



The Bedfordshire and Luton BAP in 2010

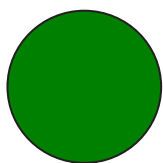
This report illustrates how we're doing against the targets we've set for Bedfordshire's priority habitats.

The 'official' BedsLife partnership has 18 member organisations. But it has taken literally thousands of people to get to where we are now. None of this could have been done without the legions of volunteers and landowners who help the relatively few professionals working for nature in our county.

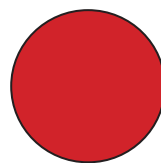
As you'll see, we're having some great successes. We're well on our way to achieving the targets in our Heathland, Acid Grassland, Reedbed and Woodland plans, for example.

However we're not doing as well as we'd like on some of the others. The reason of course boils down to a lack of resources, whether they be time, facilities, volunteer interest, landowner cooperation, information or money. The atmospheric climate and the economic climate are changing, and nature around the UK is affected by both.

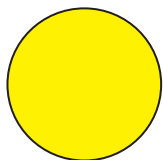
Presented in the following pages is a graphical summary of our progress to date in this, the International Year of Biodiversity. We have three types of habitat targets: 1) maintaining or improving condition on existing habitat; 2) restoring degraded or relict habitat and 3) creating new habitat from scratch. Most Habitat Action Plans include all three target types. Many of our targets date to as far in the future as 2030. We've therefore colour-coded the report to show how we currently predict the outcomes:



We expect to meet or exceed the target



Given the current knowledge we do not expect to meet the target



We might meet the target and are cautiously optimistic



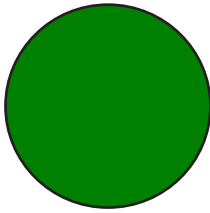
At this time we do not have enough data to evaluate progress



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

Arable margins

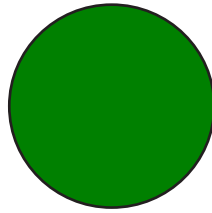
Maintain/
achieve
condition



462 ha
by 2015

Restoration

Creation



0 ha: target
exceeded

Arable margins are strips of land lying between a crop and the edge of a field. They are home to bees and other pollinators, birds and arable plants, the most threatened group of plants in the UK.

Very little is known about Bedfordshire's arable margins. In the absence of data, the Partnership set conservative targets. These have been exceeded, largely through agri-environment schemes and the **work of agencies like the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.**

Floodplain grazing marsh

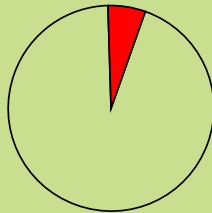
Maintain/
achieve
condition



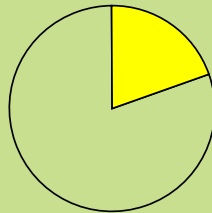
143.5 ha
by 2015

Restoration

Creation



70 ha
by 2015



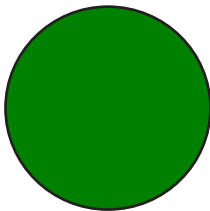
20 ha
by 2015

As the name suggests, this habitat is found mainly along rivers, in the floodplain. Our largest areas are in the Ouse, Ivel, Ouzel and Flit valleys. Most sites are grazed but some are cut for hay or silage.

The **Environment Agency is helping to fund a PhD** looking at floodplain restoration, with example sites in Bedfordshire. Restoration has recently begun at Arlesey Old Moat & Glebe Meadows. The creation target will largely be met through planning obligations.

Hedgerows

Maintain/
achieve
condition



1165.7 km
by 2015

Restoration

Creation



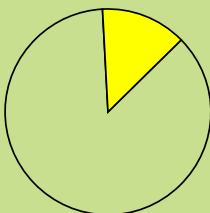
Target date
2015

Our oldest recorded hedgerows date from 969 AD. The most recent figures estimate that there are 4500km of hedgerows in the county. **Luton is thought to have up to 80km of pre-1901 hedgerows.**

Hedgerows in Studham, Maulden and in the chalk hills of southern Bedfordshire have been surveyed in recent years. Hedgerow creation is difficult to monitor so figures are not available. Extensive areas of new hedgerows can be found, however, in particular in the Marston Vale.

