Aquatic warbler management advisory visit to southern England September 2009









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Summary

Aquatic warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*) is the rarest and only globally threatened passerine bird in mainland Europe. It is vulnerable at global level, and endangered at European level. It is included on Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive, in Appendix II of the Bern Convention and in Appendix 1 of the Bonn convention. It is a priority species for conservation action in the UK with its own Biodiversity Action Plan and is red listed as a bird of conservation concern.

Once widespread and numerous in the fen mires and wet meadows throughout Europe, aquatic warblers have disappeared from much of their former range. The current population estimate is of only 10,500 – 14,200 vocalising males. It is confined to fewer than 40 regular sites in only six countries, with four sites supporting over 80% of the global population.

Numbers in the UK are low, with an average of 33 birds/year 1996–2000, subsequently declining to c10 annually from a possible combination of monitoring effort change, weather patterns and population decline. However, conservation effort in the UK is an important part of international effort to support this species, and is included in the international action plan.

Southern England has a network of wetland sites that have been used by aquatic warblers *Acrocephalus paludicola*, particularly juveniles, during migration. Eight sites were visited between 31 August and 4 September 2009 to speak to the managers about management of appropriate habitat.

Whilst some suitable habitat was present at all sites visited, it was found to be rare and not a key focus of management plans, even though it does provide significant biodiversity benefits.

Discussions with site managers highlighted a range of opportunities on all sites to manage, restore or create suitable habitat, particularly feeding habitat, and recommendations based upon these discussions are included in this report.

Maintaining suitable habitat within these sites is important to provide a network along the English side of the Channel flyway for aquatic warbler.

Monitoring of passage aquatic warblers took place between 2006 and 2008 on a number of sites across southern England, including the two Special Protection Areas designated for aquatic warbler – Marazion Marsh and Icklesham. As a result, a monitoring protocol has been developed and a network of site managers is being established with better links with aquatic warbler work in Europe.

The next step was to review current management at these sites and make recommendations for habitat management to improve opportunities for aquatic warbler.

1 Introduction

Aquatic warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*) is the rarest and only globally threatened passerine bird found in mainland Europe. It is listed as Vulnerable at global level, and classified as endangered at European level. It is included on Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive, in Appendix II of the Bern Convention and in Appendix 1 of the Bonn convention. It is a priority species for conservation action in the UK with its own Biodiversity Action Plan and is red listed as a bird of conservation concern.

Once widespread and numerous in the fen mires and wet meadows throughout Europe, aquatic warblers have disappeared from much of their former range. The current population estimate is of only 10,500 – 14,200 vocalising males. It is confined to fewer than 40 regular sites in only six countries, with four sites supporting over 80% of the global population.

Aquatic warbler is a migratory species breeding predominantly in eastern Europe and Belarus and wintering south of the Sahara in west Africa, particularly Senegal. This species, particularly the juveniles, takes a westerly migration route along the Channel coast with significant numbers using wetlands in Brittany to build body fat before onward migration to Africa.

Numbers in the UK are low, with an average of 33 birds/year 1996–2000, subsequently declining to c10 annually from a possible combination of monitoring effort change, weather patterns and population decline. However, conservation effort in the UK is recognised as an important part of international effort to support this species, and is included in an international action plan.

International effort to conserve aquatic warblers is coordinated through an international action plan (Action Plan Concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team, 30 April 2003). Much of this effort is focused on conserving and managing the areas of suitable wet fen and meadows on the breeding ground, but action in the UK to support aquatic warblers on passage is a key part of this plan. However, given the low numbers of birds involved, their secretive behaviour, and erratic pattern of occurrences, it has proved difficult to determine accurately total numbers and site usage in the UK.

