



**Our strategy for protecting freshwater wildlife
2008-2018**

What is Pond Conservation?

Pond Conservation is a charity that works to protect freshwater wildlife with a special focus on ponds.

Why A rich and healthy freshwater environment brings benefits for everyone – now and in the future.

We know that life in freshwater is under threat everywhere; we need to protect it through strong practical action backed by good information.

What we do Inspire everyone to support the conservation of freshwaters.

Implement practical solutions based on the best knowledge.

Champion ponds and other freshwaters to decision makers.

Work with people, communities and organisations to protect freshwater wildlife.

Our conservation objectives. Our goal is to counter the many threats to freshwater wildlife and increase the diversity of freshwater plants and animals. To do this we will concentrate our efforts on achieving our core 10 year conservation objectives. These are to:

- Protect the best pond sites
- Make large numbers of new wildlife-rich ponds
- Manage ponds to protect important species

Biodiversity is our main focus, but we know that ponds provide many other ecosystem services, from flood alleviation to carbon trapping. These ponds are not always the best for wildlife, but they can still contribute to supporting freshwater biodiversity. Our aim is to work with many partners to use ponds to achieve multiple ecosystem service goals.

How we will do it. To achieve our objectives we will inspire people to work with us at home, in their communities and in other conservation organisations.

We will:

- Work with many different people to achieve our goals, particularly using our inspirational Million Ponds programme.
- Develop a Flagship Ponds programme, protecting special places by working with communities and other organisations, building on the experience of our Ponds for People programme.
- Give evidence-based advice at all levels on the management of ponds to protect or increase their wildlife value.
- Develop a national garden pond programme to enthuse and engage people.
- Work to protect freshwaters from the damaging effects of climate change, protecting ponds at the landscape level and, where appropriate, increasing connectivity.

- Support our practical conservation work with research, survey, policy work, education and fundraising, including continuing to develop the European Pond Conservation Network.

Developing our organisation. To deliver our programme we must also develop our organisation.

To do this we will:

- Raise our public profile so that we become well-known for protecting freshwater wildlife.
- Improve our ability to raise funds from many different sources.
- Start a supporters scheme.
- Stay flexible: because circumstances are always changing, we will review our plans regularly so our work remains relevant and at the cutting edge.

About Pond Conservation

Pond Conservation was created by the merger between Pond Action and the Ponds Conservation Trust in 2004. During the 1990s our work focussed on amassing the evidence base for protecting pond biodiversity, followed by the start of practical projects, including community-based work. Our current aims focus on delivery: using our knowledge to develop evidence-based projects that will reverse the long-term decline in the UK's ponds, and reduce wider threats to the UK's freshwater biodiversity.

1. Challenges and opportunities

Freshwaters everywhere are under threat and ponds are no exception.

Ponds are important: globally they represent 99% of standing water bodies; in the UK and elsewhere our own research has proved that they are a vital reservoir of freshwater biodiversity – just as important as rivers and lakes. But the evidence is that the quality of ponds as wildlife habitats is still declining. Many human activities such as development and intensive agriculture damage small waterbodies, and climate change is likely to exacerbate problems in the coming years.

A major issue is that ponds are poorly protected in legislation compared to other freshwaters. So they need strong advocates and concerted action to protect them on the ground. These problems are a major challenge to the continued existence of both ponds, and freshwater wildlife generally.

But there are also opportunities:

- Ponds are hugely popular, one of the first places where people experience the freshwater environment.
- They are one of the habitats where individual action can really make a difference.
- Ponds are small and easily created. Because of this there are many places where new ponds can be located, safe from the polluted water that drains from towns and farmland.
- Unlike other freshwaters it's cheap and easy to make new wildlife-rich ponds practically anywhere.
- We now have official support for protecting ponds: the recognition of ponds as a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

So despite the threats, there is room for optimism. With enthusiasm and focus we strongly believe that we can reverse the century long decline of our richest freshwaters.

2. What we will do

2.1 Inspiring support for our conservation goals

People are the key to our success. We recognise that we can only do so much ourselves so the majority of our work will be achieved by inspiring others. To help deliver our conservation objectives we need to win hearts and minds. Ponds are one of the easiest places to do this. Many people have ponds in their gardens, and, outside of the major cities, there will typically be 5 countryside ponds within a kilometer of their doorstep.

