

Key environmental corridors located alongside roads and tracks in our woodlands will be managed according to the Environmental Corridors Guidance for SE England (see page 5). In the High Weald, over 11% of our woodland area will be dedicated to providing a permanent network of open habitat that supports heather and associated species, e.g. silver studded blue butterfly. Open sunny corridors with areas of dappled shade, retained mature trees and crossing points for dormice in narrow places are already a feature of many of our woodlands. These corridors measure between 10 and 40 metres in width (including the road or track) and provide links to areas of open habitat on neighbouring land. We have also started to integrate environmental corridors with patches of wooded heath (20-70% tree canopy cover) and will thin some areas of woodland to between 20% and 70% tree canopy cover to encourage heathland flora to extend onto Forest Enterprise land.



Patch of permanent open habitat supporting heathland vegetation as part of a key environmental corridor in St. Leonard's Forest.

Table 2. Key UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats on the Public Forest Estate in the High Weald

UK BAP Priority Habitats	Comments
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Present throughout the estate either as coppice or high forest habitat, particularly on ancient woodland sites.
Lowland heathland	Present as part of the shifting forest/wooded heath mosaic and alongside forest roads and tracks that have been managed to provide a network of open and edge habitat.
Wet woodland	Predominantly associated with gill woodland.
Hedgerows	A small but important resource that provides connectivity with woodlands.
Lowland dry acid grassland	Present as part of the forest/wooded heath mosaic.
Ponds	
Rivers	
Wood pasture and parkland	Remnants present throughout the estate.

Table 3. Key UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species and Associated Habitat Management on the Public Forest Estate in the High Weald

UK BAP Priority Species	Management Activity								Comments
	Restoration of ancient woodland to native species	Thinning of conifer woodland	Clearfelling of conifer woodland	Enhancement of open and edge habitat alongside roads and tracks	Minimum intervention management of woodland	Coppicing of broadleaf species	Enhancement of the deadwood resource	Enhancement and creation of stream corridors & ponds	
Adder	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	Structural enhancements and open space provision will improve conditions for this species.
Brown hare	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			Woodland used for cover and foraging where found in association with its open habitats.
Common lizard	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	Structural enhancements and open space provision will improve conditions for this species.
Common toad		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	Structural enhancements and open space provision will improve conditions for this species.
Dormouse	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			PAWS restoration likely to enhance habitat through the promotion of a more dense undestorey and improved ride edge habitat will facilitate dispersal.
Grass snake	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	Structural enhancements and open space provision will improve conditions for this species.
Grey partridge	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	An arable species that will benefit from enhancement of the woodland edge and interconnecting corridors.
Great crested newt	✓				✓		✓	✓	Will benefit from improved old growth features and the enhancement and creation of pond habitat.
Hawfinch	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	Nests in mature well-foliated trees. Maintenance of forest cover is important and pond enhancement/creation will support local populations.
Lesser redpoll	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	Depends on a continual supply of pioneer woodland and feeds on birch and alder seeds. This species is negatively influenced by the creation of permanent open space.
Lesser spotted woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	An increase in the abundance of dead and decaying wood is a priority for long term survival. Well developed crowns with a high density of branches are needed for foraging.
Marsh tit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Prefers mature, deciduous woodland where oak or beech is the dominant species. Uses wooded riverside habitat and alder carr in addition to well developed parkland or wood-pasture.
Nightjar	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			Felling and coppicing increases the availability of suitable habitat through the creation of temporary open space and edge habitat. Thinning enhances edge habitat.
Noctule bat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Creation of more open habitats will improve foraging habitat and older tree retention will provide additional roosts.

