

**Bringing back clean water
to the countryside**

YEAR 2 REPORT

Who's involved?

The partners...

The Million Ponds Project is a major partnership co-ordinated by Pond Conservation, in association with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

Partners who are creating hundreds of ponds include the Environment Agency, Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, RSPB, Defence Estates, Ministry of Justice, FWAG and the Forestry Commission.

The Tubney Charitable Trust, Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales are funding project officers to help provide training and advice. The creation of many ponds is funded through Biffaward and Defra's agri-environment schemes, managed by Natural England. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Dulverton Trust, Restore UK, the Tanner Trust and One World Wildlife are also supporting the project.

Wildlife organisations including Plantlife, Buglife, the RSPB and the Aquatic Coleoptera Conservation Trust are providing information about pond creation for rare species. Volunteers from the Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK are creating and managing ponds for BAP amphibians and the pond-loving grass snake.

The Minerals Product Association and the British Aggregate Association are working to encourage their members to create clean water ponds for wildlife on mineral sites.

... and many other people

In addition to the project partners, many individuals and organisations contribute their own time, effort and money to create clean water ponds, including the National Trust and many Wildlife Trusts.

Other organisations who have contributed their time, knowledge and data to the project include the National Biodiversity Network, the Conchological Society of Great Britain, the Botanical Society of the British Isles, the British Bryological Society, the British Dragonfly Society, the Bat Conservation Trust and many individual species experts.

What the Million Ponds Project does

- Brings significant biodiversity benefits at a landscape scale.
- Sustains and increases populations of rare and protected species.
- Increases landscape connectivity, providing stepping stones and a greater variety of waterbodies.
- Protects our vulnerable freshwaters against climate change.
- Galvanises effort from a huge range of people: from individuals, landowners and community groups to national organisations.
- Changes attitudes and mindsets through training, information provision and on-site advice.
- Helps to sustain our freshwater wildlife for the long term.

What is the Million Ponds Project?

The Million Ponds Project is a national partnership initiative to protect our freshwater wildlife by creating a new network of clean waterbodies across the UK.

Ponds are exceptionally rich wildlife habitats. They typically support around 70% of the freshwater species found in lowland landscapes, including more rare and protected species than rivers, lakes or ditches.

And ponds pack all this biodiversity into a really tiny space: only 5% of the water area taken up by lakes, rivers, streams and ditches.

At a time when around 90% of our lowland waterbodies are degraded, and many pollution problems are intractable, the Million Ponds Project is using pond creation as a simple, cheap and effective way to bring back clean water to the countryside.

Find more information on why clean water ponds are important, and how to make them in the Pond Creation Toolkit.

The first phase of the Million Ponds Project

Phase 1 of the Million Ponds Project, which runs from 2008 to 2012, is creating the first 5,000 clean water ponds in England and Wales.

Around a quarter of these ponds are being targeted to support some of the 100 or so pond species that are national priority for conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Our 4 year targets

- **Make 5,000 new clean water ponds across England and Wales**
- **Ensure at least 1,000 new ponds are specially targeted for Biodiversity Action Plan species**
- **Train at least 1,000 pond makers and undertake at least 500 advisory sites visits**
- **Monitor and quality assure 10-20% of the new ponds made**

◀ Here's one we made earlier!

We know that clean water pond creation works. This pond on Otmoor SSSI, in Oxfordshire, was designed in 1995 by Pond Conservation and dug by the Environment Agency. Fifteen years later it supports the BAP species Tubular Water Dropwort, and is the first Oxfordshire site for Lesser Water Plantain in many years. In 2010, botanists from the Ashmolean Natural History Society Rare Plant Group collected seed from the pond for the Millennium Seed Bank.



Jeremy Biggs

The Pond Digging Fund for BAP species supported by Biffaward

Over 100 BAP species are known to depend on ponds, and most of these need clean water too, so clean water pond creation is an excellent way to protect populations of our most endangered plants and animals.

In the first four years of the Million Ponds Project, over 1,000 waterbodies are being specially dug for Biodiversity Action Plan Species.

To help the process along, Biffaward are providing a £500,000 Pond Digging Fund to create these ponds on ideal sites which will strengthen and extend vulnerable populations.



▲ Since the beginning of the Million Ponds Project, Biffaward funding has been secured for the creation of 566 ponds at 109 sites. In Year 2, this included ponds for BAP species such as: Spangled Water Beetle, Water Vole, Pillwort, Lapwing, Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Mud Snail, Tassel Stonewort, Grass-poly, Marsh Clubmoss, Natterjack Toad, Great Crested Newt and many others.



