

## PRIORITY HABITAT FACTSHEET



*North Warren, Thorpeness (Emma Aldous),  
Bearded Tit (Neil Rolph), Common Frog (Paul Kitchener).*

# Reedbeds

**A fen community dominated by reeds occurring in waterlogged areas, which are mostly freshwater, but can also be brackish or tidal.**

**Made up of reedbed, fen, eutrophic open water, ditches and wet woodland, they may also include small areas of wet grassland and carr woodland.**

**Most of the UK's reedbeds are in East Anglia, with the three largest being on the Suffolk coast. They contain over fifty-six species of conservation concern.**

## IMPORTANCE FOR WILDLIFE

Reedbeds provide breeding habitats for rare and migratory birds and important wintering habitats. They make excellent habitats for otters, water voles, water shrews and harvest mice. Variations in reedbeds such as shallow areas, well-vegetated ditches, open areas of water and gentle bank gradients help to support a broad range of amphibians and reptiles. They are also an extremely important habitat for invertebrates with fifty-four notable invertebrates associated with Suffolk's reedbeds.



## IMPORTANT ASSOCIATED SPECIES

### Birds

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*  
Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*  
Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*  
Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*  
Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*  
Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*  
Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*  
Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*  
Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*  
Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*  
Crane *Grus grus*  
Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

### Mammals

Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*  
Water shrew *Neomys fodiens\**  
Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus\**

### Flies

Broads Long-legged Fly *Dolichopus laticola*  
Black Fungus Gnat *Asindulum nigrum*

### Amphibians

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*  
Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*  
Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*  
Common Toad *Bufo bufo*  
Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*

### Molluscs

Depressed River Mussel *Pseudanodonta complanata*  
Desmoulin's Whorl Snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*  
Swollen Spire Snail *Mercuria similis*  
Narrow-mouth Whorl Snail *Vertigo angustior*

### Moths

White-mantled Wainscot *Archanara neurica*  
Fenn's Wainscot *Chortodes brevilinea*  
The Concolorous *Chortodes extrema*  
Large Wainscot *Rhizedra lutosa\*\**

\*Suffolk Priority species  
\*\*Priority - Research Only. Common and widespread, but rapidly declining.



Images: Top – Marsh Harrier (Neil Rolph). Bottom, left to right – Grasshopper Warbler (Neil Rolph), Fenn's Wainscot (Paul Kitchener), Smooth Newt (Gary Last), Water Vole (Margaret Holland).

## FACTORS AFFECTING HABITAT IN SUFFOLK

- Coastal erosion and saline incursion have already led to a substantial reduction in the size and quality of the reedbed. Shingle banks protecting them are being eroded or overtopped by the sea. These reedbeds are expected to be lost as inundation by seawater increases in frequency.
- Conversion to intensive agriculture, water abstraction and land drainage.
- Inappropriate management leading to dehydration, scrub encroachment and loss of open water. Wetter parts of reedbeds are quickly lost if not managed resulting in woodland forming.
- Inappropriate water level management, impacts from water abstraction and fluvial flooding threaten key species through direct losses (desiccation and drowning) or by impairing management.



## HABITAT MANAGEMENT ADVICE

- Maintain water levels at a sufficiently high level and ensure that areas of litter do not dry out. Ensure continuity of level as rising water levels can be damaging for many invertebrates.
- Maintain all stages of succession from young reed in shallow water to old reed and invasion of scrub on virtually dry ground over dense litter.
- Maintain existing stands of Phragmites, tussocky grasses, sallow carr and sedges to ensure habitat diversity.
- Retain scrub in small areas to increase habitat diversity. Remove any unwanted scrub by pulling out bushes, leaving small pools of water.
- Consider grazing to maintain floral and invertebrate diversity. Trampling and poaching can create valuable patches of bare soil and create high-quality berms at ditch margins
- Encourage flower-rich areas at the reedbed margins to provide pollen and nectar sources for adult insects.
- Create a gently sloping profile at the fen edge to allow for seasonal water level variations.
- Non-commercial cutting of reeds should take place on a 4 year+ rotation to allow time for invertebrates to reproduce successfully.
- On a commercially cut reedbed, only part of the site should be managed intensively, leaving other areas available as longer-term invertebrate habitat. Only a small amount of the reedbed should be burned at any one time.

