

Appendix IV

RSPB Dungeness

**Management Plan 2008 – 2012
Final Draft**

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FULL MANAGEMENT PLAN

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2. EVALUATION & RATIONALE FOR MANAGEMENT

2a.2. Identification of the Features Influencing Management of the site

** = Features which are the prime reason for RSPB maintaining the reserve and which will drive its management.

✓✓ = Features for which we have legal responsibilities (SSSI interest features) and which will influence the management we undertake at the site.

✓ = Features for which we have legal responsibilities (SSSI interest features) but do not require positive management.

* = other important conservation features whose requirements we need to take into account when deciding upon management of the site.

a) Shingle habitat

Important feature	Influencing Management?	Why?
Geomorphology: cusped foreland with shingle ridges – fossil ridge features – active shoreline	✓✓	SSSI interest feature. Internationally Important Geomorphological feature.
Vegetated shingle of fossil ridges/perennial vegetation of stony banks	✓✓	SAC habitat. SSSI interest feature. BAP Priority Habitat. BAP plants, RDB and NSc [nationally scarce] plants
Annual vegetation of drift lines	✓✓	SAC habitat
Shingle Invertebrates (spiders, moths, bumblebees, other hymenoptera, diptera, beetles, <i>Aphrodes duffieldi</i>).	✓✓	SSSI interest feature, several RDB species, several BAP priority species. Protection of shingle habitat is required to maintain invertebrate assemblage.
{Slime moulds (Myxomycetes)}	✓	{Should be a SSSI interest feature} One or two rare spp associated with shingle habitats (<i>Listerella paradoxa</i> , Vulnerable (6-10 UK sites) grows on <i>Cladonia portentosa</i> and <i>Trichia fimicola</i> , only a few UK sites and one in Belgium = world distribution ,occurs on rabbit dung)

b) Open water (gravel pit/reed fringe)

Important feature	Influencing Management?	Why?
<i>Phragmites australis</i> dominated swamp	**	<u>RSPB PRIORITY HABITAT.</u>

Important feature	Influencing Management?	Why?
Breeding birds:		
Bittern	**	Potential future breeding species. FDIII ¹ species
Breeding waterfowl assemblage	√√**	SSSI interest feature. Up to 700 pairs of waterfowl and wader including several species with >1% UK population.
Breeding seabird assemblage	√√**	Formerly nationally important assemblage. Med Gull and common tern SPA features
Non-breeding birds:		
Bittern	**	2-6%UK, FDIII, BAP priority
Non-breeding waterfowl assemblage	√√**	SSSI interest feature. Part of c.Ramsar site ² .
Other:		
Great crested newt	√√	SAC feature. SSSI feature. BAP priority species. One of largest UK populations

c) Neutral lowland grassland

Important feature	Influencing Management?	Why?
Lapwing	**	BAP priority species, FDIII species. Widespread national population decline
Redshank	**	FDIII species. Regional population decline
Bumblebees and other invertebrates	√√	SSSI interest feature. Four BAP species (<i>Bombus humilis</i> , <i>muscorum</i> , <i>runderarius</i> and <i>sylvarum</i>). ³ Exceptional diversity with up to 11 species recorded annually.

d) Oppen Pits (poor/tall fen)

Important feature	Influencing Management?	Why?
Geomorphology, inc. sediment record	√√	SSSI interest feature. Peat layers can be dated and contain pollen records to help work out which vegetation was present in the past
Fen vegetation community inc. Marsh Fern <i>Thelypteris palustris</i>	√√	SSSI interest feature. NSc plants. BAP Priority habitat.
Transition Mires and Quaking Bogs communities (<i>Sphagnum</i> etc)	√√	SAC feature - communities are re-establishing after scrub clearance with a transitional form of vegetation from the eutrophic fen to poor fen and ombrotrophic vegetation which places the pits within the Habitats Directive Annex 1, feature 7140 Transition Mires and Quaking Bogs.

¹ Working together for Birds: Future Directions (FD) III is the RSPB framework for conservation success from 2002 to 2007.

² "The UK Conservation of many bird populations are under great threat, and these threats will not appreciate diminish over the period of this strategy. Maintaining the status quo will be difficult to achieve but is not enough. We will start an ambitious programme to put back more of what has been lost, reverse the decline in species, populations and ranges, restore damaged habitats and recreate lost habitats."

³ Candidate Ramsar is now pRamsar.

