

Traditional orchards

Current UK status and trends

England resource is approximately 15,601ha but declining

Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

Between 15 and 90 hectares

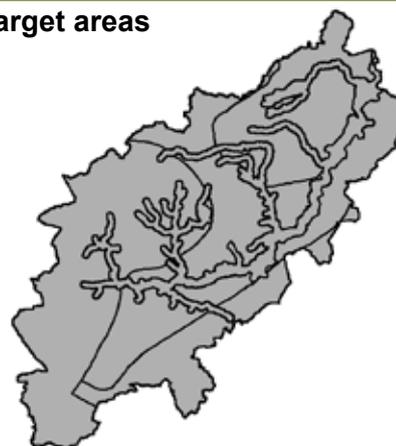
Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

5ha of traditional orchard restored and 2 LWS designated for their traditional orchard habitat

Lead partner

Wildlife Trust

Target areas



Habitat description



Orchards are collections of cultivated ‘top-fruit’ and/or edible nut bearing trees. **Traditional orchards** are a subset of such orchards and may be described as those dominated by older, less intensively managed ‘standard’ trees, planted at relatively low densities and with main branches above the reach of grazing animals. Associated hedgerow habitat and ground flora may be diverse depending on their historical and present management. Under-storey grazing in such orchards was not uncommon and is now sometimes mimicked by appropriate mowing regimes. The minimum size of a traditional orchard is defined as five trees with crown edges less than 20m apart.

Traditional orchards can have significant ecological value and diversity. Ongoing research has identified their importance for birds (including woodpeckers, bullfinch, fieldfare and redwing) and many other species groups. In particular, much of the diversity has been found to depend on the microhabitats

in dead or decaying wood – and mediated by rich assemblages of fungi and saproxylic invertebrates.

Main issues and threats

- Insensitive management e.g. intensive horse grazing or overwintering livestock, removal of dying trees, lack of re-planting regime
- Deliberate removal, partial removal or fragmentation for agriculture or development. Particular issues include removal for “site improvement” and speculative removal to facilitate planning permission.
- Lack of traditional management: as orchards have in general been planted all at once, they are typically in danger of failing all at once if not appropriately managed
- Isolation: like many other counties Northamptonshire has experienced an ongoing

decline in the number of surviving orchards. This tends to isolate remaining orchards from one another, increasing local extinction rates among less mobile species.

General strategy

- Identify and maintain the current resource
- Enhance the current resource: reintroduce traditional management or restore degraded orchards through infill planting
- Enhance the perceived or actual economic and cultural, health and wellbeing values to be derived from traditionally managed orchards

Targets

1. Identify through desk study and site visits all areas that meet the definition for this habitat by 2020
2. Maintain the current extent of traditional orchards
3. Achieve favourable condition on 20ha of traditional orchard habitats by 2020
4. Restore 10ha of heavily degraded and historical orchard to LWS standard by 2020

Actions

A.	Through desk study and survey work identify and maintain the existing extent of traditional orchards	South Court Environmental Wildlife Trust
B.	Provide information on appropriate management for orchards to their owners and to those wishing to plant orchards in order to attain, maintain and enhance the biodiversity of their habitats	South Court Environmental Wildlife Trust
C.	Reinstate traditional management to orchards through Countryside Stewardship or other funded projects	Local authorities Natural England
D.	Restore degraded orchards through Section 106 agreements/new developments	Local authorities Developers
E.	Where appropriate apply Tree Preservation Orders to safeguard orchard trees	Local authorities

Flagship species



- Common bullfinch
- Lesser-spotted woodpecker

Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat information from Natural England](#)
- ▶ [Management and restoration information from Natural England](#)
- ▶ [Habitat and management information from the People's Trust for Endangered Species](#)
- ▶ [Habitat and management information from the Mid-Shires Orchard Group](#)
- ▶ [Management advice for bumblebees](#) (from Bumblebee Conservation Trust)