



REVISED PLAN JULY 2021

LAKES & RESERVOIRS

1. INTRODUCTION

This action plan covers all natural and man-made still waters larger than 1ha in size and overlaps with a number of other habitat action plans that cover wetland habitats. Ponds are the subject of a separate Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Local 'standing water bodies' (as opposed to flowing 'water courses') come in a great variety of sizes and configurations and include lakes and reservoirs.



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The [UK Ponds Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (BAP) defines ponds as 'permanent and seasonal standing water bodies less than 2ha in size' but in [Higher Level Stewardship](#) the upper limit of a pond is 1ha; for the purposes of this plan, a lake or reservoir is defined as any water body larger than 1ha in size. A more ecologically meaningful distinction might be that ponds tend to be dominated by shallow-water and edge habitats whereas a lake has a true open-water zone where submerged plants and algae predominate.

Many lakes and reservoirs have man-made origin either as ornamental features ([Coombe Pools](#)), for water storage ([Draycote Water](#) and [Shustoke Reservoir](#)), as flood defence features (e.g. balancing pools at places like [Claybrookes Marsh](#) and Baginton Lagoons) or as the flooded worked-out gravel pits and quarries. Some of the best ones, e.g. [Alvecote Pools](#) (a mosaic of ponds and lakes) and [Wyken Slough](#) have also developed accidentally following subsidence of land overlying coal mines.

Most local lakes and reservoirs are classified as 'eutrophic', i.e. having waters rich in mineral (especially phosphates and nitrates) and organic nutrients. This enrichment promotes a proliferation of plant life, particularly algae, which can reduce the dissolved oxygen content and cause the extinction of other organisms, with a tendency for large populations of algae to form in mid-summer which often makes the water green. It also leads to the formation of dark, anaerobic mud on their beds and a tendency to silt up quite quickly. Nutrient enrichment can result from farm run-off, road run-off and other sources of enriched water flowing into a water body and also polluted rain water. At low levels, such enrichment may not affect the ecological diversity (mildly eutrophic water bodies are typically very diverse), but at higher levels it results in acute pollution - 'eutrophication' - creating stagnant water bodies of much lower diversity, with a tendency to produce toxic blue-green algal blooms in hot summers and sometimes characterised by death of aquatic vegetation and surrounding shrubs.

Most water bodies in the county are in an unfavourable condition compared to formerly, due to increased agricultural and industrial runoff and the current fashion of stocking waters with large alien carp which destroy most of the insect and plant life in the water, as well as continually stirring up mud from the bottom (Jon Bowley, pers.comm.2021).

Lakes and reservoirs, where not too enriched, can support a large array of fully aquatic and emergent plants, including 'macrophytes' like water lilies, pondweeds, reeds, and

reed-maces plus microscopic algae. Animals using the water body include fish, a wide range of waterfowl (e.g. ducks, swans, grebes, rails), herons, herptiles (frogs, newts, grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), many types of insect (notably dragonflies, midges, water beetles) and other invertebrates such as water snails, leeches and crustaceans (e.g. crayfish and smaller isopods). Some of these can require very specific parts of a water body or other specific conditions related to water depth, water quality, water body size, water level fluctuations (summer draw-down can benefit many species), plant abundances, the presence/absence of fish or other predators and low levels of disturbance.

The margins of water bodies are very important, and often the most diverse part of a water body. At the best examples, they are characterised by broad fringes of varied emergent and other marginal vegetation (including carr) and plentiful exposed wet mud. Many species of invertebrate have their larval stage located here, and many wetland birds nest in the cover of lake edges, both at ground level (e.g. wildfowl) or higher up (e.g. warblers and herons).

2.	OBJECTIVES*	TARGETS*
Associated Action Plans are: 'Rivers & Streams', 'Reed beds', 'Ponds', 'Marsh & Swamp', 'Quarries & Gravel Pits', 'Parks & Public Open Spaces', 'Bats', 'Otter', 'Water Vole', 'Snipe', 'Bittern', 'Great Crested Newt' and 'White-clawed Crayfish'		
PLEASE CONSULT THE '<i>GENERIC HABITATS</i>' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR OBJECTIVES COMMON TO ALL HABITAT PLANS		
A.	To achieve condition of 102 existing water bodies larger than 1ha which are currently in unfavourable condition, to favourable or recovering, priority being given to those that are designated SSSIs and LWS.	2030
B.	To achieve condition of land buffering water bodies.	2030
*Derived from Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 3 Technical Report (2009) and based on a minimum mapping unit of 0.25ha. Numerical targets have been incorporated into section 6. See Generic Habitats Plan for rationale for derivation of targets and definitions of favourable and unfavourable condition ('Habitats overview' in 'State of the Natural Environment' (NE,2008,p49).		

