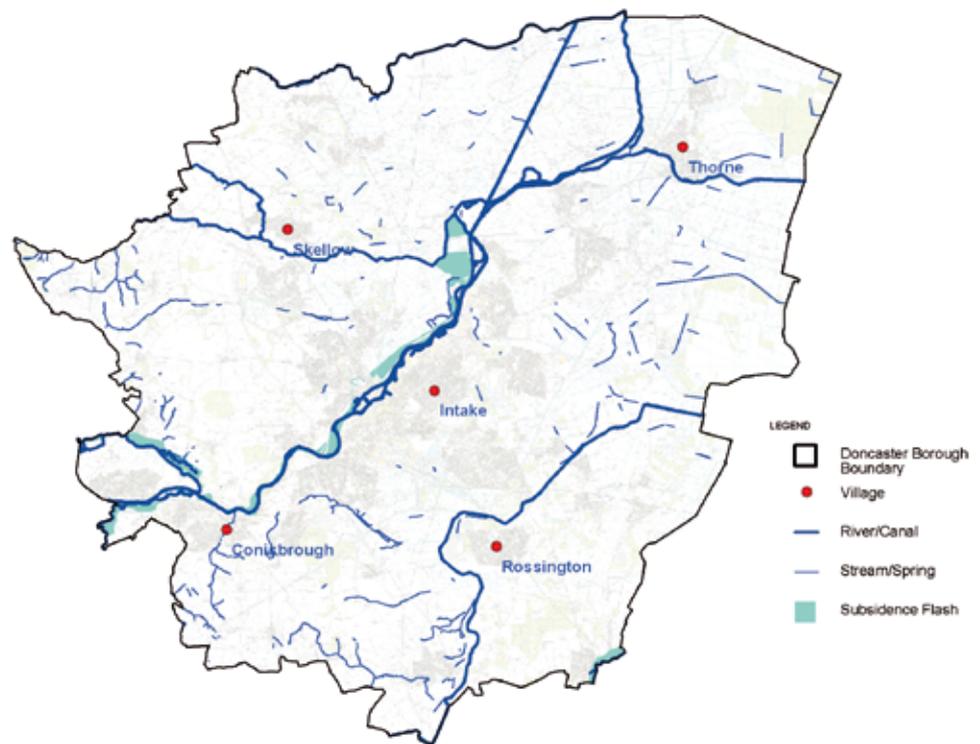


Rivers, Canals, Oxbows, Major Streams and Subsidence Flashes

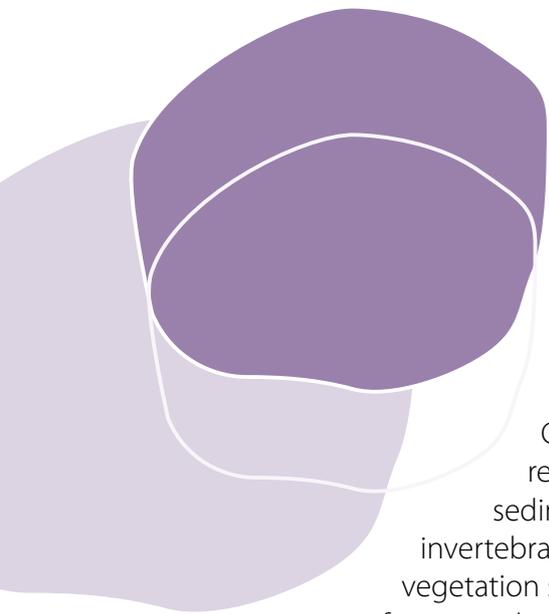
Summary Habitat Action Plan

Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan
January 2007



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1 Habitat description

Flowing water and floodplain wetlands include aquatic habitats ranging from swiftly flowing rivers to slow, sluggish canals. Doncaster's river valleys also support a number of wetland sites such as cut-off oxbows and riverside marshes. Rivers and canals support a diverse range of plants and animals including otter, water vole, water shrew and waterfowl such as grebes, swans, coot, moorhen and mallard. Riverbanks provide nesting habitat for the elusive kingfisher, and burrowing sand martins. Grey wagtails are typically seen bobbing up and down rivers, and reed buntings are also frequent foragers. Riffles, pools and exposed sediments and shingle bars are important for a range of aquatic invertebrates and are also fish spawning sites. Marginal and bank side vegetation supports a variety of wild flowers and animals and the riverbank often provides a corridor linking fragmented habitats in otherwise intensively-farmed areas. Overhanging banks are particularly good for mining bees to make their solitary nest sites.

The slower flow conditions in Doncaster's canals should allow the establishment of a greater amount of aquatic, emergent and swamp vegetation. However, due to the fact that many sections of canal are in embanked channels high above the surrounding farmland, problems of bank stability and leakage mean that much of the canal system has been re-enforced with metal sheet-pile edging.

