

Plan

HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR MIXED ASH-DOMINATED WOODLAND

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FIRST PUBLISHED: June 1999

MOST RECENT UPDATE: March 2008

CURRENT STATUS

Before man began to have a significant impact on the landscape, much of England would have been wooded. With the exception of Sherwood, however, modern Nottinghamshire is not a well wooded county. Ancient woodland constitutes only 14% of the total woodland area, and is restricted to isolated fragments.

Much of Nottinghamshire's ancient woodland has ash as a significant proportion of the canopy. This woodland type dominates in the absence of human interference on the calcareous soils found in areas such as the Magnesian Limestone Ridge, the Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands and the Vale of Belvoir. Pedunculate oak is the other main canopy species in the majority of ancient or long-established ash woodland sites. Elms were once a major constituent of some ash woods in Nottinghamshire, but have been severely affected by Dutch Elm Disease. New secondary ash woodland can develop on post-industrial sites and abandoned arable fields and grassland. The total area of ancient and recent ash dominated woodland in the County is not yet known.

Ancient ash woodland is the most botanically diverse woodland in Nottinghamshire. A wide range of trees and shrubs can be found, including small-leaved and large-leaved limes, midland hawthorn, dogwood and spindle. The rich ground flora can be dominated by dog's mercury, wood sorrel and wood anemone, with carpets of bluebell in pockets of deeper more organic soils. County rarities such as herb Paris, spurge laurel, stinking iris and several species of orchids are a key feature of a number of the ancient ash woods. Old trees and fallen or standing dead wood support fungi and specialist invertebrates.

Ash woodlands teem with bird life. Tawny owls, woodpeckers, nuthatches, and treecreepers are some of the characteristic bird species to be found all year. In spring resident thrushes, tits and finches are joined by up to five species of warbler. However, bird life represents a tiny if striking fragment of the enormously diverse fauna of woodland. Some species such as roe deer, badger and bats are elusive. Insects and other invertebrates occupy every possible space offered, from the soil and leaf litter of the woodland floor to the leaves, flowers, fruit, branches and rot-holes high in the canopy.

THREATS

The main factors currently affecting the County's mixed ash-dominated woodland are:

- The invasion and spread of non-native species such as sycamore.
- The tendency of woodland managers to 'tidy up' by removing dead wood, which is an essential part of any woodland habitat.
- The lack of management of many woods in private ownership.
- The use of inappropriate planting designs and species mixes for woodland creation.
- The historical replacement of native broad-leaved trees with non-native conifers or hardwoods. Forestry Commission policy has worked to prevent this since 1984.
- Loss to development remains a potential threat, but one which is generally well-defended by the planning system. Recreational development such as log cabins in woodland is a particular concern, which may prove harder to stem.
- Air pollution, which results in the loss of sensitive lichens, mosses and liverworts.
- Impoverishment of surrounding countryside, leaving woods as islands lacking complementary habitats such as grassland, and linking features such as hedges or green lanes.
- Muntjac deer, although not yet present in large numbers in the County, are likely to be in the near future, and present a considerable potential threat to the woodland ground flora and tree regeneration.

CURRENT INITIATIVES - EXAMPLES

- Many private landowners manage areas of mixed ash woodland, and have a vital part to play in its conservation.
- The Government's England Forestry Strategy (1999) sets a series of national targets and programmes for protecting and restoring woodlands, including a commitment to reversing the fragmentation of ancient woodlands.
- The Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust manages many important ash woodlands, including Bunny, Dyscarr, Eaton, Gamston, Kirton, Sellers and Treswell Woods.
- The Forestry Commission have habitat management and restoration projects underway at Wellow Park SSSI and Bevercotes Park SSSI.

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- Ash woodland on a number of privately owned sites is managed under the Woodland Grant Scheme, elements of which are targeted to encourage the sensitive management of ancient semi-natural sites.
- English Nature has compiled a provisional Ancient Woodland Inventory for Nottinghamshire.
- Some woods are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- Ancient woodlands are given specific protection in the Nottinghamshire Structure Plan, whilst the emotive, amenity and landscape value of all woodland is such that this habitat is very rarely lost to built development.
- Woodlands receive protection under the Forestry Act, which requires a felling licence to be obtained from the Forestry Commission for felling of more than 5m³. Tree Preservation Orders, administered by Local Authorities, provide an additional avenue for protection where particular local threats are perceived.
- The Woodland Trust seeks to acquire sites on which to establish new woodland, or manage existing woods.
- The Greenwood Community Forest aims to work with partners to create well designed woodland and bring existing woods back into management throughout the Forest area.
- High standards for woodland management are encouraged by the UK Forestry Standard.