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

Lakes and Reservoirs are on the current UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) list of Priority Habitats published in 2007 ([Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#)). The targets and objectives for the [Eutrophic Standing Waters](#) BAP, updated in 2010-11, may be seen online.

4. CURRENT STATUS

The Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA,2012) figure for open standing water, including ponds, lakes, reservoirs, flooded gravel pits, water filled ditches and canals is 1930ha with 7422 standing water features.

The precise number of water bodies within the sub region is unknown, though the HBA (2021) gives a figure of 274 separate water bodies larger than 1ha, covering a total area of

1,262.59ha (figures should be treated as an approximation due to limitations of the available data).

Draycote Water reservoir is the largest water body, at 240ha. Other large examples include the flooded gravel workings of the Tame and Blythe Valley (e.g. Dosthill Lake, a designated Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and the pools at [Kingsbury Water Park](#) (LWS), [Middleton Hall](#) and [Packington Park](#)) and the lakes of [Brandon Marsh](#), other reservoirs such as Shustoke and [Olton](#), ornamental lakes at sites including [Coombe Country Park](#), Packington, [Compton Verney](#) and Arbury Park, subsidence pools at Alvecote and Wyken Slough (LWS) and old settling pools at Baginton. These collectively contain the bulk of standing freshwater in the subregion and have some regionally important bird populations that specifically require large, undisturbed water bodies for breeding, over-wintering or both.

Other designated Local Wildlife Sites are:

Wormleighton Reservoir ([Canal River Trust](#))

Napton Reservoirs (Canal River Trust)

Stockton Reservoir (Canal River Trust)

Earlswood Lakes (Canal River Trust)

Draycote Water ([Severn Trent](#))

Lea Marston and Coton Pools ([Environment Agency](#))

Compton Verney Lakes

New Waters, Warwick Castle

There are 9 reservoirs in the sub-region, 7 of which are owned by the Canal & River Trust:

- Olton: built in 1799 from marshland fed by Folly Brook to supply the Grand Union Canal
- [Wormleighton](#): built in 1787 on 7ha of Earl Spencer land to supply the Oxford Canal
- Napton: supplying the Grand Union Canal, and built at its junction with the Oxford Canal
- [Stockton](#): built to supply the Grand Union Canal
- [Earlswood Lakes](#): built in the 1820s over 28ha, Windmill, Engine Pool and Terry's Pool Reservoirs supply water to the Stratford Canal; there is a range of nesting birds including goosanders in the winter.

The other 2 reservoirs in the sub-region, both operated by Severn Trent, are:

- Shustoke, built in the 1880s, drawing its water from the R Bourne to supply water to Birmingham
- Draycote, drawing its water from the R Leam to supply water to Rugby and Coventry.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

A wide range of species and habitats are protected under international and domestic laws, including the [Wild Birds Directive](#) (1979), the [Wildlife and Countryside Act](#) (1981), the [Conservation Regulations](#) (1994) and [EC Habitats Directive](#) (1992). Protection of sites is afforded nationally through SSSI, [Special Areas of Conservation](#) (SAC) and [Local Nature Reserve](#) (LNR) statutory status. Other sites are offered recognition of their value through

Local Wildlife Site status (LWS), Local Character Areas and identified Landscape Scale Areas. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2012) chapter/section 11 states conditions with regard to any development negatively affecting biodiversity, including protected sites, ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats (paragraph 118). The Wildlife & Countryside Act and schedule 2 of the [Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010](#) make it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take, possess, sell, buy or transport a range of species.

Seven water bodies are protected by SSSI status: Alvecote Pools, Brandon Marsh, Claybrookes Marsh, Coombe Pools, [Ensors Pool](#) and pools at Middleton Hall and [Ufton Fields](#). Here, the factors leading to eutrophication need to be controlled as potentially damaging activities. The Middle Tame and Blythe Valleys were identified as a Biodiversity Enhancement Area (BEA) in the Government's [Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands](#); this was abolished in 2010.