2 Characteristic Species

Common duckweed	Bulrush	Spiked water milfoil
Broadleaved pondweed	Branched bur-reed	Perfoliate pondweed
Canadian pondweed	Arrowhead	Water plantain
Mud water starwort	Grey clubrush	False fox-sedge
Common reed	Reed canary grass	Greater duckweed
Reed sweet grass	Fat duckweed	Greater water parsnip
Greater pond sedge	Rigid hornwort	Greater tussock sedge
Common clubrush	Soft hornwort	Unbranched bur-reed

3 Current factors causing loss or decline

- All the significant watercourses in the Borough have been canalised and have lost their original features, geomorphology and flow patterns. Maintaining the riffle-flow regime to the edge of the tidal limit on the Don near St Mary's Bridge is vital to provide the gravel bed habitats suitable for spawning brown trout.
- Some riparian wetland sites are under threat from direct drainage, water abstraction or lowering of the local water tables. Flood prevention work may continue to have an impact on the river channels.
- Pollution, both point source and diffuse has a significant effect on water quality, and reduces species diversity. Mine water discharges may also become more important as groundwater levels rise.

- In-stream features such as weirs and sluices have disrupted fish movement, but the removal of weirs risks contamination from the disturbance of old sediment that has accumulated behind these structures.
- A return to using the canal system for transportation on a large scale could affect habitat on stretches of 'navigable river'.
- The maintenance of canal banks is a problem in the lower canal systems where leakage necessitates replacement with metal piling.
- Non-native animals such as signal crayfish, mink and introduced coarse fish species threaten native populations. Spread of disease is also a significant threat to riparian wildlife and use of crayfish as bait for angling has led to pathogen movement between watercourses.
- Some fisheries experience problems of littering and bank-side vegetation trampling.

4 Objectives, targets & proposed actions

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead & Partners
1) To ensure the protection and maintenance of existing river, river wetlands and canal habitats.	By 2008.	1.9	Set up a Doncaster Rivers Trust to provide a forum for the various different interest groups to discuss and coordinate river issues and opportunities, including habitat and species conservation as identified within the LBAP.	All LBAP partners, and river users and stakeholders. (Environment Agency (EA) lead), Don Gorge Strategic Partnership (DGSP)
2) To restore degraded sites and ensure appropriate management of river, river wetlands and canal habitats.	2 wildlife stepping out points created by 2010.	2.2	Construct wildlife 'stepping-out' points on re-enforced sections of canal bank.	EA, DMBC, British Waterways (BW), DGSP
	Continuous.	2.4	Research and implement measures to control the introduction and spread of invasive, non-native plant species, within riparian habitats owned and managed by LBAP partners. Prioritise work in the uppermost parts of river catchments.	All LBAP partners
3) To create riparian wetlands linked to existing river and canal systems.	0.5km of emergent habitat creation by 2009.	3.2	Install coir rolls (or equivalent) at angling sites, where vegetation is sparse or the bank-side has been eroded or reinforced.	EA, DMBC, BW, DGSP
4) Raise public awareness of the importance and special characteristics of rivers, canals, and riparian wetlands.	By 2009.	4.1	Produce a guidance sheet for river and riverside leisure users to highlight local biodiversity interest, issues affecting the habitat and associated species, and appropriate management and behaviour. Promote relevant partner publications, legislation and codes of conduct.	EA, BW, YWT, DGSP

5 This habitat in Doncaster

The following describes where in the Doncaster Borough good examples of this habitat can be found, however, named sites may be privately owned and therefore are not publicly accessible. For further information about this habitat and where it can be found in Doncaster see the 'Rivers, Canals, Oxbows, Major Streams and Subsidence Flashes Habitat Action Plan'.

The River Don is the main river in Doncaster, but its tributaries and other rivers such as the Idle, Torne, and Went are also important. The course of the Don contains a number of oxbows, now cut off from the river and there are several important subsidence flashes formed as a result of mining and river engineering.

The name Ea Beck is given to the combined flows of The Skell and Hampole Dike, which have their confluence near the Humber Head Bridge and flows to the River Don at Thorpe In Balne. Within the upper river a small pocket of wetland and wet woodland at Size Ings may represent an old route of the Beck. There are numerous flooded borrow pits and water-filled 'foot drains' along the whole route of the Beck and their biodiversity value is recognised by their designation as Bentley Tilts and Course of Old Ea Beck Site of Scientific Interest.

The River Don is also the primary navigable waterway in the Borough. River meanders severed by the construction of the Doncaster to Sheffield railway line and mining subsidence near Old Denaby have created two floodplain wetland sites with significant biodiversity value (Old Denaby Ings and River Oxbow, and Old Denaby Area) collectively known as Old Denaby Wetlands (managed by DMBC). The adjacent Denaby Ings Site of Special Scientific Interest is maintained by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. In these areas you will see a good array of typical river, oxbow and subsidence wetland wildlife.

6 How to take part 'Backyard Biodiversity – Nature in your Neighbourhood'

This is a new initiative launched by Doncaster Council to enable local people to learn about, protect and enjoy nature where they live. Community Groups and Organisations can loan activity packs and equipment to enable them to take part in activities such as bird watching, pond-dipping, building bird and bat boxes and bug hunting. The service is available FREE of charge from selected Customer Service Centres in Doncaster. A pack of Wildlife Gardening fact sheets has also been produced, which provides advice and information on how you can help the wildlife in your own garden.

Doncaster Biodiversity Action Partnership
Doncaster Council, Environmental Planning, 2nd Floor, Danum House,
St Sepulchre Gate, Doncaster, DN1 1UB.

Telephone: 01302 862896
Email: bio.diversity@doncaster.gov.uk

www.doncaster.gov.uk/biodiversity