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Otter	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	Recovery underway in SE Region - in time stream corridors may provide suitable dispersal and holting sites.
Pearl bordered fritillary	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			Present in Beckley Wood. Potential for future reintroduction/natural recolonisation in other woods.
Pipistrelle bat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Creation of more open habitats will improve foraging habitat and older tree retention will provide additional summer roosts.
Purple emperor	✓	✓		✓					Ensure known assembly areas are mapped and considered in operational planning. Ensure more gradual habitat change in the immediate vicinity of assemble areas and retain sufficient sallow alongside roads and tracks, e.g. through a phased flailing programme.
Serotine bat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	A species of the edge - hedgerows, ride corridors and treelines.
Silver-studded blue			✓	✓					Will benefit from short or sparse bell heather that has been encouraged to grow in open habitat alongside forest roads and tracks.
Skylark			✓	✓		✓			Likely to benefit from increased open space provision and in particular areas of rough grassland, which occur in association with peripheral open habitats.
Slow worm	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			Structural enhancements and open space provision will improve conditions for this species.
Song thrush	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	Structural enhancements and open space provision will improve conditions for this species.
Spotted flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Requires mature deciduous woodland where there is a combination of nest sites and open structure, especially rides and glades.
Stag beetle	✓	✓			✓		✓		Improvement in the deadwood resource will boost local populations and facilitate recolonisation from local source populations.
Tree pipit	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	PAWS restoration increases the availability of suitable habitat through the promotion of scrub vegetation.
Tree sparrow	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	A species of arable or mixed farmland with woodland. Edges of more open, mature woodland are
Turtle dove	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	Woodland edge, scrub and tall hedges used for nesting. Field margins and semi-natural grassland used for feeding. Closed canopy mature woodland is usually avoided except where there is a well developed ride edge habitat.
Water vole								✓	PAWS restoration likely to enhance breeding habitat to facilitate future recolonisation.
Willow tit	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Requires structurally diverse woodland and mature scrub habitats, often but not always wet, with a good proportion of standing rotten wood and a well-developed shrub layer.
Woodcock	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A damp woodland species that requires a well developed shrub layer. Damp pasture and wet heath is used for feeding.
Woodlark	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			Felling and coppicing increases the availability of suitable habitat through the creation of temporary open space and edge habitat. Thinning enhances edge habitat.
Wood warbler	✓	✓			✓				Requires closed canopy woodland with little mid-strata or shrub layer, particularly in sessile oak woods and birch woods.

6.4.2 Deadwood habitat

Deadwood exists within a woodland as cut and fallen material on the forest floor, whole standing trees or dead limbs, holes and rot in the tree canopy. Deadwood provides a habitat and food source for a range of animals, plants and fungi, including bees, wasps and a range of rare deadwood specialist species. Many of these are poor colonists with exacting habitat requirements which are only found where management has allowed for a continuity of mature trees and deadwood, for example in wood pasture or ancient and semi-natural woodland. Previous management practices have cleared many of these important habitats and the Forestry Commission is currently trying to provide and protect deadwood habitat across the High Weald.

Management will concentrate on providing deadwood habitat where it is missing from existing habitats that are already of high ecological value. Some of these areas (2% of our landholding in the High Weald) will be managed by limited intervention to create natural reserves. In addition to this, at least 3 standing and 3 fallen dead trees will be created or retained per hectare of woodland after felling operations. The woody residues arising from tree felling operations will also be retained on the woodland floor.



Mature tree allowed to die in-situ and provide deadwood habitat within the woodland

6.5 Monitoring

Forest Enterprise manages 20 woodlands in the High Weald that range in size from less than 10 hectares to greater than 800 hectares. The fragmented nature of land ownership and habitat configuration in the South East dictates that monitoring the response of individual species, e.g. birds, to habitat change in isolation on the public estate would be unlikely to provide an accurate indication of the benefits derived from our active habitat management. This is because of the influence of external factors such as agriculture, road effect zones and differing woodland management regimes in adjacent privately owned woodland blocks. Furthermore, any expenditure on survey and monitoring would denude existing funds that are currently channelled towards habitat creation and restoration. Forest Enterprise will therefore continue to work at the habitat scale to ensure the conservation and enhancement of those UK BAP priority habitats with which priority species are associated (see Table 3 on page 18). Existing species recording schemes, such as the breeding bird survey (BBS), will be used to gain information about the conservation status of individual species and further highlight the need for joined up working at the landscape scale. Forest Enterprise will continue to enter into land management partnerships that deliver benefits at the landscape scale, e.g. the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme and the Rother Woods Project.



Nightjar (Photo Courtesy of S. Bound)