Through ringing and visual observations, aquatic warblers have been recorded regularly at a number of sites in southern England and on this basis, some sites have been designated or are being considered as Special Protection Area (SPA) for the autumn passage of this species. Monitoring the numbers passing through sites relies mainly on ringing during August and September. Although a number of sites have recorded aquatic warbler, there has been no co-ordinated long-term effort for this species. Although the number of birds passing through the UK appears to be low, a clearer understanding of numbers involved, site and habitat usage is important part of the international action for the species. Aquatic warblers migrate through a series of short hops, and therefore require a network of stopover sites throughout the migratory range. Also, whilst the key wetlands in general receive full statutory protection and are under positive management, a lack of understanding of the specific requirements for aquatic warblers on migration is limiting our ability to manage sites for aquatic warblers alongside management for other priority species. Understanding the habitat and management requirements for aquatic warbler and then providing habitat that enables the species to access appropriate food sources is the key conservation issue at all migration sites.

Between 31 August and 4 September 2009 Arnaud Le Nevé (Bretagne Vivante -SEPNB) visited eight wetland sites in southern England to look at the suitability of habitat and the potential for management based upon the experience of the research carried during the Life Project in Brittany. Of the eight sites, five have regular ringing activity. Some still record a small number of aquatic warblers, whilst others have historical records.

2 Objectives

- To assess the current condition of roosting and feeding habitat of migration sites in the UK for aquatic warbler.
- To discuss opportunities for maintaining and improving habitat along the Channel coast for aquatic warbler.
- To improve the sharing of knowledge of the management of *Megaphorbiae* (eutrophic vegetation that is quite high and can be dense, before colonisation by willow) between site managers.

3 Methodology

Each area was assessed by a brief site visit to look at:

- Hydrology areas of shallow water 1-20 cm.
- Salinity fresh/saltwater.
- Reed dominance areas of low frequency.
- Reed height between 1-1.5 m in height.
- Presence of vegetation (*Megaphorbiae Schoenoplectus* (bulrush)/*Scirpus* (clubrush)/etc) of 0.5 m height.
- Presence/absence of litter layer.
- Openness of the bottom 10 cm of the vegetation to enable the aquatic warbler to feed.
- Presence of large invertebrates spiders/grasshoppers/damselflies to provide the food source for aquatic warblers.

4 General management recommendations

The visits showed there is currently a good network of wetland sites along the Channel coast and it is important to manage them appropriately. Though there was plenty of roosting habitat at all sites, the feeding habitat was often only present in small amounts. Site managers did however identify significant potential to improve their wetland sites to include suitable habitat and include the work in their management plans.

Site managers of wetlands are focused primarily on producing two main habitat types, either reedbeds dominated by *Phragmites* (common reed) or water meadows with very short vegetation to benefit breeding waders or wintering waterfowl.

Whilst reedbeds provide security and are very good for resting, this habitat is relatively poor for food. In good years, leaves of reeds provide a good supply of aphids, but these are only 19% of the diet of the aquatic warbler in stopover migration. To find food the aquatic warbler uses a habitat that forms the boundary between reedbeds and grazed water meadow, and provides a greater diversity of larger invertebrates. This habitat is often missing because it has been replaced by *Phragmites* (common reed) or grazed/cut out.

5 Characteristic of the restored habitat for feeding aquatic warbler

There are two main requirements:

- Water management: Shallow water level from 1-20 cm deep at the bottom of the vegetation.
- 2. Vegetation management: Three levels of vegetation mixed together:
 - the highest is 1-1.5 m and usually made up of emergent lightly scattered *Phragmites* (common reed).
 - the medium sized is 0.5-1 m high with *Juncus* (rush), *Scirpus* (club-rush) and *Carex* (sedges) and other medium sized helophytic vegetation.
 - Bryophyte level is sparse or absent and the ground level has open spaces with no or little litter where birds can move and invertebrates develop.

6 Other species that benefit:

Birds: (feeding and/or nesting habitat) spotted crake, sedge warbler, reed bunting, water rail, yellow wagtail, snipe, garganey, bluethroat, bittern (feeding), teal.

Large invertebrates: Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies), Dolichopodids (flies), arachnids (spiders) including *Clubiona sp.*, Orthoptera (grasshoppers and crickets) and Coleoptera (beetles).

