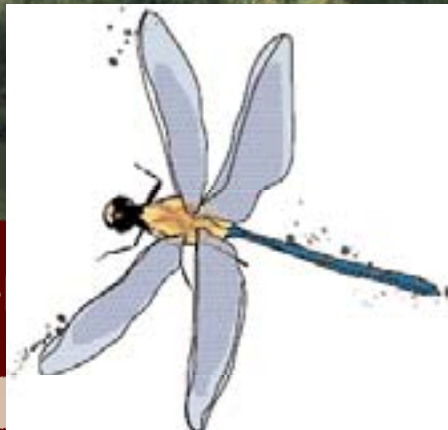




Ponds & Open Water



Aims of the Ponds and Open Water Action Plan

- To encourage good nature conservation practice in Lambeth's ponds and open water bodies, to promote a greater habitat and species diversity.
- To raise awareness of the biodiversity importance of Lambeth's ponds.
- To encourage greater involvement in the management and development of Lambeth's ponds for a wide range of positive uses, including nature conservation and recreation.

A) Why are ponds and open water bodies important for biodiversity?

Lambeth's ponds and areas of open water have a rich history associated with them, and have immense value for local communities providing access to water for a variety of recreational, educational, aesthetic and nature conservation activities.

London's ponds and lakes are used for fishing, swimming, boating, socialising, entertainment, environmental education and nature conservation, and many have associations or groups who work to manage, protect or develop them.

Lambeth's ponds and lakes are increasingly valued for their contribution to nature conservation and biodiversity. Many are rich in habitats, plants and animals increasingly restricted or uncommon in London, act as 'refuges' for wildlife as other suitable habitat is lost or declines in management and quality, or are used for environmental education purposes, both formal and informal.

Ponds and lakes are now seen by conservationists, educationalists and site managers as a tool to raise the awareness and interest of people in urban wildlife, nature conservation and biodiversity, as well as in landscape history. Many ponds have been lost to neglect or development, but others are protected and are slowly being brought back to life by restoration projects or actions of local people.

B) Where are ponds and other areas of open water in Lambeth?

The 1984-1985 London Wildlife Habitat Survey indicated 23 ponds and areas of open water in Lambeth. However, this figure is probably incorrect, as smaller ponds or those in relatively inaccessible locations, including many private gardens or school grounds, will have been omitted from the surveys, so the actual figure is probably higher.

The net area of all ponds and open water bodies in Lambeth is small, amounting to no more than 2.5 hectares in total, or less than 0.092% of the total land area of the Borough.

The majority of Lambeth's larger ponds are in public spaces like Ruskin Park, Brockwell Park and Clapham Common but others are in smaller greenspaces like Palace Road Nature Gardens, Agnes Riley Gardens or Streatham Rookery.

The remainder are on private land like Tate Gardens and Lambeth Palace, or where access is restricted, e.g. allotments, schools or housing estates.

E) Why do we need an Action Plan for Lambeth's ponds and open water bodies?

Neglect and lack of management on ponds and open water results in the forces of 'natural succession' taking over, resulting in the loss of aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats/species and their replacement by those typical of dry land, e.g. grassland, scrub and woodland

Inappropriate or overzealous management by modern grounds maintenance contracts often have pond maintenance regimes driven by cost. Such regimes which do not put nature conservation as a priority results in ponds being managed to keep an area looking neat and safe, so that marginal habitat is thinned out or cut back without consideration to the needs of wildlife.

Conflicts often occur on ponds where there is demand for recreational and leisure uses such as fishing, boating, swimming, picnicking, music, events and dog walking. Pressure on pond banks and the water itself might 'squeeze out' or confine areas of wildlife importance to limited locations, or the noise and disturbance by such activities can drive out or deter wildlife.



Clapham Common SW4: Eagle Pond, an coarse fishing pond restored in 2002, showing improvements to benefit wildlife as well as angling. Lambeth Council 2005

Many water bodies are increasingly affected by pollution, and there is evidence that such pollutants directly or indirectly affect habitats and species in lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.

