

# Hundred Foot Washes IDB

## Biodiversity Action Plan Report 2020-21

### Note on 2020-21 report

In November 2020 ADA published the new updated IDB Biodiversity Plan along with guidance and a press release here:

<https://www.ada.org.uk/2020/11/ada-launches-updated-biodiversity-action-plan-for-idbs/>



Internal Drainage Board Biodiversity Action Plan

## Guidance Document

November 2020

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The Conservation Officer will begin moving Board reports into this new format as soon as possible and keep the Board informed of progress. The new reports are good news for the drainage industry as they reflect years of work by many people to ensure that the most up to date legislation, policy and approaches are accessible and practicable for those involved with water level management and, by extension, wildlife conservation. The existing BAP reports provide a good foundation on which to build and update as necessary.

### Report Summary

#### **Invasive species**

Floating Pennywort continues to be found sporadically at the fringes of the Middle Level system but has not currently found its way in. All Boards are asked to keep an eye out for large rafts of a 'lily-leaf type' mass floating in the main channels as this is likely where it will turn up first. An information sheet will be shared separately and a training session has been suggested for later in the year.

#### **Barn Owls**

Sightings welcomed by the Conservation Officer. 2020 was an exceptionally poor year across the region.

#### **Water Voles**

Those drains where habitat is suitable appear to be well managed with consideration of marginal and bankside vegetation.

Boards are reminded to contact the Conservation Officer *before* any bank reprofiling or other works that may impact water voles take place. If unsure, please contact the Conservation Officer regardless.

## **Mink**

Mink project underway across the Middle Level; Cambridgeshire now has a dedicated mink officer, a funded position hosted by the Countryside Restoration Trust and Waterlife Recovery East (WRE). All sightings of this and other invasive species are important. A more comprehensive update is available in the 2020 Natural Level newsletter.

The Conservation Officer thanks the Board for their contribution of 2 fully-equipped mink rafts in 2020. A total of 4 mink – all female - were subsequently caught, 2 from Welches Dam and 2 from WWT. It is likely that the habitats on the Ouse Washes and the vicinity are very attractive to breeding mink and it is therefore a key area of trapping. Efforts to continue in 2021.

## **Kingfisher/Sand Martin**

Sightings of these species in the breeding season are welcomed by the CO to help build a picture of how their populations fare across the region.

## **Badger**

Badgers and their setts are protected in UK law but exclusion work is permissible under licence where a threat may be posed to land drainage. Such work is not always successful and can lead to further, more problematic, incursions so often the best course of action is to work around them. However, if this is not deemed possible the Conservation Officer should be contacted to determine the best course of action. Care must be taken not to disturb setts during routine management.

## **Otter**

Sightings or reports welcomed.

## **Other Environmental issues**

Outbreaks of Bird Flu were reported in small numbers across the fens through winter 2020. Please contact the CO if you come across dead wildfowl, birds of prey or gulls.

## **Training/Advice**

At present, the ongoing situation regarding coronavirus means no public events are planned, however when it is deemed safe to restart events the Boards will be notified. In the meantime, the Conservation Officer is happy to assist with any enquiries.

Peter Beckenham  
Peter.beckenham@middlelevel.gov.uk  
07765 597775

## Drainage Ditch Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Manage ditches for biodiversity as well as for drainage	1.1	Establish and maintain a management plan for routine IDB operations incorporating key biodiversity features	Conservation Officer	2015	Plan finalised and followed each year	<i>A map-based plan is available.</i>
		1.2	Look for opportunities to provide natural erosion protection such as marginal plant ledges when re-profiling ditches	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	If re-profiling is carried out, opportunities identified	<i>No re-profiling carried out during the period.</i>
		1.3	Provide natural erosion protection as in 1.2 if opportunities available	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Length of ditch with ledge / natural vegetation revetment	<i>As above.</i>
		1.4	Ensure ditch cleansing operations do not damage bird nests in nettles or other vegetation. Carry out surveys prior to work if necessary.	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Measures taken	<i>Appropriate checks were carried out if ditching machines were operating near potential nest sites.</i>
2	Identify ditches of conservation interest and manage appropriately	2.1	Ensure appropriate management of ditches for priority species	Conservation Officer, Plantlife, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Specified in management plan	<i>The 2011 survey of aquatic plants has been used to advise on appropriate management of IDB ditches</i>

