



Summary

The Pond Manifesto

Collectively, ponds are an exceptional freshwater resource: the millions of small waterbodies of less than 10 hectares that exist around the world represent 30 percent of the global surface area of standing water. In Europe, ponds are still a highly abundant and varied aquatic habitat, despite losses of up to 90 percent in some countries.

In this Manifesto, produced by the European Pond Conservation Network, we present the case for conserving European ponds and provide an outline strategy for much needed conservation action in Europe and North Africa.

We show that the conservation of ponds faces significant challenges but also offers many opportunities which can be used to sustainably address some of the most important issues of our time, including habitat degradation, species extinctions, water resource management and climate change.

Ponds are vital for many rare and endangered species, both at national and European levels. Networks of ponds support the meta-populations of many aquatic species, including amphibians, invertebrates and wetland plants. Ponds are particularly important at the landscape scale: they have been shown to contribute as much to regional biodiversity as rivers or lakes, and they provide stepping-stones and increased connectivity between other freshwater habitats.

Ponds are an important part of our culture: partly because of their intrinsic historical value, but also because their sediment records can tell us about our ancestors' way of life. Ponds are the 'local waterbody' and play a crucial role in maintaining and encouraging the link between people and wildlife. They also provide many opportunities for education and experimental research across a wide range of subjects.

There is increasing evidence that ponds play a vital economic role in delivering ecosystem services: they offer sustainable solutions to support climate change amelioration and water resource management. They are also an asset for recreation and agriculture, particularly in the context of whole farm diversification and agri-tourism.

Ponds face many threats from human activities but receive little protection under European and national legislation. In addition, there are significant gaps in our knowledge of pond ecosystems, especially compared to rivers and lakes, which have been intensively studied for many years.

Without action to protect ponds, Europe will progressively lose this critically important habitat and its unique biodiversity.

There is urgent need to protect, consolidate and increase the pond resource in Europe. Doing so is an achievable goal, which could be realised with relatively few resources, and with many benefits for society.

A full version of this document is available at www.europeanponds.org