Our planned Million Ponds and Flagship Ponds campaigns will reach millions of people. In the next year we will launch a national garden pond survey to make direct contact with households across the UK. Through the National Pond Monitoring Network we will work with hundreds of wildlife enthusiasts and specialists; through our participation in the Lottery funded Open Air Laboratories Project we will potentially reach thousands of schools and communities.

Our efforts will focus on:

Enthusiasing others: Our knowledge, built up over the last 20 years, has given us many new and exciting messages to spread. We need to get this knowledge out at all levels, and build on it so that everyone is aware of the importance of ponds for freshwater wildlife and what they can do to make a real difference.

Garden ponds will be key to our awareness raising strategy, and will allow us to reach far beyond the normal 'conservation' audience. Following pilot projects in the Thames Valley, Lancashire and elsewhere, people have already undertaken hundreds of garden pond surveys for us. With this foundation we will launch a new national survey of garden ponds, working in conjunction with the OPAL project and others. We expect many

thousands of people to tell us about their garden ponds, increasing their enjoyment and helping us to understand how to make the best garden ponds for wildlife.

The Million Ponds Project will engage large numbers of people: we will be directly training around 1000 key staff of organisations such as the Environment Agency, Defence Estates, RSPB and National Trust and working on several thousand sites, with partners who have between them 8 million members – if just 10% of these people are aware of Million Ponds we will reach around a million people. This is a great opportunity to achieve many of our aims. In developing our Flagship Ponds project over the coming year we also aim to raise awareness of how communities and others can to help protect some of the estimated 80,000 Priority Ponds identified under the UK BAP.

We will also use our work to contribute to the work of the Education and Public Understanding Group of the England Biodiversity Strategy on public engagement with wetlands, which we are leading jointly with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. We will develop our education strategy to explore ways of working with the sector to most effectively deliver our conservation objectives.

Action for conservation: Awareness is essential, but it is vital that enthusiasm is translated into action. The support of people, communities and other organisations will enable us to achieve much more on the ground than we could possibly achieve by ourselves.

The Million Ponds project will create at least 5000 new high quality ponds in the first four years by working with large numbers of partner organisations and individuals. In our Flagship Pond scheme we will train people and communities to monitor and manage key wildlife rich ponds, and improve poorer quality ponds for Biodiversity Action Plan species.

There are many thousands of Priority Ponds - important for UK wildlife - that we cannot directly influence through our own partnership projects. To reach these ponds, we will supply a wide range of information and advice materials on pond protection, management and creation to help people get out and do it themselves.

To do this we will build on the experience of our Ponds for People programme which has shown us how to support communities, helping them to deliver effective pond conservation work.

Recruiting supporters: As an organisation we can do much more to save our threatened wildlife if we inspire people to support us as emotionally, practically and financially.

To do this we will launch a new supporters scheme and as part of the scheme we will:

- Provide guides to the best places to see wonderful ponds near to their homes.
- Encourage them to join us in practical activities surveying, protecting or creating ponds.

- Provide information and advice that will help our members to make the best wildlife ponds at home, including web-based discussion forums.
- Provide advice on understanding and managing all sorts of ponds.
- Work with and recruit support from many people from a variety of communities.

2.2 Policy into practice

We will provide leadership in the conservation of ponds through our work on the Steering Group of the Pond Habitat Action Plan, in association with the statutory agencies and NGOs. To promote this work we will employ a pond HAP officer on a long-term basis. We will also continue to promote protection of all freshwaters through policy work with Wildlife & Countryside Link, and engagement with the Water Framework Directive.

With critical policy issues, such as protection and condition assessment of the UK's ponds, we will lead lobbying work ourselves, enlisting support from other parts of the environmental movement where this can help our case.

2.3 Evidence-based conservation

We believe that our practical and advice work must be evidence-based. This is critical for our organisation's credibility. Undertaking major projects where the likely biodiversity outcome is unknown has the potential to waste people's time and misuse money that could be better spent elsewhere.