Lowland dry acid grassland

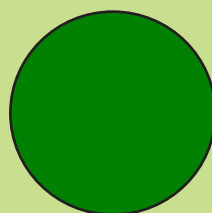
Maintain/
achieve
condition



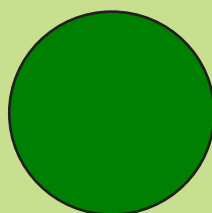
37.5 ha
by 2030

Restoration

Creation



32.5 ha
by 2015



10 ha
by 2020

Acid grassland is a rare habitat closely related to heathland and is often found closely associated with it. All of our acid grassland is restricted to the acidic, sandy soils of the Greensand Ridge.

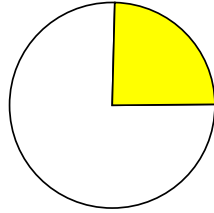
The Greensand Trust helps manage much of our acid grassland. Their work has contributed greatly to the success of our restoration and creation targets. Maintaining the habitat takes ongoing effort and resources however, and this is where much of our challenge lies.

Lowland calcareous grassland

Maintain/
achieve
condition

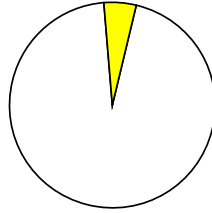


Restoration



737 ha
by 2030

Creation



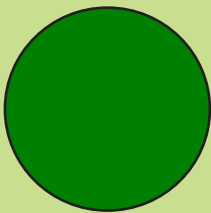
443.5 ha
by 2030

Calcareous, or 'chalk' grasslands are found on shallow soils over chalk or limestone. Ours are found around Luton on the steep slopes of the Chiltern Hills.

Chalk grassland restoration and creation take a very long time, decades if not centuries. **Much of our chalk grassland is managed by the Wildlife Trust**, at places like Pegsdon Hills and Totternhoe. The Partnership is currently looking to amend the creation and restoration targets to make them a bit more conservative.

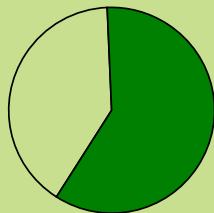
Lowland heathland

Maintain/
achieve
condition



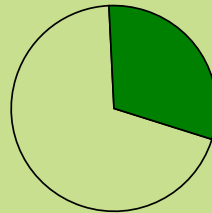
37.5 ha
by 2010

Restoration



5 ha
by 2020

Creation



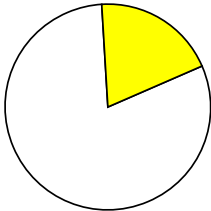
130 ha
by 2030

All of Bedfordshire's heathlands are on the Greensand Ridge. Several once occurred on the clay-with-flint soils of southern Bedfordshire: these no longer exist.

We are well underway to meeting our maintenance and restoration targets, in part because our county resource is so small: only 37.5ha remain. **The RSPB is undertaking most of the heathland creation**, at The Lodge and Sandy Heath Quarry. They're aiming to have 110 new hectares of heathland by 2030.

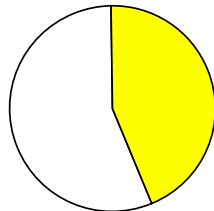
Lowland meadow

Maintain/
achieve
condition



311 ha
by 2012

Restoration



80 ha
by 2020

Creation



72 ha
by 2020

Once extensive, lowland meadow is now a very rare habitat. It is now often found only in small isolated pockets in places like churchyards. Much of our remaining meadow is located on the neutral soils in Bedford Borough.

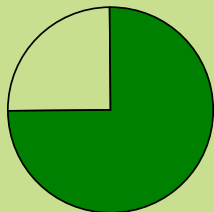
Most of our meadows are in private ownership, which presents a real management challenge. **The Wildlife Trust is currently working with meadow owners across the county**, providing advice and expertise.