³ Now five following the discovery of *B. ruderatus* in 2010.

Important feature	Influencing Management?	Why?
Slime moulds (Myxomycetes)	√√	Ranks as a top UK site. Should be a SSSI Feature. Several rare spp e.g. <i>Physarum globuliferum</i> Endangered (5 or less UK sites), grows on rotten branches, <i>Physarum lateritium</i> Critically Endangered (1-2 UK sites left), moss and leaf litter under light scrub woodland.
Great-crested newt	√	SAC feature. SSSI feature. BAP priority species. Part of one of largest UK populations

3. VISION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

3.2. Objectives & management

1. To maintain the internationally important shingle ridges in favourable SSSI and SAC condition

Species targets/CMS prescriptions

- Maintain the presence of key species of invertebrate associated with the shingle habitats

Habitat targets/CMS prescriptions

- Maintain the current extent of vegetated shingle of fossil ridges
- Maintain *ca*2.5km of annual drift-line vegetation
- There is no increase in the extent of coarse grass/scrub in areas of vegetated shingle

Summary management

- Seek to restore maintenance for natural processes (work with Cos through influencing EA to adopt RSPB preferred ecological option in shoreline management plan)
- Prevent damage from vehicles/trespass
- Support Natural England vegetation re-establishment trials on bare/damaged ridges
- Graze enclosed shingle ridges one year in five
- Annually graze 20ha of shingle ridge margins

Summary monitoring

- Monitor vegetation of shingle ridges
- Record presence of key invertebrates species every five years

2. To maintain in favourable condition the SSSI, SAC (gc newt), and SPA (BS and SV) features of 140ha of artificial wetland habitat associated with the open water and margins of the freshwater gravel pits.

Species targets/CMS prescriptions

- The 5-year mean number of wintering bitterns to increase to five and one booming male to be present by the end of the plan period.
- The 5-year mean number of breeding lapwing on islands in gravel pits to be 5 pairs (stable)
- Maintain the breeding bird assemblage SSSI index of 67 (SSSI threshold 31) and maintain nationally important breeding populations of six species of waterfowl.
- Re-establish breeding populations of small seabird species (common tern, Sandwich tern, black-headed gull and Mediterranean gull)
- Maintain nationally important non-breeding populations of eight species of waterfowl and the internationally important population of shoveler (>400)
- Water voles to be present at more than two sites
- Great crested newts to be present at more than five sites with mean annual population exceeding 100 individuals
- Number of waterbodies occupied by Medicinal leech to be established every five years
- No ruddy duck
- No mink

Habitat targets/CMS prescriptions

- The extent of *Phragmites australis* dominated swamp to increase to 15ha
- The length of reed/water interface to be a minimum of 200m/ha (ideally up to 400m/ha)
- Small fish/eel biomass in reedbed to be 10kg/ha or more.
- Scrub to be less than 5% of reedbed area (no increase in extent of scrub– current extent yet to be determined)
- Create “blue zone” at reed/grassland interface
- Maintain channels within reed areas to facilitate fish movements
- Spring/summer water levels in reedbed to be between 0.3-1.2m
- 70-80% of reedbed to be wet in Jan-July
- Maintain 140ha of gravel pit (open water and their margins) in suitable condition for use by waterfowl
- Maintain present extent of islands in Burrowes pit and ARC pit in suitable condition for breeding waterfowl, waders and seabirds (ie bare or vegetation less than 5cm over 70% of the islands in March)
- Create 5 new islands suitable for breeding waterfowl, waders and seabirds at ARC pit (ie with bare ground or vegetation less than 5cm over 70 % of the islands in March)
- Protect islands along western shoreline of Burrowes pit between Hide 1 and Makepeace hide from ground predators
- Maintain a minimum of 30% of pit shorelines free of willow scrub
- Maintain ten key ponds in suitable condition for great-crested newts (fish free and at early stage of succession)
- Maintain water levels as close to the long-term average as possible (to allow partial winter flooding of breeding islands)

Summary management

- Protect from wildfowl grazing as necessary
- Reprofile lake shorelines to promote reed spread
- Investigate the feasibility of further fish introduction
- Improve eel access on to site (EA project)
- Cut invasive scrub in reed areas
- Cattle graze reed/grassland interface to create “blue zone”
- Excavate channels/clear vegetation from ‘choked’ channels within reedbed
- Carry out EA approved water transfer during November-March from Fourteen-acre ditch in to Dengemarsh pits, as necessary, to raise water levels in reed areas.
- Maintain dams and sluices.
- Maintain disturbance free refuge
- Mow island vegetation annually
- Create new islands
- Control scrub on shoreline of gravel pits (cut willow to be placed in lakes as fish reef)
- Clear vegetation from ponds to retain suitability for great crested newts
- Excavate minimum of two new ponds for great crested newts
- Control mink
- Allow control of ruddy duck (CSL program to continue)