To ensure our projects are of the highest calibre we will take three approaches:

- Our immediate projects will focus on key areas where we are confident of success.
- Where we are not fully confident of outcomes we will examine existing evidence then trial and evaluate different approaches.
- Where knowledge is limited we will promote, or if necessary carry out, research to inform our policies and on the ground work. Most urgently we will begin new research on garden ponds and the effects of pond management, both areas with little current knowledge.

2.4 Maximising the potential – working with other's agendas

Freshwater biodiversity is our main focus, but we recognise that ponds can also help reduce flooding, store water for irrigation, manage pollutants and soak up carbon, all with wide societal benefits. There are many opportunities to work with others using, in particular, pond creation to achieve multiple goals. These new ponds will not always be the best ponds for biodiversity – but creating large numbers of new ponds will increase the density of the freshwater network, increasing connectivity by adding water to the landscape and helping to climate-proof freshwater ecosystems.

We plan to launch a new multi-partner demonstration project, Water Friendly Farming Landscapes, which will help us quantify the benefits of small water bodies in landscape-scale water management. We will also work with SUDS designers to maximise the benefits of ponds in urban drainage systems. We will continue investigating the potential

for ponds to trap carbon, carrying out the necessary research and, if it proves successful, developing a new carbon sequestration scheme. To underpin these developments we will work with Oxford Brookes University to initiate a new small waterbody research centre which we hope will eventually become part of the new UK Cooperative Research Partnership in Freshwater Ecology being promoted by the Freshwater Biological Association. We will also work with archaeologists to protect pond artefacts and explain the history of ponds to people.

3. Our conservation strategy

Our 10 year aim is “To protect and increase the freshwater biodiversity of landscapes, using ponds as a major focus”. This conservation strategy sets out the work we will do to achieve this aim.

3.1 Science into practice

We have spent 20 years finding out about ponds. There is a lot we still don't know, but much we do. The aim of our conservation strategy is to build on the solid grounding of what we know works, and to fill the gaps in our understanding to make our future work more effective.

Our conservation targets focus directly on what we need to do to protect pond wildlife. This means practical action on the ground, helped by enthusiastic and properly trained supporters. Doing this protects both the wildlife of individual ponds and freshwater wildlife generally.

3.2 Protecting the best places

Our first target is to protect the best ponds. We think there will be around 80,000 of these, and thanks to Biodiversity Action Plan legislation they now have some protection as Priority Ponds.

We will jointly lead this work with the Environment Agency and other statutory bodies through the implementation of the Pond Habitat Action Plan. As a critical first step to help protect sites, we will find out and record where the best ponds are located. Almost certainly they will be everywhere, from city green spaces to the tops of remote mountains.

Priority pond locations will be made available on the National Pond Monitoring Network, and integrated into other databases, so that everyone from householders to planners and government bodies knows where they are. We have begun this process already in Wales and used the information to identify Important Areas for Ponds. We will complete this work in the rest of the United Kingdom, beginning in Northern Ireland. We will also encourage members of the public to find Priority Ponds as the first step in giving these ponds effective protection.

We will provide information about how best to protect Priority Ponds, using a variety of media: through our website, by publishing a new Priority Pond guide and by running training courses and continuing to provide a telephone advice line. Our aim over the next 10 years is to have a dedicated pond protection officer in each of the 4 countries of the United Kingdom.

With our partners, we will ensure that relevant planning and biodiversity protection processes take account of Priority Ponds sites and the special plants and animals they support.

We will also continue to develop our work in the rest of Europe: first trialling a programme identifying Important Areas for Ponds in the alpine arc and the Mediterranean as part of our work with the European Pond Conservation Network.

3.3 Flagship Ponds

High quality ponds are becoming rarer in the UK and that the best ponds will require vigilance if they are to retain their quality.

We will set up a Flagship Pond Project, working with community groups and others, to ensure that there is monitoring and active protection of about 1% of the most important ponds or groups of ponds.

These ponds will also have an important educational role: it is important that they are wonderful places. People increasingly see only badly damaged ponds whose muddy water and impoverished wildlife offers little inspiration.

We will explore the concept of pond trails – walking routes that enable people to see a variety of ponds, good and bad.

