



Newham Fen © NBP Photographer John Williamson



Fen, Marsh & Swamp Habitat Action Plan

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Latest version	January 2008

Description

Fen, marsh and swamp are vegetated, non-woodland, habitats that are groundwater fed and either permanently, seasonally or periodically waterlogged. Grasses do not predominate as they have peat or mineral soils. They usually exist as marginal vegetation at the edge of lakes and ponds, along river edges and within wet ditches and pools.

Fen

Fens are alkaline wetland areas developed on peat soils which receive water and nutrients from a ground source as well as from precipitation. Fens can also be classed as poor; where water is derived from base-poor rock such as sandstone; and rich when they are fed by mineral-enriched calcareous waters from base-rich rocks such as limestone.

Marsh

Marsh refers to vegetation occurring on waterlogged mineral soils or shallow peat, where the water table is close to the surface for most of the year, but not usually above ground level.

Swamp

Swamps are characterised by water levels that are at or above the surface of the vegetation for most of the year. They are generally characterised by very low topographic relief and therefore very-slow moving waters, with tall emergent or marginal vegetation such as reeds or sedges.

This action plan does not include:

- Reedbed - see Reedbed action plan
- Bog – see Blanket Bog action plan
- Floodplain grassland – see Lowland Meadows and Pastures action plan
- Carr – see Native Woodland action plan

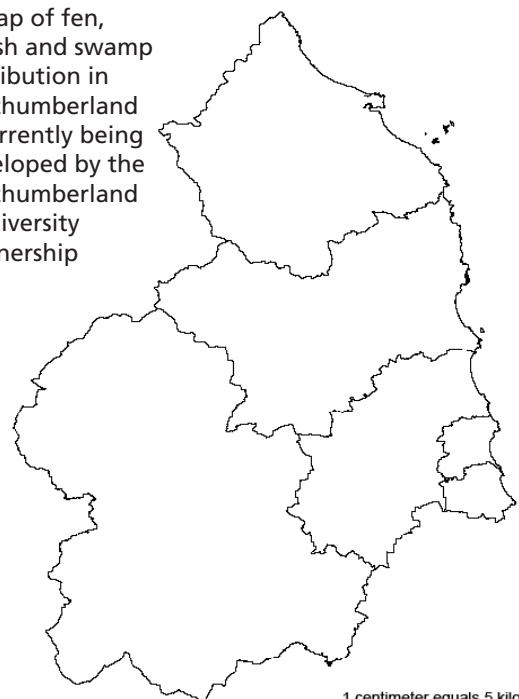
Conservation Status

EC Habitats Directive, Annex I - fen
 UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat – lowland fen; upland flushes, fen and swamps
 North East Biodiversity Action Plan - fen

Current Extent in Northumberland

The current extent of fen, marsh and swamp in Northumberland is currently unknown. Some of the largest wetlands in Northumberland are associated with coal mining. The tunnels that were produced have led to subsidence and the resulting bowls penetrate the local water table resulting in water bodies of varying depth leading to wet vegetation types.

A map of fen, marsh and swamp distribution in Northumberland is currently being developed by the Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership



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Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Drainage of land for conversion to intensive agriculture
- Change in water table and spring line flows from excessive water abstraction or development
- Fragmentation of habitat
- Agricultural run-off
- Afforestation
- Increased growth and dominance of vigorous plant species from nutrient enrichment
- Changes in hydrology where they have become isolated from the river water which irrigated them
- Siltation of watercourses feeding into wetlands and causing a build up of deposited silt
- Lack of, or inappropriate management leading to drying, scrub encroachment and succession to woodland
- Invasive species

Associated Action Plans

Water Vole
Otter

Further Information

This fen, marsh and swamp action plan links to the lowland fen and the upland flushes, fen & swamps UK BAP action plans

Rodwell, J.S. 1992, British Plant Communities Vol. 2 Mires and Heaths, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Rodwell, J.S. 1992, British Plant Communities Vol. 4 Aquatic Communities, Swamps and Tall Herb Fens, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Targets

Maintain the current extent of fen, marsh and swamp in Northumberland by 2015

Code	Priority Actions	Date
FMS A01	Identify the locations of the current fen, marsh and swamp resource	2008
FMS A02	Implement condition monitoring of known fen, marsh and swamp sites	ongoing
FMS A03	Review the fen, marsh and swamp habitat action plan once baseline data is available and create targets to increase the identified extent.	2008