*Reeds at Wilford Bridge (Emma Aldous).*



## VISION FOR SUFFOLK

1. Improve knowledge of extent and quality of reedbeds.
2. Maintain the existing extent of reedbeds to ensure no net loss.
3. Re-create reedbeds as opportunities arise.
4. Encourage the restoration and improvement of degraded reedbeds.

## WHERE TO FIND FURTHER INFORMATION

Buglife – advice on managing BAP habitats

- <https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/habitat-management/reedbeds>

Buglife – Notable invertebrates associated with reedbeds (pdf)

- <https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2019/06/Notableinvertebratesassociatedwithreedbeds.pdf>

English Nature 1997 *Suffolk Coast maritime Natural Area profile*

JNCC Habitat Description (pdf)

- <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/6fe22f18-fff7-4974-b333-03b0ad819b88/UKBAP-BAPHabitats-44-Reedbeds.pdf>

MAGIC website – interactive mapping information including designations • <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

*Making Space for Nature, a Review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network* 16 Sep 2010.

Chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS. Defra website (pdf) • <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130402151656/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

Natural England Access to Evidence No. 13 Reedbeds • [publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5889671515078656](https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5889671515078656)

Natural England NCA Profile 82 Suffolk Coast and Heaths April 2015 • <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5626055104659456>

Natural Environment White Paper June 2011 – *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* (pdf)

- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/228842/8082.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228842/8082.pdf)

*Reedbed management for commercial and wildlife interests* (RSPB Management Guides). Hawke, C.J. and Jose, P.V. 1996. Paperback available from 2nd hand book shops.

RSPB – Bringing Reedbeds to life Project (Creating and managing reedbeds for wildlife)

- <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/bringing-reedbeds-to-life>

RSPB – Land Management for Bitterns • <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/advice/conservation-land-management-advice/bitterns>

RSPB – Reedbed Management 2009 (pdf) • [https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation--sustainability/lm-advice/reedbed\\_management.pdf](https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation--sustainability/lm-advice/reedbed_management.pdf)

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Habitats Explorer • <https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/habitats/wetlands/reedbed>

## CONTACT

Emma Aldous, Communications Officer, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service  
07871 732606 • [emma.aldous@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:emma.aldous@suffolk.gov.uk)  
[www.suffolkbis.org.uk](http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk)



# SUFFOLK REEDBEDS: NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

Species	Designation
<b>Snails and slugs (Mollusca)</b>	
<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>	BAP Priority RDB3
<i>Oxyloma sarsi</i>	RDB1
<i>Mercuria confusa</i> Probably in Suffolk. Recorded under older name 'Pseudamnicola confusa' at Barsham Marshes 2006, several sites in 1980s and Carlton Marshes 1992	RDB2
<b>Spiders and allies (Arachnida: Araneae and Pseudoscorpiones)</b>	
<i>Clubiona juvenis</i> Redgrave & Lopham 2009-10	RDB2
<i>Donacochara speciosa</i>	Na
<i>Entelecara omissa</i>	Na
<i>Gongylidiellum murcidum</i> Redgrave & Lopham 1984	Nb
<i>Hypomma fulvum</i>	Na
<i>Marpissa radiata</i>	Na
<i>Tetragnatha striata</i>	Nb
<b>Woodlice (Isopoda)</b>	
<i>Trichoniscoides albidus</i>	Nb
<b>True Bugs (Hemiptera)</b>	
Heteroptera	
<i>Microvelia pygmaea</i>	Nb
<i>Gerris lateralis</i>	Local
Leafhoppers, planthoppers, froghoppers, treehoppers & cicadas (Auchenorrhyncha)	
<i>Chloriona dorsata</i> (feeds exclusively on Phragmites)	Nb
<i>Oliarus leporinus</i> (feeds exclusively on Phragmites)	Nb
<i>Paralimnus phragmitis</i> (feeds exclusively on Phragmites)	Nb
<b>Flies (Diptera)</b>	
Snail-killing flies, picture-wing flies, grass flies and allies (Acalyptrata)	
<i>Lipara similis</i> (Chloropidae) Redgrave & Lopham 2000	RDB2
<i>Elachiptera austriaca</i> (Chloropidae)	N
<i>Eribolus slesvicensis</i> (Chloropidae)	N
<i>Lipara rufitarsis</i> (Chloropidae)	N
<i>Anagnota bicolor</i> (Anthomyzidae)	N
Craneflies (Tipulidae)	
<i>Tipula marginella</i>	RDB3
<i>Dicranomyia complicata</i>	RDB2
<i>Erioptera bivittata</i>	RDB2
<i>Dicranomyia danica</i>	RDB3
<i>Thaumastopectera calceata</i>	N
<i>Molophilus pleuralis</i>	
<b>Beetles (Coleoptera)</b>	
Ground beetles	
<i>Demetrias imperialis</i>	Nb
<i>Odacantha melanura</i>	Nb
Leaf beetles (Chrysomelidae)	
<i>Donacia aquatica</i>	BAP Priority Rare
Rove beetles and allies (Staphylinidae/Scydmaenidae/Silphidae)	
<i>Stenus butrintensis</i> Redgrave & Lopham 2009-10	N
<i>Rugilus fragilis</i> Hopton Fen 2004	N
<i>Dacryla fallax</i> (characteristic of reedbeds, but also found elsewhere)	N
<i>Aloconota languida</i> Thelnetham 2004 (characteristic of reedbeds, but also found elsewhere)	N
<i>Stenus binotatus</i>	Local
<i>Stenus solutus</i>	Local