Plants: Juncus (rush), Scirpus (club-rush), Carex sp (sedges), orchids.

7 **Restoration techniques:**

- From reedbed, restore by cutting reeds in summer and removing the arisings.
- From a grazed wet meadow, restore by removing the cattle a few months before autumn.
- By maintaining a shallow water level at the bottom of the vegetation 1-20 cm in depth.
- The location of the restored site needs to be adjacent to existing reedbed.
- This can be applied to both freshwater and brackish sites, although freshwater sites seem to provide more food.
- A survey of invertebrates is recommended.

8 Maintenance

- The structure needs to be monitored annually and the area cut when the reeds are increasing again. This may be once every two/three years depending on whether the site is eutrophic or mesotrophic.
- Periodic (once every two/three years) summer grazing may produce suitable habitat structure as well.

9 Management tools

Machine

Advantages: Clear large areas quickly, easier to remove arisings. Disadvantages: The ground needs to be fairly firm and dry, more costly at the beginning. On breeding grounds, this can compact the vegetation used for nesting in but this is probably not a problem on the migration sites.

By hand

Advantages: The ground to be worked on can be wetter and it is generally cheaper.

Disadvantages: Smaller areas provided and more difficult to remove vegetation and find the people to do the work.

10 Site recommendations

Individual site assessments were produced for each location visited and are set out in Appendix 1.

11 Conclusions

The provision of advice to owners and managers of aquatic warbler migration sites to ensure appropriate management is listed as one of the key actions for the UK as part of the international Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team Memorandum of Understanding. The site specific recommendations within this report cover some of the most important sites including both Special Protection Areas designated for aquatic warbler. In addition, the approaches highlighted in this report could be adopted on other suitable sites along the south coast. Experience from Brittany suggests that creating and managing habitat suitable for migratory aquatic warbler is also likely to have benefits for wetland biodiversity in general and specific benefits for some other bird species of conservation concern. This management could be therefore integrated into more general wetland advice for site managers.

12 Acknowledgements

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13 References

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Appendix 1 Site recommendations and maps

Map of sites visited in southern England in September 2009



1 Marazion Marsh

Ownership: RSPB.

Designations: SPA (aquatic warbler, bittern), SSSI (reedbed, breeding bird assemblage).

Habitats

Reedbed, open water, willow, Schoenoplectus (bulrush) beds, fen.

Issues

Access, heavy metals, eutrophication, floating reedbed over mine shafts.

Initial impression

A large reedbed with many willows, especially in the northern section, and without wet grassland between the reedbed and the dune.

Compartment A

A narrow belt of suitable habitat between the reedbed and the dune made up of stands of *Schoenoplectus* (bulrush).

Management issues:

- The *Schoenoplectus* (bulrush) is quite homogonous and also may be too dense.
- The reedbed could potentially spread making areas unsuitable for aquatic warbler.
- Areas cut along the edge of vegetation are not suitable for aquatic warbler.
- *Typha* (reedmace) can spread into areas making them unsuitable for aquatic warbler.

Recommendations

- Maintain islets of emergent aquatic vegetation in shallow water.
- Instead of cutting the edge of vegetation, drop the water levels to keep 1-2 cm at the foot of the grasses, *Schoenoplectus* (bulrush).
- Prevent the spread of reeds by August cutting.

Compartment B

An area of pools surrounded by willows along a path and the railway line with emergent rushes/sedges, and areas of higher ground recently cleared of some scrub. There is a proposal to re-profile this area to extend the wetland.

Management issues

• The existing area of sedges/pools/reeds already has quite a good structure, although this will change if the reed and willow spread is not controlled.

Opportunities

- Remove isolated willows and remaining scrub on the bank.
- Removing the bank and extending the wetland can create suitable habitat for aquatic warbler.
- Creating one ditch will help water circulation.
- Creating shallow depressions for pools is beneficial.
- Control the spread of reeds through cutting.
- Remove cut vegetation to prevent litter build up.
- Remove *Typha* (reedmace).