3	Support the Conservation Officer in working with landowners to benefit wildlife in the district	3.1	Refer private landowners to the Conservation Officer for advice on creating field margin buffer zones and wildlife-friendly ditch management	Conservation Officer, Natural England, Wildlife Trust, FWAG	Ongoing	Number of contacts received and passed to Environmental Officer	<i>No enquiries were received during the period</i>
4	Control invasive species	4.1	Report any sightings of non-native invasive species immediately to the Conservation Officer and control as appropriate	Conservation Officer, Environment Agency, Plantlife, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Reports to Conservation Officer	<i>Floating Pennywort has been seen in the Hundred Foot Drain and preventative measures taken. Monitoring on-going.</i>
5	Plant black poplars to increase existing population	5.1	Identify suitable sites and plant at least 2 young black poplars	Conservation Officer	2015	Number of trees planted	<i>Four trees planted previously.</i>

## Floodplain Grazing Marsh Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Identify, assess and map areas of existing floodplain grazing marsh	1.1	Pass details of any known areas to Conservation Officer	Wildlife Trust, RSPB, WWT, Natural England, Environment Agency	2012	Review of potential grazing marsh area carried out	<i>Existing areas already identified and mapped by conservation bodies.</i>
2	Support landowners in creating or restoring grazing marsh / wet grassland	2.1	Manage District adopted drains where possible to assist private landowners and organisations undertaking habitat creation	Conservation Officer, Natural England, RSPB, WWT, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	(a) Number of requests received (b) Number of landowners assisted	<i>New areas of compensatory damp grassland creation are being progressed to the east of the Ouse Washes, by WWT at Lady Fen and by EA/RSPB at Coveney.</i>
3	Support appropriate	3.1	Contribute to implementation of all	Conservation Officer, Natural	Ongoing	All relevant actions	<i>Ouse Washes Strategy Group meetings were</i>

	management of the Ouse Washes		relevant plans (e.g. site management plan and WLMP)	England, RSPB, WWT, Environment Agency, Wildlife Trust		implemented	<i>attended and supported when possible.</i>
		3.2	Promote and support measures to limit spring and summer flooding of the Ouse Washes	Environmental Officer, Natural England, RSPB, WWT, Environment Agency, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	(a) No. of opportunities to comment on flood-limiting measures (b) No. of comment opportunities taken up	<i>CO not aware of any.</i>

## Open Water Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Promote the creation of ponds, lakes and reservoirs in appropriate areas	1.1	Consider pond creation as mitigation when a ditch has to be filled in or culverted	Local authorities, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	(a) Number of mitigation opportunities (b) Number of ponds created	<i>(a) No ditch in-fills (b) Pond/scrape areas are created by the conservation land owners and wildfowling groups.</i>
		1.2	Support creation of flood storage areas and reservoirs	Environment Agency, Natural England, Wildlife Trust, RSPB	Ongoing	Number of projects involved with	<i>No flood storage areas or reservoir projects arose during the period</i>
		1.3	Assist private landowners with advice, information or contacts as necessary	Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	(a) Number of information requests (b) Number responded to	<i>No information requests were received nor responses required</i>

2	Look for opportunities to create open water habitat when managing ditches	2.1	Create a pool at an appropriate ditch junction when re-profiling (see the Drainage Channel Biodiversity Manual, technique CL3)	Conservation Officer	2010	One pool successfully created	<i>No new opportunities for this method arose.</i>
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## Water Vole Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Manage ditches according to the law and to best practice for water vole	1.1	Assume water voles are present when carrying out works and follow the ADA water vole mitigation guide	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Measures incorporated in management plans	<i>Water vole Best Practice methods were used</i>
		1.2	Publicise good practice for rat control near drainage ditches	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Good practice publicised	<i>Best Practice for rat control has been previously publicised in the Environmental Officer's Natural Level newsletter.</i>
2	Enhance drainage ditch habitat to benefit water vole	2.1	Look for opportunities to add a marginal shelf when re-profiling banks	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	(a) Opportunities identified (b) Measures taken	<i>No opportunities identified; no measures taken during the period.</i>
		2.2	Consider using coir roll to stabilise banks and provide marginal vegetation	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	(a) Sites considered (b) Measures taken	<i>No appropriate sites or opportunities arose during the period.</i>
3	Monitor water vole populations	3.1	Set up a survey programme to monitor water vole populations	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trust	2010	Surveys carried out	<i>Annual surveys when possible.</i>
		3.2	Provide data on water vole to the relevant Biological Records Centres	Conservation Officer, CPERC, NBIS	Ongoing	Data sent via Environmental Officer annually	<i>Data sent to CPERC when available.</i>