▲ A few of the 100 or so pond-associated BAP species in the UK

Illustrations: Nick Roberts Design

Year 2 of the Million Ponds Project

The Million Ponds Project is now beginning to make an impact on the countryside of England and Wales...

Over 1,600 ponds have now been created by partners and others across many landscape types – so the project has started the long process of bringing clean, healthy, thriving freshwater habitats back into the countryside.

At a financially challenging time, the Project's many partners have continued to produce amazing results, helped by Biffaward's £500,000 contribution to funding 1,000 ponds for Biodiversity Action Plan species.

The project is also beginning to change attitudes more generally and has been used as an example of good practice both within the NGO sector and in government.

... and we're ahead of target

The Million Ponds Project has tough targets, so it's a great testament to the work of the many people and organisations involved that at the end of Year 2 we are ahead on all the project's major targets.

The most important of these is that 30% more ponds than planned have been made for this stage of the project – **with just over 1,600 ponds created by the end of the second year**. 480 of these ponds were dug specifically for Biodiversity Action Plan species.



David Orchard

Our Year 2 achievements

- **1,429** new clean water and BAP species ponds created by partners and other organisations working to Million Ponds Project standards (Target: 1,045 ponds)
- Of these, **420** ponds were dug specifically for Biodiversity Action Plan species (Target: 200 ponds)
- **429** people trained at 20 events (Target: 200-400 people trained in Year 2)
- **203** site visits over 2 year (target 500+ for project overall)
- **15%** of ponds double-checked against Million Ponds Project criteria (target 10-20%)

◀ Training courses and site visits have taken place across England and Wales to provide best practice information on clean water pond creation and how to design schemes for target BAP species.

Projects in Year 2



John Baker

There have been some great Million Ponds projects in the last year, located everywhere from the Isle of Wight to North Yorkshire, and from west Wales to Suffolk.

Some of the most valuable are the large pond complexes – mixtures of permanent and seasonal ponds – which create mosaics of clean water habitats that will become extraordinarily rich wildlife habitats.

We've also seen the start of a snowballing effect. In 2009/10 we worked with BBOWT at Gallows Bridge Farm, Buckinghamshire, to make a complex of 40 ponds. The site already supports amphibians, breeding waders and nationally scarce invertebrates. Another 30 new clean water ponds are planned for other sites in this area, and together these new habitats will provide a haven for wildlife, in a landscape where most surface waters are polluted and degraded. It will also provide homes for some exceptionally rare BAP plants including True Fox-sedge (*Carex vulpina*) and Tassel Stonewort (*Tolypella intricata*).



Jeremy Biggs



David Orchard

Recipe for a clean water pond

Find a place with a clean water source. To do this:

- make sure the waterbody has natural surrounds.
- don't link the pond to stream or ditch inflows.
- don't add topsoil in or around the pond.
- locate ponds where they will be exposed to few impacts during their lifetime: no frequent disturbance from dogs or duck feeding.
- leave the waterbody to colonise naturally – don't stock it with plants, fish or other animals.

◀ The snowballing effect

In the Upper Ray Living Landscape, BBOWT's complex of 40 ponds created at Gallows Bridge Farm will form part of a new regional freshwater network when more clean water ponds are created in 2011 on private landholdings nearby, and by the Forestry Commission a few miles away in Bernwood Forest.



Paul Lacey

David Orchard

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve (East Sussex).
 The Environment Agency's complex of around 50 new clean water ponds, complements the larger waterbodies already present in the area.

Abney Hall (Greater Manchester).
 Volunteers from the South Manchester Amphibian and Reptile Group (SMARG) and the Friends of Abney Hall have been working with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council on a local nature reserve to create 17 ponds for Common Toad.



Matt Sutton

Tretio Common SSSI (Pembrokeshire).
 Countryside Council for Wales have been creating ponds on National Trust land for the rare BAP plants Pillwort and Three-lobed Crowfoot.



Roger Key

Fred Holmes

Woolmer Forest (Hampshire). Amphibian and Reptile Conservation have created shallow ponds on Defence Estates land that will benefit both the Spangled Water Beetle – Woolmer is the only place where this species occurs in the UK – and the rare Natterjack Toad.

