



Bittern are a UK priority species and are afforded legal protection

Bittern are a secretive bird that live in reedbeds and are a very special species in the Lee Valley. They feed on fish and eels and the male advertises a territory by an evocative deep booming sound.

Three hundred years ago Bittern were widespread throughout England but land drainage and hunting led to a steady decline and eventual extinction. They recolonized just over 100 years ago but there are now around 200 breeding pairs in the UK. Continental birds winter alongside residents with a total wintering population estimated between 100 and 500 birds with the Lee Valley supporting up to 11. The Lee Valley Special Protection Area was classified in September 2000 with Bittern as a key species.

Adopting this iconic species could help with the following specific actions or projects for this species:

- Scrub removal from our reedbeds particularly on Seventy Acres Lake
- Further reedbed expansion and creation at key sites
- Fencing to prevent wildfowl grazing and to enable natural spread
- Provide additional edge feeding habitat and rejuvenate the reed growth

The key actions for this species your support could go towards are:

- Understanding the current distribution and numbers of Bittern in the Lee Valley
- Maintaining and expanding the current distribution and abundance of wintering Bittern in the Lee Valley
- Providing suitable wetland habitat to attract breeding bitterns
- Raising awareness of Bittern and their wetland habitat through events and media