3.3 Protecting endangered species

Many endangered freshwater species are found in ponds - around half of all threatened freshwater plants and animals use ponds - and some are so rare they are hanging on in barely a handful of sites. The Million Ponds project will make new ponds for many of these species. But there is much more we can do to improve existing sites.

We will:

1. Build up a dossier of management advice for each threatened species showing where possible sites are likely to be located and what conditions need to be present. Not all ponds will be suitable: many will be too polluted and impossible to improve, so the advice will include an assessment of a site's potential.

2. Develop targeted projects to support people, communities and other organisations to manage ponds for endangered species. This work will begin with amphibians which we

will work on, in partnership with the Herpetological Conservation Trust, as part of the Million Ponds Project.

3.4 Pristine new ponds everywhere

The number of high quality ponds in the landscape is near to an all time low, and the quality of ponds is declining. Pollution and isolation are both implicated as major causes of this decline. With our visionary Million Ponds Project – which will double the number of ponds in the United Kingdom over the next 50 years – we will begin to reverse this trend. Our targets are firmly embedded in the draft Pond Habitat Action Plan and, in England, in the Wetland Vision.

We will launch the Million Ponds Project in Autumn 2008. This is the biggest pond creation programme ever conceived and our aim is that it should both transform the approach taken to the conservation of ponds, and make a significant difference to the protection of freshwater biodiversity in the UK. We will work to make ponds with a very wide range of partners including the major land managers, statutory agencies and many others.

Once the first phase of Million Ponds is established, we will plan and develop community based pond creation programmes to extend the project's reach in the longer term. We will also continue preparation for a Project Officer in Northern Ireland, and then Scotland.

3.5 Information for all

We will provide information for everyone interested in ponds, particularly for people whose ponds are impacted or degraded. We will do this by making the maximum use of our information and knowledge, using our website and developing our telephone advice line. We will also investigate establishing links with consultants, and further developing our own consultancy, for people requiring paid services.

Materials produced for the Million Ponds Project, Flagship Ponds Project and Garden Ponds Project will inspire and help many thousands of others to make and manage ponds effectively.

To help as many people as possible we will:

- Provide a series of fact/information sheets about pond assessment and management, including what checks need to be done (e.g. services, planning, water quality).
- Establish research and demonstration projects for the restoration of poor quality sites, trialling different management techniques so that we can provide reliable, evidence-based advice.

We will also investigate establishing a web-based discussion forum and a garden pond blog.

3.6 What we don't know

Much of our success to date has been founded on our strong science base. But there is a lot that conservationists still need to understand about ponds.

A key issue is that we don't properly understand the biodiversity benefits of actively managing ponds that have been degraded. If you de-silt a pond, or reduce duck numbers in a community pond, will that bring significant biodiversity benefits? We don't know. It is important to find answers to these questions soon, because lack of knowledge in this area is currently hampering the scope and reach of what we can be done to improve pond management.

Other key areas where we need information to make a practical difference are: the effects of climate change on ponds, the change in pond quality over time, the role of ponds in the landscape, and the importance of garden ponds for wildlife.

We will promote and undertake research to rectify these important shortcomings in our knowledge as a priority. However, we must recognise that financing such work is challenging: ponds are still not popular with scientific funding bodies.

4. How we will achieve our strategy

With tens of thousands ponds to protect, create and manage we will achieve most of our goals by working in partnership with others, providing information that informs and inspires, and money to get things done.

4.1 What we will do ourselves

The largest part of our work over the next ten years will involve helping other people to do good practical work that protects freshwater wildlife.

At the same time we need to make sure we keep sight of the policy agenda so we will:

- Promote ponds through carefully targeted policy development, lobbying and research by developing our policy positions and working with Wildlife Link to develop common goals.
- Undertake crucial research ourselves and conduct critical survey work.
- Continue to develop the National Pond Monitoring Network which provides an essential database for the conservation of ponds, particularly the Pond Habitat Action Plan.
- Promote the continuation and further development of the pond component of the Countryside Survey, the first survey in the world of the condition of a nation's small waterbodies.

