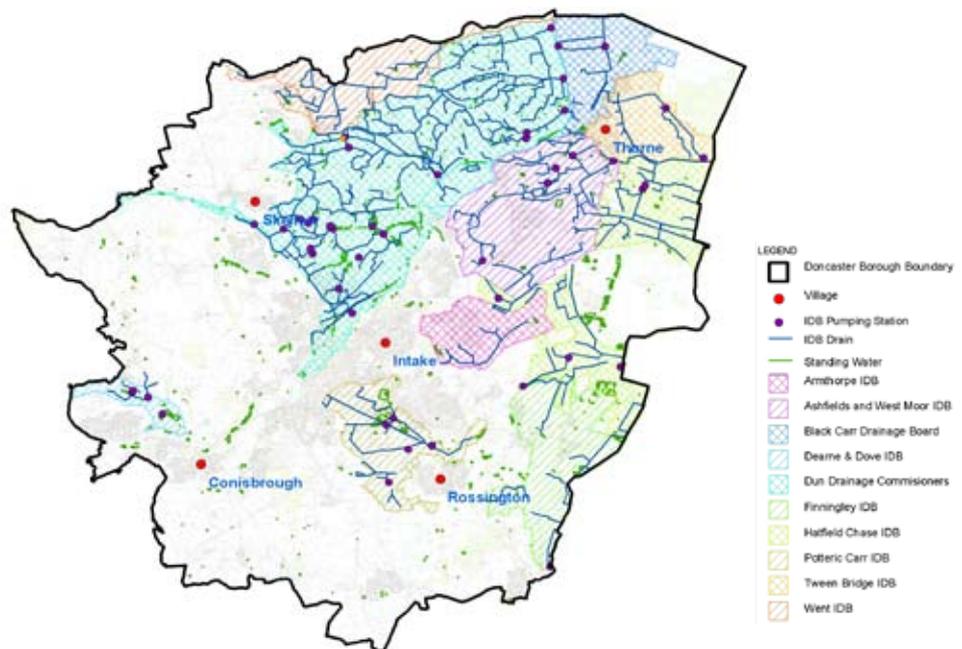


Marshes and Swamps, Lakes and Ponds, Ditches and Drains

Summary Habitat Action Plan

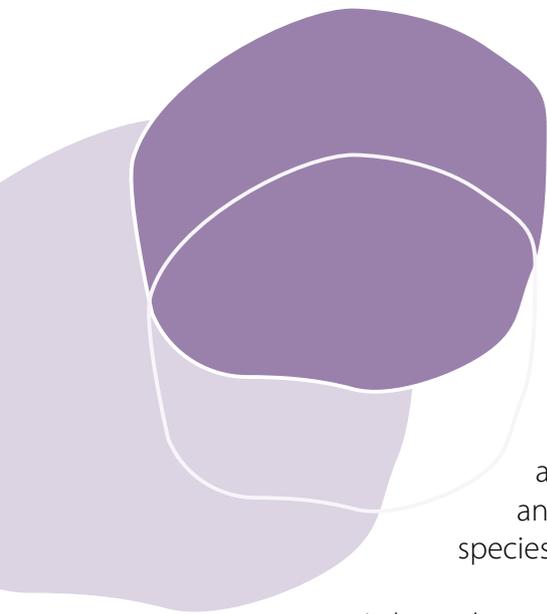
Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan
January 2007



This is one of two maps produced for this habitat – for the other map please refer to the Marshes and Swamps, Lakes and Ponds, Ditches and Drains Habitat Action Plan.

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1 Habitat description

Marsh or marshy grasslands occur on mineral soils that have a water table close to the ground surface for most of the year. This type of habitat often occurs on almost level ground around ponds or on the edges of drains, and extensive areas may occur on river valley floodplains, which experience winter flooding.

Swamp habitat occurs under waterlogged conditions, where water levels are above the ground for most of the year. Swamps are often associated with fluctuating water bodies or watercourses and are frequently inundated on a seasonal cycle. Swamps are species poor, often being dominated by single species.

Lake and ponds are the standing open water habitats that lie beyond the limits of swamp or emergent vegetation. They can contain submerged, free-floating or floating-leaved plants. Most of Doncaster's open water habitats are naturally rich in plant nutrients. These water bodies support large amounts of vegetation and a wide variety of animals.

Ditches and drains that hold water for most of the year are considered to be open water habitats, since there is often no, or only a very slight, flow of water. Many of Doncaster's drain and ditch systems are part of pumped drainage schemes and they support a range of plants similar to that found in ponds. Where dredging or maintenance is infrequent some ditches and drains can become linear swamp habitats, supporting relict assemblages of a once more-widespread wetland habitat.