Making ponds with the minerals industry

Mineral working sites – whether clay, sand or gravel – are excellent places to make new ponds. This is because they usually have some important pre-requisites for making good quality wildlife ponds: clean water, diggers and space. Even where extensive gravel pit lakes are already present, research has shown that creating ponds brings in more uncommon and endangered species.

In 2009, the value of ponds on aggregate sites was recognised when a new project officer post was awarded funding by Natural England through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. A reason the project was successful in securing funding was that we had strong backing from the minerals industry itself.

Our Minerals Officer has now worked widely at sites across England, providing advice and guidance to help companies create ponds both on active sites and on previously restored mineral workings.

A special extension to the Pond Creation Toolkit has been published tailored to the minerals industry, and training courses have been held in partnership with, amongst others, Tarmac, Aggregate Industries, Hanson and the Cotswold Water Park Society.

We've coordinated this work with other NGO initiatives, undertaking many site visits and training courses in conjunction with members of staff from the Nature After Minerals project, a partnership between Natural England and RSPB, and Buglife's Bringing Aggregate Sites to Life project.



Madeleine Ryan

▲ Minerals sites often provide great opportunities for clean water pond creation.

These wonderfully rich shallow pools in Oxfordshire were created with the Lower Windrush Valley Project and Smiths of Bletchington on land owned by Witney Town Council.

The BAP Species Map

Helping everyone make ponds for endangered species

Our new online tool is now making it much easier for anyone who wants to make ponds for Biodiversity Action Plan species.

The BAP Species Map tells you which pond-associated BAP species are in your area, and gives habitat requirements and pond design tips for each species. You can use this information to tell you which species might be attracted to your new pond, and to locate and tailor your design to provide most benefit. Many species experts have contributed to this web tool, bringing new information into the public domain.

The map was developed with funding from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, in collaboration with Nature After Minerals. A dedicated section of the map tool allows minerals operators to see which BAP species occur near their working areas, and illustrates how they can help to provide new habitats for these plants and animals.



Andrea Overland

It's not just aquatic plants and animals that benefit from pond creation...

Million Ponds Project partner, RSPB, has provided information about BAP birds that make use of ponds. A surprising addition to the list has been Hawfinch, which do best when there is at least one pond in every 10ha of their woodland home.

The Pond Creation Toolkit: free to download

In its first year, the Million Ponds Project published online factsheets covering all the basics of clean water pond creation, from the drawing board to the finished job.

In the second year, these core factsheets have been complemented by a special edition designed for the minerals industry, and by Species Dossiers that provide specific guidance on pond creation for water voles and stoneworts. We're also preparing case studies on pond creation schemes of all types to inspire prospective pond makers; proving that, on any site from the lowlands to the uplands, there are opportunities to create clean water ponds.

The Species Dossiers

With over 100 Biodiversity Action Plan species associated with ponds, it's important to get the designs right.

We are gradually increasing the range of species-specific advice provided in the Species Dossiers to cover 56 pond-associated BAP species.



Spreading the word

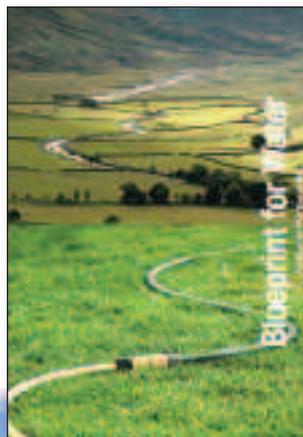
Because so many people work with ponds, getting information to them all is a big task and the project has been doing this in a variety of ways.

From local newspapers to the national press and Hansard, we've been trying to cover all the bases. There was good coverage in the Guardian and Independent newspapers this year, a guest editorial and the first two of three articles were published in Conservation Land Management. Partner publications carried articles publicising the Million Ponds Project work. And the project is included as a case study in the Blueprint for Water Campaign.



Maggie Watson

The Million Ponds Project aims to bring lasting change to the landscape so that we can all enjoy beautiful clean water ponds and their wildlife.



'Ponds are important habitats for a wide diversity of wildlife and can provide 'stepping stones' for many species that use freshwater habitats to move across the landscape'

The Lawton Review: 'Making Space for Nature' (2010)



MILLION PONDS PROJECT

Pond Conservation



Pond Conservation
For life in fresh waters



Tanner Trust



The Aquatic Coleoptera Conservation Trust

THE DULVERTON TRUST

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