The Environment Agency has a duty to promote the conservation of flora and fauna associated with water. The EA has less direct influence on off-line water bodies, but work is being carried out on main rivers to eliminate the sources of excessive nutrients.

Local authorities have statutory duties towards nature conservation, and some water bodies are within sites under their control, such as some Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). These bodies also have some responsibility for pollution control.

Severn Trent Water has a statutory duty to supply potable water to an area of 21,000 km² in the Midlands and Mid-Wales, via its reservoirs, locally Draycote and Shustoke.

The [Reservoirs Act \(1975\)](#) provides a legal framework to ensure the safety of large raised reservoirs. The Act applies to reservoirs that hold at least 25,000 cubic meters of water above natural ground level. Safety legislation for reservoirs in the United Kingdom was introduced in 1930 after several reservoir disasters had resulted in loss of life. This Act was superseded by the Reservoirs Act 1975.

The [European Water Directive](#) (2003) provided an opportunity to plan and deliver a better water environment, focusing on ecology through river basin management planning. It helps to protect and enhance the quality of surface freshwater (including lakes, streams and reservoirs), ground waters, groundwater dependent ecosystems, estuaries and coastal waters out to one mile from low-water.

The Canal & River Trust is a charity that merged with [The Waterways Trust](#) in 2012 to bring together over 2,000 miles of historic canals, rivers and docks, three important waterways museums, the national waterways collection and national waterway archives.

4.2 Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- **Eutrophication /enrichment caused by nitrates or phosphates** - primarily in sewage or fertiliser run-off, leading to excessive plant growth and algal blooms, followed by decay and shortage of dissolved oxygen. Algal blooms can also reduce light in the water body, limiting the development of aquatic plants and invertebrate populations.

- **Disease** - anaerobic conditions resulting from nutrient-loading of water bodies can encourage the development of the bacterial spores *Clostridium botulinum*. The toxins of the bacteria can be ingested by waterfowl and may cause the death of significant numbers of birds.
- **Other pollution** from organic matter, silt, heavy metals including historical pollution such as discharges from abandoned mines, metaldehyde, oil and grease, and domestic litter. Disturbance of sediment can lead to release of these pollutants, causing death of wildlife.
- **Introduction of invasive non- native plant species** such as water fern (*Azolla filicoides*) and Australian stonecrop / New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*), can out-compete all other plants locally, leading to a loss of plant diversity.
- **Introduced non-native species of animals** can cause a range of problems. The North American mink (*Neovison vison*) is a factor in the decline of the water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*); crayfish plague from American signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) threatens native white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*).
- **Unsympathetic management** e.g. large scale dredging of lakes, major re-profiling of margins, draining and refilling. Areas of marginal vegetation may be undervalued, as associated wildlife is typically elusive, and may be perceived as a place to dump rubbish.
- **In-filling** of waterbodies such as water-filled quarries, as a result of urbanisation.
- **Changes of water levels** caused by over / reduced abstraction of surface or ground water, by drainage (though natural, seasonal fluctuations can be beneficial) or by climate change can produce wide-ranging effects such as changes in the water quality, and in macrophytic, algal and invertebrate communities.
- **Changes in surrounding land-use** that alter the water table, change the pollution load or degrade or remove valuable adjacent habitat thus isolating waterbodies. The removal of waterside vegetation (which may be an effective barrier to particle matter, act as a sink for nutrients and is also important for wildlife) can increase soil erosion increasing water borne sediments and nutrients to the water. Other changes are field drainage, cessation of grazing, pesticide drift and loss to development.
- **Recreational and amenity pressures** such as boating, fishing and bank-side activities can cause turbidity, bank erosion, damage to water-side habitats, cutting of vegetation by propellers and disturb bird populations.
- **Stocking with certain fish**, e.g. carp and bream (*Cyprinidae*) which uproot plants whilst feeding, increasing the turbidity of the water and depleting food resources for wildlife; great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) can be eliminated by fish predation.
- **Excessive bird levels** especially Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) and other feral wildfowl damage and reduce marginal vegetation through trampling and compete with native wildfowl for nest sites. Their droppings can cause eutrophication and food given to them by humans can also contribute to eutrophication and attract brown rats, causing problems with egg predation.