TARGETS

Falling within the UK Broad Habitat type of Broadleaved, mixed and Yew Woodland, which includes broadleaved stands which have >20% of the cover made up of broadleaved trees. This is a locally specific habitat and not a UK Priority Habitat.

Much of Nottinghamshire's ancient woodland has ash as a significant portion of the canopy. This woodland type dominates in the absence of human interference on the calcareous soils found in areas such as the Magnesium Limestone Ridge, the Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands and the Vale of Belvoir. Pendunculate oak is the other main canopy species in the majority of ancient or long established ash woodland sites. New secondary ash woodland can develop on post industrial sites and abandoned arable fields and grassland.

Target Type	Target Text	Units	2005 Baseline	2010 Target	2015 Target
Maintain Extent	Maintain the extent of all existing mixed ash dominated woodland.	Ha	644	644	660
Achieve Condition	Maintain and improve by management existing mixed ash	Ha	362 (56% of resource in favourable	No data	660

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	dominated woodland.		condition)		
Restoration	Improve the condition of relict habitat so that it qualifies as mixed ash dominated woodland.	Ha		16	No data
Expansion	Encourage the re-establishment and increase the area of mixed ash dominated woodland.	Ha		No data	No data

PROPOSED ACTION

Policy and legislation

1. Ensure the incorporation of relevant (inter-)national law, policies and guidance into all plans and policies relating to the protection, enhancement and management of mixed ash dominated woodland habitat.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

2. Through planning control or other land use consultation processes, allow no further loss of areas of mixed ash dominated woodland habitat and seek opportunities to enhance existing areas and create new areas through approved development.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

3. Ensure agri-environment, forestry and other funding schemes include appropriate management options and design measures to suit local nature conservation needs.

ACTION: Government Agencies.

Site safeguard and management

4. Review the extent of SSSI coverage of woodland habitat and consider notifying further sites as necessary.

ACTION: Government Agencies.

5. Designate SINCs and declare Local Nature Reserves on appropriate areas of habitat or instigate other appropriate measures for their protection.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

6. Promote the uptake of positive management with owners of SSSIs, LNRs, SINCs and any other areas of mixed ash dominated woodland habitat.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

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7. Carry out appropriate habitat management on sites controlled by BAP partners.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

8. Ensure sites containing mixed ash dominated woodland habitat have appropriate management plans that are working towards improving site management and condition

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

9. Acquire land to ensure good habitat management or to create habitat.

ACTION: NGO's.

Advisory

10. Provide formal or informal training in management techniques for mixed ash dominated woodland habitat to land managers, site wardens, volunteers, etc.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

11. Establish demonstration sites or projects to demonstrate/publicise good habitat management techniques.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

Future research and monitoring

12. Establish and maintain a monitoring programme (a site register) to determine progress towards county HAP targets.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

13. Ensure that areas of mixed ash dominated woodland habitat are periodically resurveyed to establish extent and condition. Update resulting habitat inventory every 5 years and revise targets and HAPs if necessary.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

Communications and publicity

14. Improve public awareness and appreciation of mixed ash dominated woodland habitat by providing appropriate interpretation, education and access (where appropriate).

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

15. Improve awareness of the value of, and appropriate management techniques for mixed ash dominated woodland habitat among site owners and occupiers.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Buy locally produced woodland produce, such as charcoal, basketry, hurdle fencing, trellis work and pea sticks.
- Plant the right tree in the right place! Seek advice from organisations such as Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers or Nottinghamshire County Council on the suitability of your site for tree planting, what species are appropriate and how to maintain them.

SPECIES LIST

The following are examples of species of conservation concern (Appendix A) which are likely to benefit from this action plan:

- Noctule bat
- Speckled bush cricket
- Nuthatch
- Lesser spotted woodpecker
- Early purple orchid
- White letter hairstreak
- Greater butterfly orchid
- Purple hairstreak
- Fly orchid
- Herb Paris
- Stinking iris
- Spurge laurel
- Small leaved lime