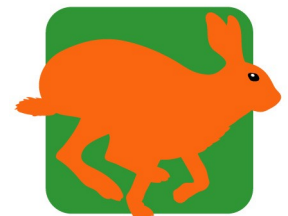
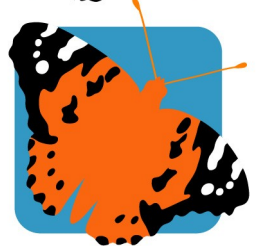
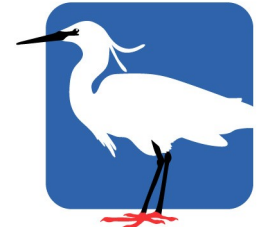


## Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership



# Broadleaved mixed lowland woodland

## Habitat Action Plan 2010-2014

Plan Lead Organisation	Forestry Commission
Plan Coordinator	Rachel Sparks
Action Group	Rural
Associated Plans	Hedgerows
Latest version	Published Jan 2010, version Nov 2010

### Description

Woodland represents one of the richest wildlife resources in Britain, providing a link with the wildwood that once covered Britain. Lowland mixed broadleaved woodland covers a very wide range of woodland types growing in lowland Britain on a wide range of soil conditions, from very acidic to base rich and includes most of the semi-natural woodland in the Tees Valley. This habitat provides an environment with a relatively constant temperature, damper air and less intense sunlight, which provides conditions for a wide diversity of wildlife. The UK BAP plan identifies broadleaved woodland as the habitat with the highest number of threatened species.

After the last ice age most of Britain was colonized by woodland - the wildwood (Rackham 2006). The original woodland was probably a patchwork of closed canopy forest and smaller groups of trees with a mosaic of other habitats, maintained by wild grazing animals. Humankind began to have a significant impact on woodland in the Bronze Age (after 2500BC). By Roman times, clearance for agriculture and domesticated livestock had reduced woodland cover to similar levels as today. Much of this woodland was sustainably managed for wood products.

Ancient woodlands, defined as land that has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600AD, is considered to be the most valuable and irreplaceable woodland. The trees and shrubs in ancient woodlands may have been felled, or cut for coppice, at various times since 1600, but as long as the area has remained as woodland, i.e. the coppice stools have regrown or the stand has been replanted soon after felling, then it still counts as ancient woodland. Because it may have been cut over many times in the past, ancient woodland does not necessarily contain old trees.

New methods of intensive forestry were developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ancient, semi-natural woodland (ASNW), declined in value as its products were no longer required and most traditionally managed woodlands were neglected. Many ancient woodlands were felled and replanted with faster growing conifer plantations as part of national strategies to increase the amount of home grown timber. Replanting has a significant impact on the composition and structure of the original woodland. These woodlands are known as planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS). However, where some of the original woodland features remain, there is scope to restore some of their biodiversity.

The UK is a sparsely wooded country, 11.5% is covered by trees with approximately 1.2% ancient semi-natural woodland. Over half of these ASNWs are below 5 ha in size. This means

that these woodlands are too small to maintain a core area unaffected by adjacent land use to sustain specialized woodland species, with many woodlands being too isolated to allow migration of species across the landscape.

Since 1994 the Breeding Bird Survey has revealed a major decline in the numbers of some woodland birds, but those with the most specialist habitat requirements (some of which are also long-distance migrants), have shown the most dramatic declines, notably willow tit (down 77 per cent), spotted flycatcher (down 59 per cent), wood warbler (down 57 per cent) and pied flycatcher (down 54 per cent). The reason isn't loss of woodlands. The factors driving woodland bird declines are complex and little understood. Changes in woodland structure, including ageing of woodland, reduction in active management and increased grazing by deer are potential causes in addition to reductions in invertebrate food, fragmentation and climate change are thought to play a role.

## Current factors causing loss and decline

- ◆ Inappropriate management with areas of concern include: removal of large old trees; removal of dead wood; abandonment of traditional management systems (including coppice); excessive disruption caused by large scale harvesting and other insensitive changes in management regimes.
- ◆ Inappropriate grazing regimes promote grasses over woodland herbs and can reduce or prevent natural regeneration of trees and shrubs.
- ◆ Replacement of native trees with non-native trees, particularly conifers, beech, sycamore and rhododendron.
- ◆ Habitat loss due to development, including roads and mineral extraction, or conversion of woodland to pasture and arable.
- ◆ Undesirable recreational activities such as motorcycle scrambling, paint ball games, off-road vehicle courses and mountain biking can damage woodland ground flora and disturb breeding birds.
- ◆ Reduction of hardwood based industries and demand for hardwood products through product substitution and loss of traditional markets, resulting in loss of species through neglect or unsympathetic management of woodlands.
- ◆ Dutch elm disease has devastated the elm population over a wide area.