Compartment C

This is an area of habitat dominated by rank vegetation between the back of the reedbed and a grass field. This area has the greatest potential at the site to benefit aquatic warbler.

Issues

- The area of rank vegetation has been left unmanaged, allowing woody plants (bramble) to establish and a litter layer to build up.
- Areas of cleared reeds have been left in the suitable area.

Opportunities

- Remove the last willows and previously cut material.
- Cut and remove the vegetation between the reedbed and the field in August.
- Re-profile the dumped material between the reedbed and the field to create gently sloping margins.

Arnaud Le Nevé and David Flumm at Marazion Marsh





Aquatic warbler site visit - Marazion Marsh September 2009



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Area A at Marazion Marsh

Area C at Marazion Marsh



2 Abbotsbury Swannery

Ownership: Private

Designations: SPA, SSSI

Habitats

Saltmarsh, salt-water reedbed, freshwater reedbed, water meadows.

Issues

Availability of freshwater, compatibility with commercial reed cutting.

Initial impression

The saline habitat is present but the freshwater feeding habitat is missing. There is very good potential to provide this freshwater habitat because the site has reedbeds that are currently not used commercially, very good structures to control the water levels, there is suitable equipment and the habitat is compatible with other interest of the estate e.g. shooting. Therefore, experimental cutting to provide medium height emergent aquatic habitat of higher plant diversity should be considered. The western reedbeds would provide the easiest/quickest restoration opportunity if it was possible to convert to a freshwater habitat.

Compartment A - Snipe beds 9410

An area of managed reedbed where rotational cutting has recently stopped. Lack of freshwater has meant this area has been abandoned to saltwater, although the infrastructure is still present. A series of pools have been scraped within the reedbed creating a mixture of pools and rushes/sedges, which provides good vegetation structure for aquatic warbler.

Issues

• The re-colonisation of reeds is likely to be a problem without management.

Opportunities

- Maintaining the salty flood water is a means to control *Phragmites* (common reed) spread.
- Maintaining this habitat can be complementary to the Western Beds 2511 in term of diversity of habitats, if Western Beds 2511 is restored with freshwater (see below).

Compartment B - Western Beds 2511 (western part)

An area of reedbed now unmanaged with saline influence. There is a series of pools with good vegetation structure around the edges.

Issues

• The re-colonisation of reeds is likely to be a problem without management.

Opportunities

- Reverting to freshwater would make a very good habitat for aquatic warbler.
- Maintaining the structure through occasional later summer cutting may be required.
- Introducing freshwater management would increase the number of large invertebrate food sources.
- The introduction of freshwater would require the careful monitoring of reed spread and control through summer cutting may be more frequent.
- Maintaining a summer cut in the eastern area would suitable habitat.

Compartment C - Western Beds 2511 (eastern part)

An area of freshwater reedbed managed commercially for reed cutting. The eastern part is managed for a teal/snipe shoot.

Issues

• The area at the eastern end could be suitable if August cutting was continued to prevent reed re-colonisation.

Opportunities

• Cut eastern edge in August to restore emergent aquatic medium height vegetation with low frequency of reed.

Compartment D - Reedbed south of Withy Beds 3409

Commercially managed freshwater reedbed.

Issue

Suitable for roosting but not for feeding.

Opportunities

• Cutting initially in August around the pond in front of the hide could create suitable habitat within the reedbed.

Compartment E - East Beds 8993

An area of freshwater reedbeds historically commercially cut but more recently abandoned with no cutting or water level control being used although the infrastructure is still present. The reeds are looking weaker and bindweed is becoming more common in areas.

Issues

- Water supply may be an issue.
- Uniform reedbed.
- Litter layer build up.

Opportunities

- Restore structures to enable control of water and so enable vegetation management.
- Experimental summer cutting of areas to create grass/sedge dominated patches.
- Create depressions for open pools.
- Remove bank and re-profile to connect with open water on water meadows but leave fencing to control stock.

Compartment F - Abbotsbury meadow 8905

An area of freshwater water meadows with an area of pools and rushes grazed by sheep.

