the first locally designated Nature Improvement Area in Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull.

Developing the NIA as a destination to engage more people is a future theme. If you wish to be involved, contact:
enquiries@tamevalleywetlands.co.uk