## Conservation Status

Lowland mixed broadleaved woodland became a UK priority habitat in 2006

## The Habitat in the Tees Valley

The Tees Valley has approximately 6-7% of woodland cover, significantly lower than the national average of 11.5%. According to the ancient woodland inventory, by Natural England, we have 1,043 ha of ancient woodland in the Tees Valley. Using recent map and field data from local wildlife site surveys, there are 1,421 ha of ASNW, of which 1,078 ha either PAWS or a mosaic of ASNW and PAWS.

Broadleaved woodland in the Tees Valley is unevenly distributed, with most being concentrated in the beck valleys of eastern Cleveland and other clusters around Wynyard in Stockton and the River Leven in the south. The Tees plain and the Hartlepool area are largely devoid of woodland, and those patches that exist are small and isolated. In eastern Cleveland, many of the steep sided beck valleys are wooded with a mix of broadleaved mixed lowland woodland and conifer plantations. Most of these ancient woodland sites are on some of the steeper terrain and have probably had continuous woodland cover since the retreat of the last ice age. These woodlands contain diverse tree species and are remnants of the woodlands that once covered most of the Tees Valley. They are characterized by ash and oak, with alder and willow species in wetter areas. English and wych elm were also a significant component of the woodland mix, but these were virtually wiped out by Dutch elm disease in the 1970/s. Examples of species rich ancient woodland in east Cleveland include the complex of woodlands near Loftus; Clarkson's, Rosecroft, Loftus, Deepdale Woods and Whitecliff as well as Newton and Rifts Wood near Saltburn. Over the other side of the Tees Valley, at Wynyard, important woodlands for wildlife include Thorpe Woods.

## Current Activity in the Tees Valley

The main driver for woodland management and the creation of new woodland is the Forestry Commission through its England Woodland Grant Schemes (EWGS).

## Further Information

Pryor, S.N, Curtis ,T.A & Peterken, G.F. (2002) . The conservation and restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites: A guide for owners and managers. Woodland Trust.

Kirby, K. & Goldberg, G. (2002) Ancient woodland guidance for Local Authorities. English Nature.

Rackham, O. (2006) Woodlands. New Naturalist Series. Collins.

Anon (2009). Woodlands: Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodlands; and Coniferous Woodland. Chapter 6 in Countryside Survey: England Results from 2007. NERC/Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Natural England.

Symes, N & Currie, F. ( 2005) Woodland Management for Birds: A Guide to Managing for Declining Woodland Birds in England, RSPB Management Guide.

### Websites

Forestry Commission [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

Woodland Trust [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

The England Ancient Woodland Inventory is available at [www.gis.naturalengland.org.uk/pubs/gis/tech\\_aw.htm](http://www.gis.naturalengland.org.uk/pubs/gis/tech_aw.htm)

## Vision Statement

To conserve and restore ancient semi natural woodland and increase the extent of native broadleaved woodland in the Tees Valley.

## Targets

W.T1 Carry out an assessment survey of all ASNW in the Tees Valley

W.T2 Increase the extent of native broadleaved woodland in the Tees Valley through new planting.

Target goal Create 100 ha of woodland by 2014

W.T3 Achieve favourable condition of ancient semi natural woodland in the Tees Valley.

Target goal Restore 150 ha of ASNW into favourable condition by 2014

## Actions

Code	Action	Organisational lead	Action contact	Partners	End date
W.A1	Produce a woodland database for the Tees Valley using GIS from currently available data. Produce a summary report and distribute to relevant statutory agencies and local authorities.	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	Susan Antrobus		April 2010
W.A2	Seek resources to carry out condition assessments of all ancient semi natural woodland in the Tees Valley. Carry out ecological condition assessment of ancient woodlands in the Tees Valley.	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	Susan Antrobus	Forestry Commission. Wildflower Ark Redcar & Cleveland BC, Natural England	Dec 2011
W.A3	Support the creation of new native woodland through EWGS, promoting this scheme to TVBP partner organisations and other landowners.	Forestry Commission	Rachel Sparks		Ongoing
W.A4	Support the restoration to favourable condition of ASNW (including PAWS) through EWGS, promoting this scheme to TVBP partner organisations and other landowners.	Forestry Commission	Rachel Sparks	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	Ongoing
W.A5	Encourage positive management for woodlands for key woodland birds through promotion of 'WIG80' Forestry Commission grant scheme.	Forestry Commission	Rachel Sparks	RSPB, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust Teemouth Bird Club	Ongoing
W.A6	Carry out thinning , where required, of native woodland plantations, created as amenity woodlands by local authorities in the 1980/90's	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	Susan Antrobus	Local Authorities	Ongoing