Issues

• Grazing has created vegetation that is too short. There is a small area along the fence in front of the hide that could be suitable with less grazing.

Opportunities

• Electric fencing areas to prevent sheep grazing in some years.



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Area A at Abbotsbury Swannery



Area B at Abbotsbury Swannery



Area F at Abbotsbury Swannery



3 Radipole

Ownership: RSPB

Designations: SSSI (reedbed, bittern, breeding bird assemblage).

Habitats: Freshwater reedbed and grazing marsh.

Initial impression

There are already some very good areas for aquatic warbler, especially area C and the newly re-profiled channels. In addition, there is potential for the restoration of these habitats across other parts of the site. Trials on the effects of rotational grazing to provide suitable habitat are also possible because of the size of the site.

<u>Area A</u>

A 6 m strip of previously uniform reedbed restored to potentially suitable aquatic warbler habitat by cutting three times during the year with a number of pools created. This has created a low stunted and sparse reed growth with establishing rushes, sedges and herb flora providing potentially very suitable habitat for aquatic warbler.

Issues

• The dry areas are less suitable for aquatic warbler and currently the vegetation is cut too low.

Opportunities

- Monitoring the habitat response from spring 2010 would be very interesting.
- From 2010, if the reeds seem contained in spring, the frequency of cutting could be reduced to obtain a medium size height vegetation in August and September.
- Creating additional shallow pools could increase the wetness of the area for longer during the year.

<u>Area B</u>

An area of grazed meadow without grazing in 2009 dominated by a single grass species with reed and *Juncus* (rush) spreading in along the boundary.

Issues

- Much of the field currently looked too dry to create aquatic warbler habitat.
- The grass was too dense and collapsed, making it unsuitable for aquatic warblers to feed.

Opportunities

- Cutting the area now could benefit the vegetation in 2010?
- Restoring/re-profiling ditch edges and creating more permanently water filled depressions could be managed to create suitable habitat for aquatic warbler.

<u>Area C</u>

An area of water logged medium height vegetation with a mixture of sedges and rushes providing ideal habitat for aquatic warbler. This area was previously grazed but not in 2009.

Issues

- The area will need to be maintained by grazing or cutting in the next few years.
- Maintaining the same water management.

<u>Area D</u>

An area of grazed meadow where fringing reedbed has encroached onto parts of the field and a network of ditch features.

Issues

Much of the field looks too dry for aquatic warbler.

Opportunities

- The projects to re-profile the ditches and introduce shallow depressions and ditches into the field could create much wetter conditions.
- The current grazing has created some very nice structure within the field and associated open bare ground.
- The deposition of waste cut reed provides an interesting dry habitat for invertebrates with many spiders present (and also voles) but this would need to be removed to avoid organic accumulation.

<u>Area E</u>

An area of grazed meadows on uneven ground with scattered rushes and associated pools for waders.

Issues

Much of the area was too dry for aquatic warbler.

<u>Area F</u>

A network of channels that divide the reedbeds which have been re-profiled two winters ago to create a six metre shallow edge along one side. This has created patchy regeneration of reeds and cut viewing areas have sedges becoming more dominant. This has created potentially some very good aquatic warbler feeding areas.

Issues

• Without management, the area could become dominated again by reed.

Opportunities

• Managing 50 m sections alternately for reed cover and *Megaphorbiae* would create potentially very good habitat for aquatic warbler.



Nick Tomlinson, Arnaud Le Nevé and Don Moxom (Abbotsbury) at Radipole



Aquatic warbler site visit - Radipole Lake September 2009



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Area A at Radipole





Area D at Radipole



Area D at Radipole



Area F at Radipole



4 Lodmoor

Ownership: RSPB

Designations: SSSI

Habitats: Saltmarsh, freshwater reedbed.

Initial impression

The saltmarsh has *Scirpus* (club-rush) beds suitable for aquatic warbler. It was impossible to see very far into the reedbed but there was no obvious feeding habitat available.