4	Control mink as necessary	4.2	Carry out mink control as part of the Middle Level programme and report all sightings to the Conservation Officer	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	(a) Number of trapping days (b) Number of mink caught	<i>Board purchased 2 mink rafts in 2020. See summary for details.</i>
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## Otter Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Improve otter habitat	1.1	Identify and maintain existing key bushes and trees near watercourses likely to be important for otters	Conservation Officer	2012 and ongoing	Sites identified and listed in management plans	<i>Signs indicate activity along main channels in particular</i>
2	Monitor otter populations	2.3	Ensure any dead otters are reported to the Conservation Officer and transferred to the Environment Agency for post mortem	Environment Agency	Ongoing	Otters reported to Conservation Officer, if found	<i>No reports</i>
3	Reduce otter deaths related to eel and crayfish trapping and road traffic	3.1	Report incidents of suspected illegal netting, trapping or fishing to the Environment Agency Fisheries Officers and the Conservation Officer	Environment Agency, Angling Clubs & syndicates	Ongoing	Incidents reported, if discovered	<i>No reports or indications of illegal trapping noted. Members are encouraged to report any suspicious activity or illegal fishing to the EA or Conservation Officer.</i>

## Bats Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Improve habitat for bats	1.1	Put up at least 3 bat boxes at an appropriate site	Bat Conservation Trust	2015	Number of bat boxes sited	<i>Six boxes sited previously</i>

		1.2	Pollard suitable trees to provide bat roosts		Ongoing	Number of trees pollarded	<i>No new trees were pollarded during the period.</i>
		1.3	Identify potential sites for a bat hibernaculum, e.g. in disused buildings or tunnels	Conservation Officer, Bat Conservation Trust	As opportunities arise	(a) Potential sites looked for (b) Site created	<i>(a) Limited opportunities for this potential action due to the lack of old buildings or suitable culverts in the District. (b) None.</i>
2	Collect information on bat populations	2.1	Monitor bat boxes	Bat Conservation Trust	2015 onwards	(a) Number of boxes monitored (b) Number of boxes used by bats	<i>Boxes monitored when possible.</i>
		2.2	Pass bat box information to CPBRC and NBIS	Conservation Officer, CPBRC, NBIS	2015 onwards	Data via Conservation Officer annually	<i>Annually if box found to be occupied by bats.</i>

## Kingfisher Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Improve the quality of kingfisher habitat	1.1	Provide at least 2 potential nest holes in sheet pilings	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Number of nest sites provided	<i>Three.</i>
		1.2	Leave kingfisher fishing perches where possible (e.g. occasional branch)	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Number of perch sites left	<i>Numerous perches are available on natural sites over many channels and ditches.</i>
2	Collect records of kingfisher breeding between March and July	2.1	Note sightings of potential breeding kingfisher and pass information to CPBRC and NBIS via the Environmental Officer	Conservation Officer, CPBRC, NBIS	Ongoing	Data sent via Environmental Officer annually	<i>Data sent when possible.</i>

## Procedural Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Provide training on IDB BAP and conservation management of drainage channels for all relevant staff by 2013	1.1	Establish programme of 1-day courses for IDB staff and members	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trust, Natural England, other specialists	2013	(a) Number of courses held (b) Number of Board members / staff attending courses	<i>No annual biodiversity training meeting in 2020 due to Covid-19. Board will be advised on opportunities in 2021.</i>
		1.2	Establish suitable training for contractors' staff	Conservation Officer, Contractors	2013	Contractors attended training course	<i>Training requirements to be reviewed</i>
2	Take biodiversity into account when planning and undertaking capital works	2.1	Consult with the Environmental Officer and choose the best possible mitigation solutions for biodiversity, e.g. fish-friendly pumps	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	(a) Number of capital schemes undertaken (b) Number of schemes commented on	<i>No IDB capital schemes undertaken (b) no comments required.</i>