Standing water habitats are important for a range of wildlife including great crested newt, grass snake, water vole, water shrew, dragonflies and other invertebrates such as snails and crustaceans. Swamps and open water provide habitat for coarse fish species, which in turn support birds such as heron and kingfisher. Open water is important for many breeding and wintering water birds.

2 Characteristic species

Needle spike-rush	Lesser pondweed	Branched bur-reed
Floating club-rush	Greater spearwort	Reed sweet-grass
Greater tussock sedge	Mare's-tail	Reedmace
Cyperus sedge	Water soldier	Sweet-grasses
Bottle sedge	True fox sedge	Great water parsnip
Water violet	Reed canary grass	Fool's-water cress
Flowering rush	Tufted hairgrass	Brooklime
Tubular water dropwort	Greater pond sedge	Yellow iris

3 Current factors causing loss or decline

- Habitat loss, such as infilling, piping or culverting of ditches and infilling of ponds.
- Development isolates ponds and water bodies and severs links to other habitats. It can also have a serious effect on the local water table and water quality.
- Abstraction for irrigation lowers ditch levels. Flood defences have caused the drying up of wetlands sites, severing natural floodplains from periodic inundation.
- Land drainage to remediate mining subsidence and restore areas to agricultural use, can lead to the general lowering of the water table and the drying-out of ponds within the drainage catchment.
- Water quality can be adversely affected by some agricultural, industrial and quarrying operations. Nutrient enrichment causes increased growth and dominance of vigorous plant species and can lead to a loss of biodiversity. High sediment loads can smother vegetation and create anaerobic conditions.
- Native plant diversity in some water bodies and drains has been reduced due to invasion by introduced plants.

4 Objectives Targets and Actions

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead & Partners
1) To ensure the protection and maintenance of marshes and swamps, ponds and lakes, and ditches and drains.	2 parishes by 2008.	1.4	Undertake a pond survey in parishes that are a priority for this habitat type (e.g. Fishlake). Use survey results to determine the necessary conservation action to take forward.	DMBC, Doncaster Naturalists' Society (DNS), Natural England (NE)
	Continuous.	1.10	DMBC to support the EA policy of no further canalisation or culverting of streams, ditches and drains, wherever possible, through delivery of statutory functions and in undertaking land management activities on DMBC land.	DMBC, Environment Agency (EA)
2) To restore degraded sites and ensure appropriate management of marshes and swamps, ponds and lakes, and ditches and drains.	1 event by 2008.	2.2	Run a promotional event for farmers to advise and encourage sensitive management of open water habitats.	DMBC, NE, EA, Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs), Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Linking the Environment and Farming (LEAF)
	By 2008.	2.6	Set up a wetland restoration project group, to focus on the development and implementation of wetland restoration schemes, including securing funds for all aspects of works and project management.	All partners
3) To create 2ha of marshes, swamps, ponds and lakes and ditches and drains linked to existing river, stream, ditch and drain systems.	1 ha of wetland habitat created through mineral site restoration, by 2010.	3.3	Promote the restoration of mineral extraction sites to a diverse mosaic of wetland habitats, including the necessary provision for associated priority species.	DMBC, mineral site owners/ developers

5 This habitat in Doncaster

The following describes where in the Doncaster Borough good examples of this habitat can be found, however, named sites may be privately owned and therefore are not publicly accessible. For further information about this habitat and where it can be found in Doncaster see the 'Marshes and Swamps, Lakes and Ponds, Ditches and Drains Habitat Action Plan'.

Wetland habitats can be found almost anywhere in Doncaster, although the most 'natural' water bodies are to be found at sites such as Shirley Pool Site of Special Scientific Interest. There are still many small field ponds in the Fishlake and Sykehouse areas, such as at Steward's Ings Lane Meadow, which is designated a Site of Scientific Interest. Semi-natural woodland ponds can also be found at Savage, Brooks and Marr Flats Wood, Hatchell Wood and Martin Beck Common Ponds on the Sherwood Sandstone, and at Howell Wood on the edge of the Coal Measures.

Water bodies are also often associated with industrial processes and engineering activities. Borrow pits associated with railways, roads, canals and flood defences (such as on the Ea Beck) are a common feature of Doncaster's countryside. Several drains have been designated as SSIs and the drains around Thorne Moors and Hatfield Chase are important reservoirs of wetland biodiversity.

6 How to take part

'Backyard Biodiversity – Nature in your Neighbourhood'

This is a new initiative launched by Doncaster Council to enable local people to learn about, protect and enjoy nature where they live. Community Groups and Organisations can loan activity packs and equipment to enable them to take part in activities such as bird watching, pond-dipping, building bird and bat boxes and bug hunting. The service is available FREE of charge from selected Customer Service Centres in Doncaster. A pack of Wildlife Gardening fact sheets has also been produced, which provides advice and information on how you can help the wildlife in your own garden.



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