Saltmarsh

Large area of suitable *Scirpus* (club-rush) vegetation with areas of emergent vegetation and stunted reed provides very good structural habitat for aquatic warbler.

Issues

Seasonal grazing can provide habitat for aquatic warbler although needs to be monitored to see whether it is better to have a high density of cattle over a short time or a low density over a long time.

Opportunities

- Maintain current structure through careful monitoring of grazing
- Cutting areas to create suitable habitat in the edge of the reedbed next to the saltmarsh could create suitable freshwater aquatic warbler habitat.



Lodmoor saltash

Lodmoor saltmarsh





Grazing at Lodmoor

5 and 6 Arne and Lytchett Bay

Ownership: RSPB/Private

Designations: SSSI, SPA

Initial impression

There are significant areas of reedbeds in Poole Harbour fringed with megaphorbiae, which are potentially suitable although freshwater habitats were not visited (potential areas were identified).

At Arne, the structure at the back of the reedbed looked good although the insect interest could not be assessed because of the weather. The area is brackish so, although interesting, there may be less food availability. Fresher areas that are grazed by deer were not visited but may provide better habitat.

At Lytchett Bay, there is good potential but it lacks the feeding habitat between the reedbed and grazing meadows. The area is dominated by saline influence and the food availability would need to be assessed. There is little suitable freshwater habitat potential in the area making the food provision less certain.

Subhalophilous (brackish) meadows can be good for aquatic warbler, even though freshwater seems to be better for large invertebrates such as spiders and damselflies.

Issues

There is no aquatic warbler feeding habitat between the reedbed and the grazed meadows at Lytchett Bay. However, this habitat was present but could not be properly assessed at Salterns, Arne.

Opportunities

- The creation of pools with summer cut fringes within the reedbed and/or the creation/restoration of shallow wet channels separated from grazing for a time to obtain medium high vegetation in August could provide potentially good habitat for aquatic warbler.
- Discussions resulted in areas not visited but of potentially suitable habitat being identified at Arne Moors. Initial monitoring of this site with the ringing group was discussed as the first step.

Arnaud Le Nevé and Shaun Robson



Lytchett Bay



7 Titchfield Haven

Ownership: Hampshire County Council

Designations: SSSI, SPA

Habitats: Freshwater reedbed and grazing marsh with pools and lagoons reclaimed from the sea.

Initial impression

Large reedbeds and grazed meadows but lack of feeding habitat, although with lots of potential because of the size of the site and the hydrological control available. Area C in particular had lots of potential, where a mosaic of reedbed and *Megaphorbia* could be established, especially in the shallower areas.

<u>Area A</u>

The ringing site includes a narrow corridor of reed along the main river with a dry meadow with pools and sedge/rushes and grasses. This is grazed once every two/three years. Aquatic warblers have been caught in the reedbed along the river but this is just a corridor or possibly a roosting place, but probably not a feeding site.

Issues

The adjacent *Megaphorbiae* is too dry but has good potential.

Opportunities

The creation of a bund (with a sluice) to create shallow water (10 cm) in summer across the *Megaphorbiae* area could create ideal conditions. This needs to be cut/grazed every two to three years after initial restoration to prevent litter build up and reed dominance.

<u>Area B</u>

This is a series of scrapes and islands of breeding waders and gulls with areas of shallow water with some *Megaphorbiae* and areas of fringing reeds. There was an adjacent recently re-profiled ditch.

Opportunities

- Cutting some of the fringing reed in August rather than spraying could create good *Megaphorbiae* habitat.
- Cutting alternate sections of the ditch for the benefit of reeds and then the benefit of rushes/sedges etc would create good habitat for aquatic warbler.

<u>Area C</u>

A very large area of reedbed created on former grassland in six separate hydrological units.

Issues

• Much of the reedbed is dense, mono-specific and without open areas so not suitable as feeding habitat for aquatic warbler (or even bittern).

Opportunities

- A diversity of structure and plant and invertebrate species could be created by cutting areas in August to create wet areas of *Megaphorbiae*.
- Bushes and willows could be removed.