Summary monitoring

- Monitor breeding birds
- WeBS counts
- Monitor water levels
- Monitor great crested newt populations
- Monitor reed spread by fixed point photography

- Monitor Medicinal Leech
- Monitor Water voles

3. To manage 60ha of neutral lowland grassland to provide suitable conditions for breeding lapwing and redshank and a suite of key grassland birds and for BAP bumblebee populations

Species targets/CMS prescriptions

- The 5-year mean number of breeding lapwing remains at 24 pairs
- The 5-year mean number of breeding redshank remains at 11 pairs
- The 5-year mean number of breeding of grey partridge, skylark and corn bunting remains at 6, 20 and 3 pairs respectively
- At least maintain current numbers of eleven species of bumblebee including the BAP species *Bombus humilis* and candidate BAP species *B. muscorum* and *B. ruderarius*

Habitat targets/CMS prescriptions

- Increase extent of habitat by reversion of 4 ha of arable to grassland
- Vegetation height on April 1st to be <5cm across 80% of sward
- 10% of lake shore/grassland interface to be free of tall emergent vegetation
- 5-10% surface water in selected fields in late May
- 20% of grassland left ungrazed
- 30% of monitoring quadrats to contain red clover and other spp legumes
- Legume flowering season to be extended from May-September

Summary management

- Top fields
- Graze with cattle and sheep
- Mow lake margins
- Pump surface water from lakes to hayfields and Denge Marsh in compts. 43 - 46
- Maintain ditch water levels as high as possible
- Excavate shallow rills
- Leave areas ungrazed on rotation
- Cut and spread flower rich hay
- Allow arable plots to revert to grassland

Summary monitoring

- Monitor breeding birds
- Monitor bumble bee numbers
- Monitor field vegetation (legume frequency)

4. Manage 1ha of artificial damp sand habitats at the margins of the gravel pits for their populations of invertebrates and plants and maintain favourable SSSI condition .

Species targets/CMS prescriptions

- The 5-year mean number of Jersey Cudweed plants to be >1,000
- Establish the presence of *Bryum warneum* every five years
- Establish the presence of (8 RDB, 2 pRDB, and 17 NSc species) key invertebrate species every five years
- Minimise cover of *Crassula helmsii*

Habitat targets/CMS prescriptions

- Maintain up to 1 ha of bare silt/sand habitat across more than one pit

Summary management

- Create new areas of bare silt/sand and restore existing areas by excavation
- Control *Crassula helmsii* using glyphosate
- Graze with sheep

Summary monitoring

- Monitor Jersey cudweed
- Monitor *Bryum warneum*
- Monitor key beetle species
- Monitor *Crassula helmsii*

5. Manage the internationally important series of natural wetlands (open pits) to maintain favourable SSSI and SAC status.

Species targets/CMS prescriptions

- Maintain presence of great-crested newt at pits 1,3,5 and 6
- Maintain Kent scarce plant indices of 449 at pit 5 and 1200 at pit 6

Habitat targets/CMS prescriptions

- Increase extent of fen vegetation community from 0.3ha to 0.6ha
- Maintain 1.35 ha Transition mire and quaking bog at pits 4,5,6,and 8
- Maintain disturbance free sediment layer record

Summary management

- Remove willow scrub from pits 4 & 8 (100%), Pit 5 (80%)
- Trial areas of scrub removal at pits 1, 2, 3 plus 10 &11
- Do not disturb integrity of sediment layers
- Graze pits 5 and 6 and/or cut and remove vegetation and maintain scrub at current level in pit

6

Summary monitoring

- Monitor Great crested newt
- Monitor fen vegetation (NE)

6. To increase the breeding population of tree sparrow, a FD III priority species.

Species targets/CMS prescriptions

- The 5-year mean number of breeding tree sparrow to = 15 pairs

Habitat targets/CMS prescriptions

Summary management

- Nest box provision
- Artificial winter feeding in the vicinity of Boulderwall Farm

Summary monitoring

- Monitor breeding tree sparrow