Species	Designation
<i>Paederus riparius</i>	Local
<i>Erichsonius cinerascens</i>	Local
<i>Tachyporus pallidus</i>	Local
<i>Myllaena infuscata</i>	Local
<i>Myllaena intermedia</i>	Local
<i>Myllaena minuta</i>	Local
<i>Hygronoma dimidiata</i>	Local
<i>Alianta incana</i>	Local
<i>Pachnida nigella</i>	Local
<i>Ocyusa picina</i>	Local
<b>Caddis flies (Trichoptera)</b>	
<i>Phacopteryx brevipennis</i> 1 undated record from Redgrave & Lopham	N
<i>Agrypnia pagetana</i>	Local
<i>Limnephilus binotatus</i>	Local & Regionally Notable
<i>Trichostegia minor</i>	Regionally Notable
<b>Ants, bees and wasps (Hymenoptera: Aculeata)</b>	
<i>Odynerus simillimus</i>	RDB1
<i>Passaloecus clypealis</i>	RDB2, RDB3, Rare
<i>Hylaeus pectoralis</i>	Rare
<i>Macropis europaea</i>	RDB3, Na, Scarce

### Definitions of Designations

RDB3 – Red Data Book category 3. RARE	Species which occur in small populations and, although not currently either Endangered or Vulnerable, are at risk. Rare species exist in 15 or fewer 10km squares, or are more widespread than this but dependent on small areas of especially vulnerable habitat.
RDB2 - Red Data Book Category 2. VULNERABLE	A taxon is Vulnerable when it is not Critically Endangered or Endangered but is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium term future. Rare species exist in 15 or fewer 10km squares, or are more widespread than this but dependent on small areas of especially vulnerable habitat.
Nb – Nationally Scarce Category B	Species which do not fall within Red Data Book categories but which are nonetheless uncommon in Great Britain and thought to occur in between 31 and 100 10km squares of the National Grid, or for less well recorded groups, between eight and twenty vicecounties.
Na – Nationally Scarce Category A	Species which do not fall within Red Data Book categories but which are nonetheless uncommon in Great Britain and thought to occur in 30 or fewer (typically between 16 and 30) 10km squares of the National Grid, or for less well recorded groups, in seven or fewer vice-counties.
RDBK	Species appear in the Red Data Book but the status is unknown, although they are thought to be rare.
Local	Found in restricted habitats.
Notable A	Taxa which do not fall within RDB categories but which are none-the-less uncommon in Great Britain and thought to occur in 30 or fewer 10km squares of the National Grid or, for less well-recorded groups, within seven or fewer vice-counties. The same as 'Nationally Scarce'.
Notable B	Taxa which do not fall within RDB categories but which are none-the-less uncommon in Great Britain and thought to occur in between 31 and 100 10km squares of the National Grid or, for less-well recorded groups between eight and twenty vice-counties. Superseded by Nationally Scarce, and therefore no longer in use.
N – Nationally Scarce	Species which do not fall within Red Data Book categories but which are nonetheless uncommon in Great Britain. This status category has been used where information has not been sufficient to allocate a species to either Na or Nb. These species are thought to occur in between 16 and 100 10km squares of the National Grid.
BAP Priority Species	Listed under Sec 41 of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 as priorities for conservation action.