5. LOCAL ACTION

- An accurate digitised database of water bodies in the sub-region has been established by the Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) and is annually updated.
- Detailed bird recording is long established at many key sites e.g. Brandon Marsh SSSI, Draycote reservoir, Tame and Blythe Valley sites, Coombe Country Park and [Seeswood Pool](#).
- Water level management plans for the benefit of wildlife on SSSI sites have been produced for all relevant SSSIs with surface waters.
- The implementation of Farm Waste Management Plans is part of the '[Cross Compliance](#)' checking for all farms receiving funding from Defra.
- The EA offers bio-security advice to clean fishing equipment and clothing after fishing and leave to dry through the '[Check Clean Dry](#)' campaign.
- Removal / control of non-native invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam:
 - WWT: removes Himalayan Balsam from all relevant water bodies on its reserves
 - RSPB: Middleton Lakes are under mechanical management to control invasive non-native species; biological control with the release of the rust fungus is scheduled for 2019.
 - Earlswood Wildlife Partnership: at Earlswood Lakes control of Himalayan Balsam was carried out in 2019 along Spring Brook where it passes the pumping station at the top of Windmill Pool. All the feeders around the lakes are full of it.
- Creation of new water bodies:
 - The Environmental Stewardship Scheme administered by Natural England offers funding for the creation of ponds (see **Ponds Action Plan**) and larger water bodies, and some new ones have been created (e.g. farmland near Mappleborough Green).
 - Ongoing mineral extraction is creating new water bodies e.g. RMC operations at Salford Priors, [Marsh Lane Bird Reserve](#) near Meriden.
 - [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#) (RSPB) took over the former sand and gravel quarries at Middleton Hall in 2007 from Hanson Aggregates and through restoration has created a 23ha range of wetland habitats including [Middleton Lakes](#).
 - Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) enhanced a 8ha site, secured on a long term lease, in Bedworth in close conjunction with the 'Friends of the Nook' community group and the local community. Work included dredging, planting of 2200 native trees, reed bed creation for nesting birds, mud flats, seasonal flooding / grass areas for invertebrates and bund creation to improve the site for water voles.
- [Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire](#) (BCW):
 - mowing of banks at Calcutt Reservoir in March/May/ August / September/October 2014
 - work with Severn Trent in 2020 at Draycote Reservoir Dam area
- [Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#) (WWT):

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan

- reduction in erosion impact of waves on banks with coir rolls which have become partially vegetated at Earlswood Lakes as part of the Green Connections Landscape Scale project 2012-2015.
- management and improvement of a large pool at [Bubbenhall Meadow](#) good for overwintering water birds and for nesting birds; 43 different birds, 19 species of butterfly and 27 different types of fungi.
- Coventry City Council (CCC): to maintain the condition of the Coombe Pool SSSI, Coombe Country Park, the following management is carried out:
 - installation of 35-40 barley straw “sausages” to reduce algal blooms as the pool gradually gets shallower with natural siltation.
 - coppicing of marginal willows & alders on the fishery dam wall to maintain it for the Reservoirs Inspectorate
 - management of willows on ditches linked to the lake system as part of Higher Level Countryside Stewardship
 - monitoring of geese numbers monthly by the Wetland Bird Survey (Webs) Counts and action taken to control numbers if they become excessive.
- Warwickshire County Council: at Kingsbury Water Park water quality varies across the 17 water bodies. Some lakes are used for water sports and are very coloured, some are used by anglers (a natural stocking regime is maintained) and some are not managed at all. Over a number of years trees have been removed from the lake margins and marginal vegetation planted as a more desirable habitat and to utilise the nutrients which get washed in from the River Tame every time it floods.