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

Maintain/
achieve
condition

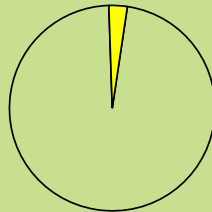


Restoration



32 ha
by 2020

Creation



3000 ha
by 2030

Bedfordshire is not a well wooded county, but has a few significant areas of woodland north of Bedford and on the Greensand Ridge.

Most of our woodland creation is being undertaken by the Forest of Marston Vale. They are working on planting 3000ha of new woodland by 2030, and have met their 2010 target. Many of our ancient woodlands have in the past been coniferised to produce timber. Most of these are now being restored.

Ponds

Maintain/
achieve
condition



Restoration



102 sites
by 2022

Creation



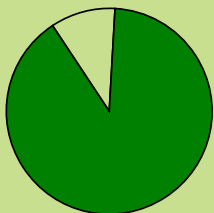
80 sites
by 2015

Ponds have only been a UK BAP habitat since the end of 2007. A 2007 survey found that 50% of Bedfordshire's older ponds were disappearing through habitat succession and other factors.

The **Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity** is working with communities on pond creation and restoration. As the project progresses we should gather enough data to evaluate progress.

Reedbed

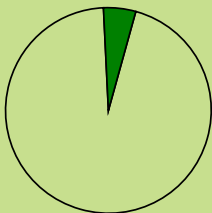
Maintain/
achieve
condition



22.3 ha
by 2015

Restoration

Creation



20 ha
by 2030

Reedbeds are wetlands dominated by stands of reed. They are uncommon in Bedfordshire and yet are some of the most important bird habitats in the UK.

Our largest existing reedbed was recently created at Millennium Country Park, where it is managed by the Forest of Marston Vale. Most of our new reedbed will be created through quarry restoration projects.

Traditional orchards

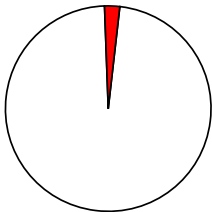
Maintain/
achieve
condition



Restoration



Creation



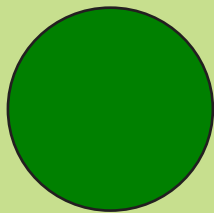
7 ha
by 2015

Traditional orchards are another UK BAP habitat introduced in 2007. Bedfordshire has an extensive orchard history. However agricultural census data show a 95% drop in our orchard area since the 1950s.

We know little about our remaining orchards. The **Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre** has mapped out **historic orchard sites**. A county-wide orchard survey will start in autumn 2010.

Wet woodland

Maintain/
achieve
condition



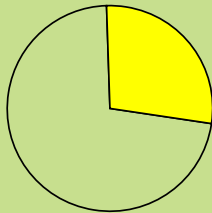
40 ha
by 2030

Restoration



20 ha
by 2020

Creation



150 ha
by 2030

Wet woodland is an uncommon and often overlooked habitat. For its size, Bedfordshire has more wet woodland than would be expected, about 320 ha. Flitwick Moor SSSI is one of the most important wet woodland sites in south east England.

Many of our partners manage wet woodlands. Our creation target will largely be met through mineral restoration and in the new Bedford River Valley Park.

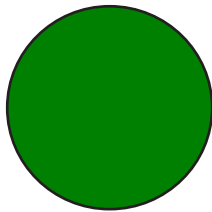
Wood-pasture and parkland

Maintain/
achieve
condition



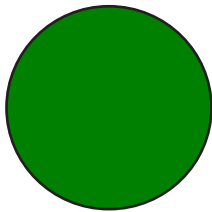
21 sites
by 2030

Restoration



2 sites
by 2020

Creation



0 ha: target exceeded

Parkland is characterised by veteran trees and open grassland which is usually grazed. At least 95 parkland sites can be identified in the county but only remnants of most remain.

Conservative parkland targets were set because little is known about our remaining sites. **BedsLife** is currently **conducting a parkland survey**, which will tell us more about the habitat base.