

Help us secure £74,000 to Create a haven for Warblers, Waders and Wildfowl



Summary

The River Severn is the longest river in Great Britain, winding its way from the mountains of Wales to the broad reaches of the Bristol Channel. Alongside this beautiful river we look after five nature reserves, Coombe Hill, Ashleworth Ham, Mythe, Small and Chaceley in the Coombe Hill area. The Coombe Hill area offers a watery home to a wide diversity of plants and animals, with 1,930 species from otters and hares to 134 species of birds. The hams are fantastically diverse spaces, easily accessible and free-to-use community asset which offers a great place for exploration, where on a cold autumn evening you can be mesmerised by starling murmurations. During the winter months, flocks of curlew seek refuge from colder winter weather on isolated moors further north. Whilst spring brings a time for nesting and rearing young for the willow warbler, lapwing and mute swans.

The Warblers, Waders and Wildfowl project will improve habitats at these nature reserves for the warblers, waders and wildfowl that call these wondrous areas their home. The wonderful warblers fill these nature reserves with their beautiful song, including the aquatic and grasshopper warblers which are on the RSPB Red List due to their declining numbers on a global scale. Other Red List species found in these nature reserves including the lapwing, curlew and long-tailed duck which enjoy the waters. This project will **improve 383 acres** through practical conservation measures including coppicing, creating deadwood, controlling vegetation growth, creating a new breeding wader island and reprofiling ditches.

Project Need

The Coombe Hill area has long been home to a wide range of birdlife, including rare waders, warblers and an array of wildfowl. We manage our nature reserves on an evidence-based approach. Site visits by our Senior Reserve Manager have revealed the need for culvert repairs and additional conservation grazing, which requires additional fencing of the nature reserves. The lack of adequate fencing to enable conservation grazing is a serious issue that will mean the condition of the habitat will deteriorate without intervention which will negatively affect the waders and wildfowl which use our nature reserve at their home. We need to take action to remedy this now, to prevent a more extensive problem from developing.

In addition, the culverts at Ashleworth Ham are in need of repair in order to enable better control of water flow throughout the reserve to enhance the habitats for warblers, waders and wildfowl. The ditches could also be modified with the introduction of woody debris which will control the water flow through the nature reserve by holding back some of the water, thereby increasing habitat for invertebrates, providing more food for the waders and wildfowl. Site visits also revealed opportunities to improve the habitats.



Sedge warbler
© Ian Allen



Lapwing



Mute swan
© Neil Aldridge



Our Solution

We will improve habitats for warblers, waders and wildfowl at these wondrous five nature reserves.

We will pollard wild willows, coppice precious wet woodlands and create dynamic deadwood habitat to add structural diversity and increase invertebrate abundance; improving food resources for warblers, other birds and mammals.

We will control vegetation growth to keep ponds, ditches, fen, meadows and grassland open, helping to delay succession as these habitats develop into woodland. This will increase plant diversity, so insects thrive and berry-bearing plants flourish, benefiting the warblers and wildfowl by increasing food resources, and providing diverse vegetation structures for their nesting.

We will create a new island in the wetland scrapes for breeding waders to nest on to deter predators, to help grow their numbers and aid survival at this key site. We will also re-profile ditches to benefit warblers and wildfowl.

We will install stock fencing to enable conservation grazing, which will control rank grass species so a diversity of wildflowers can exist, boosting invertebrate populations and thereby help warblers, waders and wildfowl by increasing their food resource.

We will repair culverts, improve the ditch network and introduce large woody debris to improve the water level at Ashleworth Ham, to preserve these rare floodplain meadows and all the species that call them home.

Biodiversity Benefits

The site-based habitat improvement works across five nature reserves in the Coombe Hill area will benefit 26 species of warbler, wader and wildfowl. 7 of these species are RSPB Red List species, including the aquatic warbler, grasshopper warbler, lapwing, curlew, red-necked phalarope, whimbrel and long-tailed duck. A further five species are RSPB amber list species the willow warbler, spotted redshank, mute swan, gadwall and mallard duck. Other UK priority species include the sedge warbler, Cetti's warbler, chiffchaff, blackcap, lesser whitethroat, whitethroat and tufted duck.

This project will improve five UK priority habitats including lowland meadows, rivers, ponds, lowland fens and wet woodland and help conserve another 95 Priority species including visiting otters, hares and water shrews.

With your help we can create wonderful wildlife havens for all.



Willow warbler
© Paul Thrush



Curlew
© Amy Jones



Tufted duck
© David Slater



Chiffchaff
© David Slater

Thank you for your support