

# **Youngs Park Wildfowl Conservation Area**

## **Biodiversity Action Plan**

### **2013 - 2023**

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## 1.1: Mission Statement

'Youngs Park People (YPP) are committed to the conservation and preservation of native flora and fauna, and increasing the educational and scientific understanding of the wider public on principles and issues surrounding our native wildlife.'

## 1.2: Introduction

In 2007, Young's Park People (YPP) were given permission by Torbay Council to manage and develop the Wildfowl Conservation area within Young's park, after members of YPP and other members of the community expressed their concerns that the area had been left unmanaged. On inspection of the wildfowl area, the group found an amazing marsh habitat with a huge amount of diversity, including the rarities, such as the southern marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*).

The area contains fresh water pools with, once flowing, waterways between them, which had then become blocked due to over growing vegetation. With the lack of management, invasive species were allowed to take hold and spread; species such as the Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) spread so much that no intervention could lead to the area become one big monoculture. After inspecting, YPP then sent a preliminary 5 year management plan for the council's approval, once approved the management of the area began.

## 1.3: Past History

As with any conservation project the past history and uses of an area influence its current state. Like many other conservation areas, Young Park has a deep history with many different uses. Originally a marshland with fresh water running down from Clennon Valley and saltwater from the bay. May's Pool was a major feature which was reputed to be bottomless, until in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a horseman fell in it and discovered it was only 3 feet deep. The area was reclaimed and eventually became part of the park when Young's Park was finally formed in May 1936. After years of struggle to keep the land drained as parkland, the council eventually decided, in 2004, to allow it to return to its natural state, a marshland.

## 1.4: Previous Management Actions 2007-2012

One of our main aspects of work is the control and removal of invasive species. Within the conservation we aim to create a level playing field in which all plant species can compete, this tactic will yield a high amount of plant diversity, as the removal of rapid competitors, like Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) will allow this. We have already seen an increase in the amount of Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) due to removal of more invasive species from some areas of the conservation.

We are however aware of how other competitors provide different ecosystem services providing habitat and food for many species, such as reedmace (*Typha sp.*), which provide food and habitat for species including goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) and dunnocks (*Prunella modularis*).

With species such as reedmace (*Typha sp.*) we will aim to control its spread rather than consent its removal in its entirety. So far, we have undergone the gradual removal of the Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) from some areas, via the pulling on individuals before they seed, and the control of reedmace (*Typha sp.*) in areas where we wish it not to spread such as the pathways through the area.

With the Waterways, the lack of previous management leads to overgrown and dead vegetation blocking the waterways throughout restricting the flow of water. Our volunteers, with the help of the British Trust of Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and iGoMANGO (Monitoring Assistance for Non-Governmental Organisations), have now cleared and widened the waterways, leading to a constant flow running throughout the area. Ongoing clearing of waterways takes place outside nesting/breeding season, to cause as little disturbance to wildlife as possible.

We are now seeing the results of our labour, as there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of dragonflies and damselflies present, as nymphs are dependent on the continual cycle of oxygenated water in order to survive.



In 2008 YPP were awarded £10,000 from The Big Lotto, Breathing Spaces. This was used to build an extension to the existing boardwalk, with a dipping platform, provide seating, interpretation boards, bird and bat boxes and CCTV cameras. Torbay Council kindly paid for the boardwalk foundations and handrail.



With the assistance of iGoMANGO, in 2011 YPP received an award of £9,750 from The Big Lotto, 'Awards For All'. This was for another small boardwalk extension and dipping platform, the production and printing of volunteer handbooks and organised volunteer/education days.



**New dipping platform with bespoke wildlife carving**



Since YPP took on the management of this conservation in 2007 the following awards have been achieved:

2009 Bay Blooms, Community Environment Project - Gold

2010 Planting Places Award

2010 RHS South West In Bloom, London and Manchester Cup (for outstanding contribution to an environmental initiative)

2011 Bay Bloom, Community Environment Project – Silver



## 2.1: Youngs Park Wildfowl Conservation Area Habitat Action Plan

Habitat	Issues	Management objectives	Associated organisations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for excessive floral growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of artificial grazing through machinery (strimmers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encroachment of non native invasive species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of removal via hand extraction,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP</li> </ul>
Marshy Grassland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of biodiversity due to external or internal factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of species populations</li> <li>Control of invasive species where necessary</li> <li>Maintain and improve hedgerow system</li> <li>Review benefits and losses of habitat expansion.</li> <li>Creation of additional pools and scrapes</li> <li>Aim for no net loss in biodiversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP</li> <li>igoMANGO</li> <li>Natural England</li> <li>Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT)</li> <li>British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)</li> </ul>
Flowing Waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Danger of pollution from upstream sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing of estuarine waters for abnormal contaminant levels</li> <li>Communication and education of parties responsible for possible contamination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environment Agency</li> <li>YPP</li> <li>Torbay Council</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blocking caused by vegetation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of water levels.</li> <li>Extraction of vegetation that poses a risk.</li> <li>Review width of streams and benefits and losses on expansion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environment Agency</li> <li>YPP</li> </ul>
Standing water bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential contamination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing of water for abnormal chemical concentrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environment Agency</li> <li>YPP</li> <li>Torbay Council</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Falling water levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain water levels throughout year where necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of muddy verge habitats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintenance of muddy banks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP</li> </ul>

