



Reedbeds



*Reedbeds are wetlands dominated by stands of the common reed *Phragmites australis* where the water table is at or above ground level for most of the year. Reedbeds frequently include areas of open water, ditches and small areas of wet grassland, with carr woodland found around the drier edges. Reedbeds are very important habitats for birds. They are breeding sites for many nationally rare species and used as winter roost sites for several birds of prey. They also support a number of rare invertebrates.*

1 Objectives and Targets

1.1 Objectives

- A. Protect all reedbeds from loss or degradation.
- B. Increase the extent of reedbeds through rehabilitation or habitat creation.
- C. Maintain and enhance existing and new areas of reedbeds through appropriate management.
- D. Improve knowledge of reedbeds through survey, research and monitoring.
- E. Increase awareness of the nature conservation value of reedbeds.

1.2 Targets

- Ensure that a strategic scheme for wetland and riparian habitat creation is in place by the year 2003.
- Create one 20 hectare reedbed on an area of low nature conservation interest by 2010.
- Ensure that all reedbeds over 2 hectares are managed for their wildlife interest by 2005.

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

2 Current Status

2.1 Importance

Reedbeds are a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Programme and a costed habitat action plan has been written. There are approximately 5000 hectares of reedbeds in the UK in about 900 sites. However there are only about 50 sites greater than 20 hectares and many of these are located in the south-east or eastern England.

Reedbeds are one of the most important habitats for birds in the UK.

Reedbeds support many distinctive breeding birds, and provide roosting and feeding sites for many others. They are also important for many rare invertebrates. To be of greatest value reedbeds have to be large.

The creation of large reedbeds of at least 10ha would enhance the possibility of bearded tit, bittern, cettis warbler and marsh harrier all returning to Shropshire to breed.

2.2 Trends

Nationally, the area of reedbeds has been declining steadily since the middle of the 20th century due to drainage and lack of management. Other activities that have had a negative effect include grazing, waste tipping and development.

All reedbeds in Shropshire are small (less than 10 hectares) and generally found around the margins of meres. Many are drying out and undergoing succession from wet reedbed to carr woodland, with a subsequent loss of distinctive reedbed communities.

2.3 Area / Extent

While common reed is widespread in the county, it rarely occurs in large blocks. The extent of reedbeds in Shropshire is unknown.

2.4 Distribution

Small reedbeds are scattered throughout the county, often on the edges of meres and other pools. The most significant areas of reedbeds occur at Fenemere and Alscott Settling Ponds, both located in the Meres and Mosses Natural Area.

3 Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- Loss of hydrological integrity, mainly due to drainage of water from surrounding areas.
- Lack of appropriate management resulting in natural succession to scrub and carr.
- Recreational pressure creating disturbance for sensitive species such as reed warbler.
- Outright loss through waste tipping and development.
- Pollution of water in reedbeds from surrounding farmland including fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and increased siltation levels.
- Small size and ephemeral character of many existing reedbeds.
- Isolation resulting in a lack of opportunities for recolonisation by wetland species.

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

4 Current Action

4.1 Policy and Protection

- Fenemere and Allscott Settling Ponds and many meres have been notified as SSSIs.
- A UK costed habitat action plan for reedbeds was published in 1995.
- Changes in water level management require consent from the Environment Agency.

4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- A number of sites containing reedbeds including Allscott Settling Ponds and Fenemere are managed actively for their conservation interest.
- Funding is available through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) for management of reedbeds.

5 Benefits of Conserving Reedbeds

- Habitat for breeding birds and rare invertebrates.
- Filtration of nitrates and phosphates from agricultural run-off and use as a pollution control measure at sewage farms and along river banks.
- Provision of thatching material.
- Enhancement of the rural landscape.

6 Key Species

Mammals otter, water vole

Birds reed bunting, reed warbler, sedge warbler, water rail

7 Complementary Plans

UK Reedbeds HAP

Shropshire Floodplain Grazing Marsh HAP

Shropshire Rivers and Streams HAP

Shropshire Standing Open Water HAP

Shropshire Water Vole SAP

Shropshire Otter SAP

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Habitat / Species	Action category code	Action text	Location of action	Start date	End date	Lead	Assisting
Reedbed	SHR RED CP 01	Promote the use of reedbeds in balancing pond schemes to reduce adverse effects of urban run off	Shropshire	2002	-	SC	EA, SWT
Reedbed	SHR RED HS 01	Ensure the development of sympathetic water abstraction and water level management policies to protect existing reedbeds	Shropshire	2002	-	EA	SC, T&W
Reedbed	SHR RED HS 02	Promote the inclusion of reedbeds in after use schemes as a condition of mineral extraction where appropriate	Shropshire	2002	-	EA	SC, RSPB, T&W, SWT
Reedbed	SHR RED HS 04	Retain and increase marginal vegetation including reed (Phragmites) planting at Devils' Dingle at Ironbridge Power Station until 2015.	Ironbridge Gorge Power Station	2008	2015	E.ON	
Reedbed	SHR RED RE 01	Promote further research into how to maximize the filtering benefits of reedbeds.	Shropshire	2002	2010	EA	SC, T&W
Reedbed	SHR RED SU 01	Survey newly created reedbeds annually for colonisation by species particularly associated with reedbeds.	Shropshire	2002	-	SWT, RSPB	NT, SC

Key to Organisations

SC	Shropshire Council
EA	Environment Agency
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
T&W	Telford & Wrekin Council
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
E.ON	E.ON UK Plc
NT	National Trust

Plan created 2002

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