

Environmental Standard Operating Procedure

ESOP Name Breeding Bird Mitigation

ESOP Number 13

Revision Date 22/02/2024

Related ESOPs [3 Bankside sediment disposal](#)

[4 Tree and scrub removal](#)

[9 Reed rond creation](#)

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Aim

River corridors in the Broads support a wide range of breeding birds including waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. All birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This includes nests that are in the process of construction. Rare (schedule 1) species are afforded additional protection and cannot be intentionally or recklessly disturbed when nesting (schedule 1 includes; bittern, harriers, kingfishers, Cetti's/Marsh/Savi's warblers).

This standard procedure aims to avoid killing, injury or disturbance of wild birds or their eggs and damage/destruction of nests whilst being built or in use.

Standard Methodology

- Initial habitat assessment of works area to be carried out by an Ecologist in early/mid-February, pre-breeding season.

- If the area is approved for works vegetation should be cut back in proposed work area before March, and the start of the bird breeding season.
- Ecologist to monitor vegetation re-growth and advise repeat cutting if necessary.
- Area to be surveyed for any breeding activity prior to work commencing, to ensure mitigation measures have been successful. If any signs of breeding birds are found works will cease until the responsible Ecologist has confirmed that the nesting attempt has reached a natural conclusion.

Procedure

Pre-works

- Identify work sites and timings for work to be undertaken. Management works should be avoided during the main breeding bird season, from the 1st March through to 31st August. If this is not possible the following steps must be taken:
- Ecologists to carry out a pre-breeding season habitat assessment on site, to identify whether breeding has started or if mitigation through displacement is possible.
- De-veg works to be completed in late February. This should be undertaken using hand operated cutters, including any available reed and sedge at the water's edge. Arisings should be raked off and removed from the works area. Following mitigation cut, the responsible ecologist will monitor vegetation re-growth and advise on repeat cutting if required.
- If, at any stage, signs of bird breeding activity are noticed, all works must cease and the responsible ecologist should be contacted immediately.
- For works in August, an Ecologist must assess the works area before any work can commence.

Consultation

The following must be confirmed by the Ecology team before works commence:

- Ecologists must be consulted before works start, to confirm if nests are present or absent on the site.
- Nesting site marked on the ground indicating their location.

- Ecologist to confirm appropriate buffer zone to be left uncut for the particular bird that has been identified nesting.

Risk Assessment

Hazard	Initial Risk			Controls / Safeguards / Precautions	Revised Risk		
	S	L	R		S	L	R
Damage or destruction to nest and nesting site	4	3	C	Pre- survey of site if works if cutting occurs in breeding seasons Locations of potential nesting sites must be mapped, if identified on site, and an appropriate buffer zone for the bird species left uncut (see appendix 1). Stop works immediately if an active nest is found and leave until the nesting attempt reaches a natural conclusion.	4	2	B
Damage and/or disturbance to nesting birds	4	4	C	Pre- survey of site if works occur in the breeding seasons Locations of potential nest sites must be mapped, if identified on site, and appropriate buffer zone for the bird species left uncut (see appendix 1). Stop works immediately if nest is found and leave until the nesting attempt reaches a natural conclusion.	4	2	B
Disturbance, killing or injury to birds	4	3	C	Pre- survey of site if works occur in the breeding seasons Locations of potential nest sites must be mapped, if identified on site, and appropriate buffer zone for the bird species left uncut (see appendix 1). Stop works immediately if nest is found and leave until the nesting attempt reaches a natural conclusion.	1 4	1 4	A 2

Matrix

		LIKELIHOOD					RISK
		Very unlikely	Unlikely	Moderately likely	Likely	Very likely	
SEVERITY		1	2	3	4	5	
Low (minimal, short-term disturbance levels and negligible damage to native habitats.)	1	A	A	A	A	A	A OK. Work to provisions in risk assessment
Medium (moderate, short-term disturbance levels, some damage to native habitats/species. Regenerates quickly.)	2	A	A	A	B	B	B Proceed with caution. Dynamically review risks.
High (high disturbance levels over a longer period and displacement of species. Damage to native habitats. Significant time to regenerate)	3	A	B	B	C	C	C Cancel task. Approach project in a different way.
Very High (Long-term disturbance with displacement/death of species. Significant damage to native habitats that takes a significant time to regenerate.)	4	B	B	C	C	C	

Appendix 1: Specific measures for Breeding birds

Summer Cutting (late May/June – September)

1. Broads Authority to undertake a breeding bird survey from late April into early May to determine presence and location of breeding bird activity.
2. Prior to cutting any sedge, contractors/reedcutters to contact Broads Authority Ecologist for the site to get the most up to date information on bird activity. Cutting regime can then be discussed for coming year.
3. Variable distances (e.g. crane nesting distance) - will be determined by Broads Authority informed breeding bird survey and site checks. Nest sites will vary year on year so a review each year will be done to establish which part of the fen/reedbed can be managed early in the season.

Species	Minimum uncut area around the nest	Precautionary working factors	Season with high potential for disturbance
Bittern	50 meters	Bittern chicks will be mobile on the ground before fledging and thus a high degree of vigilance should be maintained.	Nesting from March-July
Marsh harrier	50 meters	Marsh harriers often build several nests before the female selects a preferred nest for egg laying. To determine location, watch for the female settling rather than the male harrier's nest building efforts.	Nesting April-July

Crane	150-200 meters in long vegetation (reed), 500m in short vegetation (sedge)	Crane chicks will be mobile on the ground before fledging and thus a high degree of vigilance should be maintained	Avoid human activity in nesting, foraging and roosting areas from mid-February.
Water rail	5m fringe left around pool		March and June - produce 1 -2 broods per season
Reed Warblers	5m x 5m area around the nest		May – August/September 2 broods
Sedge Warblers	5m x 5m area around the nest		April – August 1 -2 broods per season
Reed Bunting	5m x 5m area around the nest		April – August Up to three broods
Grasshopper and Cettis warblers	5m x 5m area around the nest	Leave some unmanaged vegetation around uncut scrub for grasshopper and Cettis warblers	
Bearded tits,	5m x 5m area around the nest		Bearded tits – nest not only in reedbeds, but also commercial sedge beds (3-4 year old sedge)