4.2 What we will do in partnership

Major partnership programmes

Virtually all of our work is already carried out in partnership, and we will continue with this approach, cementing our links with major environmental bodies such as RSPB, National Trust and Woodland Trust and extending links with new sectors including local government, country sports organisations (e.g. British Association for Shooting and Conservation), farmers and landowners, landscape architects, the Country Land & Business Association, members of the ornamental aquatics trade, development agencies, utility companies and others.

International

Our organisation is internationally respected and many people in Europe look on our work as a model for turning information into practical action. We know from our work that many parts of continental Europe still have lots of wonderful small waterbodies, and many threats to them.

To protect these ponds we will:

- Help to raise the profile of ponds continent wide, through strategic engagement with the EU, by working with key policy makers and conservation organisations, such as the Ramsar Bureau and WWF.
- Continue to use and spread our knowledge to develop the European Pond Conservation Network as the main activity for raising European level awareness of the importance of small waterbodies.
- Aim to host the 2011 or 2012 conference of the European Pond Conservation Network.

4.3 What we will encourage others to do

In addition to our partnership work we will encourage others to help us deliver all of our conservation objectives, to help us obtain the information we need about the location of important ponds, and the best ways to manage garden ponds. At the same time we hope this will enthuse people about pond wildlife.

To do this we will:

- Work in collaboration with the Open Air Laboratories Project.
- Run publicity and awareness raising campaigns backed by publications and web-based advice about making and managing ponds.
- Raise awareness by publicising important new information about ponds (such as the results of the Countryside Survey).
- Continue to provide, and aim to expand, our telephone advice line to support this.

Encouraging others is a good approach for reaching a lot of people – but we have less assurance of the effectiveness of the results. High numbers, but limited direct contact,

may dilute the message. We will undertake monitoring, initially in the Million Ponds Project, to assess the effectiveness of our outreach work.

5. Developing the organisation

Pond Conservation is currently a small organisation, with limited core funds. To achieve our ambitions we need to grow, and increase our financial security. To raise awareness of the organisation we will undertake a range of profile raising activities, beginning with the launch of the Million Ponds Project, the results of the Countryside Survey of ponds and our national Garden Pond Survey.

Greater awareness of the organisation will open up a range of new funding opportunities. We will launch a new supporters scheme to begin attracting the support of the public and corporate members.

We will also work hard to raise funds from other sources, implementing our new fundraising strategy to develop a wider portfolio of funders than we currently work with. We will place particular emphasis on securing core, unrestricted funding.

We will develop funding programmes in the following areas:

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Access to Nature
- Landfill Tax
- Independent grant-making trusts (e.g. Garfield Weston)
- EU LIFE+
- Corporate sponsors

We will also investigate the potential for developing a carbon sequestration scheme if our research shows that this is technically viable.

6. Conclusion

This strategy outlines our overall goal for the next 10 years, our strategic aims and how we will achieve these aims. Further details of all of our work can be found on our website

www.pondconservation.org.uk

Appendix

This is a summary of what we intend to have achieved by 2018:

1. Protecting the best ponds

- Identified and widely publicised all of the UK's Important Areas for Ponds, and established a national database with a large proportion of our Priority ponds identified.
- We will have ensured that there is no net loss of Priority Ponds.
- We will have published a technical guide to the conservation of Priority Ponds.
- Our monitoring will show that we have stabilised the decline in the quality of ponds in the British landscape.

2. Flagship Ponds

We will set up Pond Warden schemes and other community-based projects to protect Flagship Ponds in many parts of the country.

3. Manage ponds for special species

We will have worked with a wide range of organisations and community groups to manage impaired ponds to make them suitable for Biodiversity Action Plan species.

4. Creating new wildlife rich ponds

We will have created at least 5000 high quality ponds with our partners including 1000 ponds for specifically for Biodiversity Action Plan species.

5. Raising awareness

- We will be running an established national garden pond survey.
- We will have encouraged many people to help us find Priority Ponds.
- We will provide extensive guidance to help everybody protect, manage and make ponds better for wildlife.

6. Research

We will aim to set up a small waterbodies research centre.

7. Networking nationally and internationally

We will continue to develop international partnerships, particularly through the European Pond Conservation Network.

8. Developing the organisation

- We will be in regular contact with 100,000 people.
- We will develop core sources of income.
- We will have established a successful supporters scheme.

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