Many ponds and lakes suffer from vandalism or being used as dumping sites, and this not only reduces the aesthetic quality of the water body and surroundings, but can also have direct or indirect impacts upon wildlife habitats and species in or around the water body.

Many ponds and lakes are affected or threatened by deliberate or accidental introductions of alien or invasive plant and animal species. If allowed to colonise, establish and disperse unchecked, many of these species can compete with native plants and animals in ponds and open waters, sometimes to the point where indigenous species are out-competed, suppressed or even excluded.

Many traditional ponds and lakes have been lost due to direct loss or infilling for safety reasons, where it is no longer regarded as essential to operations or use of the land. Many have been lost as to developments like housing, industrial estates or laying down of new hardstandings.



Brockwell Park SE24: middle pond looking north, showing restored marginal habitat and open water areas. Lambeth Council 2005

F) What is the legal status of Lambeth's ponds and open water bodies?

None of the ponds in Lambeth have specific designations to confer protection because of their nature conservation status. However, a number of ponds are within Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), either of Local or Borough importance for Lambeth. Any ponds within SNCIs are provided with protection from inappropriate use and are managed to protect their biodiversity.

A number of ponds in Lambeth are within Conservation Areas, designated as Metropolitan Open Land, or on English Heritage's register of historic landscapes. All these designations confer protection on such sites, and by inference on the ponds contained within them.

The three ponds on Clapham Common, being part of a registered Metropolitan Common, also have protection through commons legislation. In addition, two of the ponds on Clapham Common are registered fisheries, and as such are covered by National Fisheries Byelaws and local Codes of Conduct to prevent or minimise use which conflicts between the needs of anglers and wildlife.

G) What will the Ponds and Open Water Action Plan do?

Objective 1. We will improve understanding of the nature conservation and biodiversity value of Lambeth's ponds and water bodies. A Borough-wide audit of ponds and water bodies to identify nature conservation status, or potential for improvement, will be delivered by 2006.

Objective 2. We will promote 'good practice' in the management of ponds and open water in Lambeth to benefit local wildlife and retain or improve biodiversity. A 'Biodiversity Best Practice Guide' for pond and wetland management will be published by 2008.

Objective 3. We will improve public and user awareness of wildlife in, and the biodiversity importance of, ponds and wetlands in Lambeth. A programme of talks, walks, and support to Members, officers, schools, community and park user groups will be delivered by 2009

H) Who is involved in the Ponds and Open Water Action Plan?

1. Partnerships

The Lead Partner for the Lambeth Ponds and Open Water Action Plan is Lambeth Council's Parks and Greenspaces Business Unit (Lambeth Parks). Other Co-Lead Partners would be Lambeth Planning along with the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor.

The Lead Community Partner would be the Lambeth Parks and Greenspaces Forum (LPGF), the 'umbrella' body for the Borough's various Parks Friends and other user groups.

Other Partners include the Environment Agency, the Clapham Angling and Preservation Society, Greater London Authority, English Nature, London Wildlife Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the London Natural History Society.

2. Contact for information

For more information on the Lambeth Ponds and Open Water Action Plan, including copies of this plan in paper or electronic format, please contact:

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3. Further information and advice

Further advice on ponds, lakes and other open water bodies, their management and protection for nature conservation and biodiversity, can be found on the following websites.

- Ponds Conservation Trust (<http://www.pondstrust.org.uk/>)
- Environment Agency: Ponds Facts (http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/yourenv/eff/water/213866/ponds/?lang=_e®ion=)
- DEFRA (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/index.htm>)
- English Nature (advice on management plans) (<http://www.english-nature.org.uk/>)
- RSPB (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/>)
- London Wildlife Trust (<http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/>)
- Greater London Authority (<http://www.london.gov.uk/londonissues/>)
- Clapham Angling Preservation Society (information on sustainable fisheries and nature conservation management) (<http://www.claphamangling.co.uk/>)