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By
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Policy, Legislation & Protection			
PL1. Ensure that any site meeting the relevant criteria is considered for designation as an SSSI.	NE	RSPB LAs EA WCC WWT LWSP WMBC	ongoing
PL2. Continue to select all qualifying open water bodies as LWSs and enter onto database.	LWSP	HBA LAs	ongoing
PL3. Ensure that the protection of all water bodies is included in Local Development Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and any other relevant strategies.	LAs	NE WWT	ongoing
PL4. Ensure that new minor or major developments result in net biodiversity gain	WCC	NE LAs NBBC WWT NWBC	ongoing

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By
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through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy.			
Site / Species Safeguard & Management			
SM1. Achieve favourable condition of 32 existing water bodies larger than 1ha by 2018 and a further 70 by 2026, by appropriate management, to include a range of water depths and both submerged and marginal vegetation, giving priority to those holding UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species & Red Data Book species, e.g. silt removal to restore volume of water.	CSG	RSPB CRT WWT LAs	2018-2026
SM2. Achieve condition of land buffering water bodies by appropriate management of marginal vegetation.	CSG	ST CRT WCC CCP BCW	ongoing
SM3. Encourage appropriate management of all LWS water bodies to maintain condition or improve to good condition.	LWSP	NE LAs CRT EA WWT	ongoing
SM4. Actively manage sites to remove/control non-native invasive species present in waterbodies.	CSG	NE EA WWT CRT LOs	ongoing
Advisory			
A1. Signpost Best Practice Guidelines to appropriate landowners via agri-environment schemes.	NE	WWT WCC	ongoing
Research & Monitoring			
RM1. Record lake and reservoir habitats (see SM2)	HBA	CRT WCC	LOs ongoing
RM2. Continue 'Canada Geese Monitoring' and, following a review of the results, implement appropriate measures where required to resolve problems of eutrophication and loss of bank side vegetation, e.g. at Brueton Park, Solihull, and Coombe Country Park.	CSG	WWT CCP	WCC SMBC ongoing
Communication, Publicity & Education			
CP1. Actively promote the 'Check Clean Dry' Campaign to protect native species from non-	EA	WWT WCC	SRT TRT LAs ongoing

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By
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native species threats and diseases.			

Abbreviations: **CCP** – Coombe Country Park, **CRT** – Canal & River Trust, **CSG** – Core Steering Group, **EA** – Environment Agency, **FCs** – Fishing Clubs, **HBA** – Habitat Biodiversity Audit partnership, **LA** – Local Authority, **LOs** – Landowners, **LPAs** – Local Planning Authorities, **LWSP** – Local Wildlife Sites Project, **NE** – Natural England, **RSPB** – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, **SMBC** – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, **SRT** – Severn Rivers Trust, **ST** – Severn Trent, **TRT** – Trent Rivers Trust, **WCC** – Warwickshire County Council, **WMBC** - West Midlands Bird Club, **WWT** – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. PROGRESS WITH ACTIONS

From 2015–2020 there will be a rolling programme of reporting on progress, of 10 action plans per year with an annual summary of results. Progress with this plan up to 2020 can be seen at <https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/LBAP>.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Natural England (2016) [Conservation Strategy for the 21st Century](#). Sets out how NE will help deliver DEFRA's ambitions for the environment to reverse biodiversity loss, sustain distinctive landscapes and enhance engagement with nature.

Worldwide Fund for Nature (2018) [The Living Planet Report](#): aiming higher. Published in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London.

Natural England (2020) Lakes – [Cherished yet forgotten](#). A report outlining the positive and achievable actions at different scales that can be taken, to both raise the profile of lakes within catchment planning, and improve their condition and that of their catchments.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) for Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull – mapping data set and associated information. Phase 1 ([JNCC](#)) 1996-2002 and Phase 2 (Local Wildlife Sites) ongoing.

Biodiversity Planning Toolkit - a new online resource to help incorporate biodiversity and geodiversity into the planning system and new development.

[Amphibian & Reptile Groups of the UK](#) - the representative body for the network of over 60 dedicated Amphibian and Reptile Groups (ARGs) based in England, Scotland, Wales & N Ireland.

[Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team](#) encourages people to learn about, protect and conserve these animals and their habitats. Activities include recording the distribution and population size of amphibians and reptiles, pond restoration, workshops and training days, talks and visits, providing advice on pond and habitat conservation and identifying threats to local habitats.

[Amphibian & Reptile Conservation](#) - a national wildlife charity committed to conserving amphibians and reptiles and saving the disappearing habitats on which they depend.

[Plantlife](#) - carries out plant species and habitat conservation, owns and manages nature reserves, campaigns, and raises awareness through education.

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (2020) – the [Wetland Manifesto](#) is a 10 point plan to look after the UK's remaining wetland. It outlines steps we need to take including tackling invasive species, supporting landowners to install reed beds to filter pollution, and making outdoor education available for all children.

10. CONTACT

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