Aquatic warbler site visit - Titchfield Haven September 2009



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Area B at Titchfield Haven



Area C at Titchfield Haven



8 Icklesham

Ownership: Private

Designations: SSSI, SPA

Habitats: Freshwater reedbed and grazing marsh with pools and scrapes.

Initial impression

A lot of space and good potential with a large reedbed including open water pools (useful to attract birds by night). From the ringing station, the reedbed looks a little bit bushy with willows.

Area A - Penfold

An area of wet pools, rushes/sedges at the back of grazing marsh close to the coast. The area looked like perfect habitat for feeding aquatic warbler with the general appearance of wintering habitat in Africa.

Issues

• The area is disconnected from the main reedbeds and any significant stands of reed that could be used for roosting in. This may affect the use of the site by birds because they spread from reedbeds in the morning.

Opportunities

- There is some *Typha* (reedmace) that could be removed but this does not affect the quality of the habitat.
- Connecting this area to the main reedbed by a corridor of the same habitat or a corridor of reeds would provide the right mixture of reed through using the network of ditches.

<u> Area B - Tunfield</u>

An area of reedbeds and pools with *Phragmites* (common reed) invading into the surrounding rush and sedge beds and adjacent grassland field. The site has some very good fringing vegetation but these are becoming narrow as the reed is becoming more dominant. This area is grazed lightly in summer.

Issues

• The fringing sedge and rush habitat is being lost to spreading reed and is becoming too dense.

Opportunities

• Enlarging the margins by cutting and removal of reeds and edges of reedbed in the summer.

• For aquatic warbler it would be better to cut the edge of the reedbed rather than the pools to benefit invertebrates.

Area C - Six Acre

An area of *Megaphorbiae* that has been left unmanaged with dense vegetation and scattered willows.

Issues

• The vegetation here is too tall and dense for aquatic warbler feeding but has good potential.

Opportunities

- Summer cutting and removal of vegetation initially to restore and checked annually to assess thereafter.
- Removal of isolated willows.

Aquatic warbler site visit - Icklesham September 2009



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Area A at Icklesham



Area B at Icklesham



Appendix 2

United Kingdom actions from Action Plan Concerning Conservation Measures for Aquatic Warbler

- 1.1.1 Support initiatives by BirdLife and other European organisations to promote policies in Europe which favour the maintenance of traditional farming practices at current and former breeding sites.
- 1.1.2. Promote the implementation of the national action plan.
- 1.1.2 Support initiatives by BirdLife and other European organisations to ensure that the Aquatic Warbler and its habitats (including breeding, migration and wintering sites) are given full protection through national and international legislation.
- 2.1 Consider need for action on breeding populations in eastern Europe.
- 2.3.1 Ensure the protection and appropriate management of all UK sites regularly used by Aquatic Warblers on migration.
- 2.3.1 Oppose any development proposals which would adversely affect any regularly used (i.e. at least one bird seen in three years out of five) migration site. A definitive list of sites with past records of Aquatic Warblers and the numbers involved should be compiled and regularly updated.
- 2.3.1 Ensure appropriate management of reserves with regularly occurring Aquatic Warblers.
- 2.3.1. Provide advice to owners/managers of migration sites in order to ensure appropriate management.
- 3.1.3 Identify the major UK migration sites and establish their importance to Aquatic Warblers. Restore ringing activities at appropriate reserves, encourage the continuation of current ringing programmes and ensure more systematic trapping of Aquatic Warblers at a range of sites in the UK in order to establish more accurately the numbers involved.
- 3.1.3 Monitor the numbers of Aquatic Warblers on passage through the UK.
- 3.1.4 Identify habitat requirements of the Aquatic Warbler while on passage through the UK.

ACTION FOR BIRDS IN ENGLAND

The Aquatic Warbler Monitoring Project is part of *Action for Birds in England*, a conservation partnership programme between Natural England and the RSPB taking action for priority bird species in England



The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way

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