

# Wood-pasture and parkland

## Current UK status and trends

It is estimated that less than 10,000 to 20,000ha of working wood-pasture and parkland remain nationally

## Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

Approximately 202ha within Local Wildlife Sites, elsewhere up to 1000ha on over 30 sites in various states of dereliction

## Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

114ha were brought into management, 362ha restored and 29ha created through environmental stewardship

## Lead partner

Natural England

## Target areas



## Habitat description



Wood-pasture and parkland are areas of wooded land that have been historically used for the dual purpose of growing trees and grazing animals, particularly deer and livestock. They typically represent a vegetation structure rather than a particular plant community. These habitats usually consist of large spreading trees (native or non-native), often managed as pollards, set within a matrix of grassland or heathland. Many examples have been incorporated into other woodland, transformed into landscaped parks, or converted to arable farming. Parkland differs from wood-pasture in that deliberate planting, often with non-native species into a designed landscape, represents a significant component. Parklands are frequently designated for their historic and landscape value.

The intrinsic value of wood-pasture and parkland is primarily associated with the trees, which are often ancient, and in some cases may represent survivals of the genetic stock from the primeval forest, or wild wood. These trees are also habitat for a range of epiphyte flora and fungi, and for invertebrates of dead wood, which depend for some part of their life cycle on living, dying or dead wood.

Large areas of working wood-pasture and parkland may once have existed in the grounds of large estates and historic houses like Althorp, Fawsley and Castle Ashby. These have gradually been lost to other land uses or have lost their traditional features through neglect. However much survives in smaller patches across various estates.

## Main issues and threats

- Lack of young trees to replace existing ancient examples is producing a skewed age structure and will lead to a break in continuity of suitable dead wood habitat
- Damage to tree roots from soil compaction and erosion caused by trampling by livestock

and people, car parking and close ploughing to former parkland trees when parkland is converted to other land uses

- Isolation and fragmentation of remaining wood-pasture and parkland sites; many of the species dependent on old trees are unable to move between sites due to their poor dispersal abilities and the increasing distances they need to travel
- Pasture improvement through reseeding, deep ploughing, fertiliser and other chemical treatments
- Over-grazing leading to bark browsing, soil compaction and loss of nectar plants
- Felling of old or dead trees for safety reasons (which are exempt from needing a felling licence)
- Loss of habitat through conversion to arable or other land uses

### General strategy

- Plant young trees and ensure the survival of semi-mature trees to ensure a wide age range and continuous availability of dead wood
- Protect the area under tree canopies from compaction and erosion (e.g. by fencing)
- Encourage lower intensity farming of the grassland below the tree canopy (reduced grazing levels and lower fertiliser input)
- Discourage the felling of trees for safety reasons
- Restore areas of wood-pasture and parkland that have become partially converted to other land uses

### Targets

1. Maintain the current extent and standard of wood-pasture and parkland and their associated trees by 2020
2. Achieve favourable condition on 150ha of wood-pasture and parkland habitat by 2020
3. Restore 200ha of degraded or remnant wood-pasture or parkland sites to help reverse fragmentation and reduce the generation gap between veteran trees by 2020
4. Establish 30ha of new wood-pasture or parkland on arable land or improved grassland

### Actions

|                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                       |
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| <p><b>A.</b> Identify the extent and current condition of wood pasture and parkland in the county</p>                                                               | <p>Wildlife Trust<br/>Forestry<br/>Commission<br/>Natural England</p> |
| <p><b>B.</b> Manage wood-pasture and parkland through appropriate Countryside Stewardship (CS) prescriptions</p>                                                    | <p>Natural England</p>                                                |
| <p><b>C.</b> Plant young trees and ensure the survival of semi-mature trees to veteran status to ensure a wide age range and constant availability of dead wood</p> | <p>Forestry<br/>Commission<br/>Woodland Trust</p>                     |

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| <p><b>D.</b> Promote a balanced, risk-based approach to tree safety works, considering the biodiversity value of standing dead wood and advocating crown reduction as opposed to whole tree removal where this can reduce the public risk to a suitable level</p> | <p>Forestry Commission<br/>Woodland Trust</p>                     |
| <p><b>E.</b> Identify sites that are suitable for restoration which still support a number of ancient trees and/or parkland features. Restoration to be achieved through CS.</p>                                                                                  | <p>Forestry Commission<br/>Woodland Trust<br/>Natural England</p> |
| <p><b>F.</b> Identify suitable arable land or improved grassland for the establishment of a new wood-pasture or parkland site. To be achieved through CS.</p>                                                                                                     | <p>Forestry Commission<br/>Wildlife Trust<br/>Natural England</p> |
| <p><b>G.</b> Identify potential areas for the expansion and buffering of wood pasture and parkland sites and provide advice to owners of this land</p>                                                                                                            | <p>Wildlife Trust</p>                                             |

## Flagship species



- Brown long-eared bat
- Noctule
- Small heath
- Spotted flycatcher
- Stag beetle

## Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat information from Natural England](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Woodland Trust](#)
- ▶ [Management advice from the Forestry Commission](#)
- ▶ [Flora Locale's restoration library](#)
- ▶ [Management advice for invertebrates](#) (from Buglife)