## 2.2: Issues that affect the entire site

Issues	Management objectives	Associated organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planting and introduction of flora that may inhibit establishment and re-growth of flora that is already present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any new flora introduced to be native and managed to prevent it becoming invasive. This will allow the historic seed bank to regenerate, allowing the reestablishment of natural flora, which used to be present within the conservation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP/ igoMANGO</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential disturbance of fauna and flora by volunteers, pedestrians, and trains on nearby tracks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> of March through to 1<sup>st</sup> of September, a designated period where the whole conservation area is remain undisturbed, and declared a 'no go zone' for volunteers, except for public use, due to the breed of various fauna.</li> <li>Organised working parties of volunteers, to limit individual disturbance</li> <li>Improvement of existing hedgerow system, repairing gaps where present</li> <li>Erection and maintenance of boardwalks and footpaths to accommodate visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP/igoMANGO</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk of egg theft/damage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce information boards describing the offense and its penalties</li> <li>Conduct a survey to identify predominant nesting sites</li> <li>Employ volunteer wardens/security guards to patrol the site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local community</li> <li>YPP</li> <li>BTO</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible future expansion of local businesses, potentially leading to increased disturbance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempt to minimise or redirect growth of local businesses through discussions with local councils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devon/Torbay councils</li> <li>Local pressure groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible criminal use/damage (vandalism and drug use) of the site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of visual deterrents.</li> <li>Liaise with local authorities, where possible when crimes have been committed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devon and/or Torbay councils</li> <li>Local pressure groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of public understanding about the site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public education through interpretation boards, guided walks, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YPP</li> <li>Local wildlife groups</li> </ul>







## 2.4: Materials and labour required for fulfilment of ten year plan.

Management option	Materials required	Labour required and source
Mechanical Grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanical appliances</li> <li>Safety equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers supplying labour</li> </ul>
Hedge planting and repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lopping shears</li> <li>Digging equipment e.g. shovels, etc</li> <li>Mechanical appliances if necessary</li> <li>Appropriate hedgerow floral species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English Hedgerow Trust to supply experts</li> <li>Volunteers supplying additional labour</li> </ul>
Creation of wildflower 'meadow' area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeds</li> <li>Spades, Rakes &amp; Forks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tor2 / Torbay Council to recommend seed mix</li> <li>Volunteers supplying labour</li> </ul>
Species/nest monitoring surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring equipments such as binoculars/scopes/cameras</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer observers visiting the site.</li> <li>Expert surveyors from BTO.</li> </ul>
Invasive species control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted extraction by hand for vegetative invaders</li> <li>Limited use of chemicals if resilient to biological control agents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experts from the RSPB, DEFRA, Environment Agency and DWT</li> </ul>
Maintenance of muddy banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digging equipment, avoiding large mechanical equipment when possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers and experts from YPP, igoMANGO and BTCV</li> </ul>
Creation of additional pools and scrapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digging equipment, avoiding large mechanical equipment when possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers and experts from YPP, igoMANGO and BTCV</li> </ul>
Flowing and standing water chemical testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chemical testing equipment</li> <li>Inflatable dinghies or similar small vessels to provide access to deeper waters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experts from the Environment Agency.</li> </ul>
Communication and education of local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly word of mouth, although some flyers may be provided to local schools and organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers from YPP, igoMANGO &amp; Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust</li> </ul>
Monitoring of water levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weighted measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers from YPP</li> </ul>
Posting of information boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-fabricated message boards</li> <li>Educational material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer labour to erect boards</li> </ul>
Discussion with local councils pertaining to development of local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of YPP and other relevant bodies</li> </ul>

## **2.5: Future Development**

The management plan is to be reviewed annually to discuss any additional issues and implement objectives accordingly. As public awareness around the site grows, an education management plan will be created to accommodate educational groups, such as schools and community groups. This will help add to other educational resources already in place such as the interpretation boards, and educational trails available to groups. Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust have agreed to run Pond Dipping sessions, which will increase footfall and public interest in this conservation area.

In December 2012 Torbay Council offered to manage and maintain the main thoroughfare through the conservation. This will allow volunteers to spend more time within the conservation itself during months when work can be carried out.

As we also reveal the true value of the area in terms of biodiversity through our various surveys, we will intro a scientific management plan. This will aid us in the further conservation of native flora and fauna will the implementation of Species Action Plans (SAP's). What this will also do is help to us in decisions of who to implement future management objects, and also gather evidence to allow appropriate designations to be placed on the area to safeguard it for future generations to enjoy. All third party conservation organisations are in place in an advisory capacity, and will be consulted when needed by YPP.