



LAND MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT



Eastern Valleys Uplands Project - Local Wildlife Sites

The following information outlines the best practice guidelines for managing the habitat type listed below in a manner that is sympathetic to wildlife. It is part of a series relating to various habitat types and management issues that have been produced by your local Wildlife Trusts.

No.17 Upland Broad-leaved Woodland

What is Upland Broad-leaved Woodland?

This refers to two distinct semi-natural broad-leaved woodlands, these being Upland Oak and Upland Mixed Ash Woodland. Both woodlands, and particularly the Oak, generally occur on quite steeply sloping valley sides in areas of high rainfall. The Oak woodland occurs on base poor/acidic soils whereas the Ash woodland is typically found on more base-rich soils.



Bilberry



Pied Flycatcher



Wild Garlic

What wildlife does it support?

Upland Oak Woodland is dominated by Sessile Oak, with Birch also being common. Hazel, Rowan and Holly are common in the understorey. Lichens and Mosses also thrive in the clean, humid air. Ground flora can vary dependent on grazing and soil fertility with Heather and Bilberry typical of nutrient poor examples, whereas luxuriant Ferns, Bluebells and Bramble occur where fertility is higher. More specialised woodland birds such as Redstart, Pied Flycatcher and Wood Warbler can be present. The Mixed Ash Woodland naturally has a significant Ash component with a variety of other trees present including much Hazel in the understorey. The ground flora is very rich for an upland habitat with abundant Bluebells and Wild Garlic typical. Both woodland types can support important invertebrate assemblages.



Lichen on trees



Redstart



Bluebells

Why preserve/enhance it?

Upland Broad-leaved Woodland, which you can justifiably feel proud to own, is a superb resource for wildlife as it is unique and distinct from more lowland counterparts. The high rainfall, clean air and generally less disturbance allow a particular suite of species to thrive. Historically much woodland was lost, so it is of great importance to preserve in good condition what is left, and we would very much like to assist you in achieving this goal by both highlighting the threats to this habitat and providing management recommendations.

Threats

The following can all lead to the loss/degradation of this habitat:

- Overgrazing leading to changes in structure, ground flora impoverishment and difficulties for regeneration.
- Invasion by Sycamore and other non-native species.
- Development such as new roads and quarrying.
- Cessation of traditional management practices such as coppicing.
- Unsympathetic forest management.
- "Tidying up" of woods i.e. removing important dead wood.
- Atmospheric pollution.
- Climate Change.

Management Recommendations

The following is recommended to ensure the valuable Upland Broad-leaved Woodland habitat is managed sympathetically for wildlife and is thus preserved and enhanced:

Preservation/Enhancement of Upland Broad-leaved Woodland

For both woodland types the best type of management is a fairly minimalist approach allowing the natural processes of death and regeneration to shape the woodland. It is however likely that some form of management would be beneficial. The precise management will differ for individual woodlands based on their current condition and both historical and current management regimes. It may be advisable to have a specific management plan drawn up for each woodland, the basic principles are as follows however:

- If the wood is **grazed** (either by livestock or deer), as is often the case with upland woodland, this may need to be controlled. A low-level of grazing is a natural process and can be beneficial to maintain structural diversity and maintain habitats suitable for certain specialised species such as Wood Warbler. However if the ground flora is being depleted, and particularly if it is evident that there is little or no natural regeneration of native trees, then grazing may need to be reduced or periodically excluded to allow natural regeneration. In larger woods this could be undertaken with compartments on a rotational cycle. For natural regeneration, the exclusion of grazing following mast years for Oak or Ash will allow the best results. If grazing is to be reinstated when regeneration is still young then there may need to be protective shelters for sapling trees.
- **Planting** may help to maintain/enhance the woodland in the long-term but should only be resorted to if natural regeneration is poor. (planting should be native, typical to the area and of local provenance).
- **Coppicing** can be a useful means of managing the woodland and helping to maintain diversity. It should only generally be undertaken where there is clear evidence that this practice has been undertaken in the past. In any case some trees should be left to grow as standards. If coppicing is undertaken then measures will need to be undertaken to protect the new growth from grazing.
- **Dead wood** (both standing and fallen) should be retained within the woodland as a habitat for many specialised creatures, provided Health & Safety is not compromised.
- With the exception of management of non-native weeds, management works are best undertaken during the winter months to minimise impact on nesting birds and other wildlife.

Preservation/Enhancement of Upland Broad-leaved Woodland (cont.)

- **Natural Clearings** in the woodland as a result of rocky outcrops, localised damper conditions, or glades resultant from historical clearance that are maintained by grazing are very important habitats and should be retained. Low-levels of grazing will help to retain these and periodical, discrete felling will renew the clearings. The temptation to plant up these areas should be avoided.
- **Tree disease** – You should be vigilant for signs of tree disease, most notably “Ash Dieback”, report any cases to Natural Resources Wales and then undertake any necessary measures as prescribed by them.
- **Non-native scrub species** such as Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel should be eradicated. **Refer to separate Toolkit – No. 20 Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel Control for more detail.**
- **Non-native invasive weeds** such as Himalayan Balsam, and Japanese Knotweed should be eradicated.
 - ❖ **Himalayan Balsam** can be controlled by hand-pulling before it sets seed.
 - ❖ **Japanese Knotweed** will require spot treatment with a suitable herbicide.**Refer to separate Toolkit – No. 14 Invasive Weed Control (aliens) for more detail.**
- Where species such as **Sycamore** are present these should ideally be controlled. If they make up less than 10% of the trees present then eradication may be achievable. If the dominance is greater than this then it is unlikely to be effective, but they should be controlled selectively as part of any ongoing thinning exercises.
- If trees are to be felled either to control non-natives (Sycamore, Conifers etc.), for timber, or as part of an exercise to allow some regeneration, consideration needs to be given to how this will alter the exposure of retained trees and their vulnerability to wind-throw.
- The provision of **nest-boxes** within the woodland can enhance the value of the woodland for wildlife further as nest-holes are frequently a limiting factor. Some of the more specialised species of these habitats such as Pied Flycatcher and Redstart will readily occupy nest-boxes, with 28mm holes being an ideal size. Similarly, bat boxes can also provide wildlife enhancements for the woodland. In all cases the retention of old tree specimens to provide a natural resource is the preferred option but artificial boxes can be a useful supplement to these.

Restoration of Upland Broad-leaved Woodland

There may also be areas of woodland within your land that are not currently of particularly high ecological value either because they have historically been cleared and replanted with conifers or been felled and had long periods with limited regeneration, leaving the woodland sparse. However it is likely that areas of value and significant woodland ground flora may still be present however and measures can be taken to restore the woodland if desired.

This can be achieved by the removal of undesirable species (i.e. Conifers), then managing grazing to allow natural regeneration and if necessary planting of broadleaves (these should be native, typical to the area and of local provenance).

Creation of Upland Broad-leaved Woodland

Additionally there may be some areas within your land that do not have any discernible wildlife value but measures can be taken to create habitat of higher ecological value if desired. The creation of woodland is a long process and the detail of this work is beyond the scope of this document but your Local Wildlife Trust would be delighted to advise you further.

Should you require any further advice regarding the management of your Local Wildlife Site please do not hesitate to contact your local Wildlife Trust:

Gwent Wildlife Trust

Tel: 01600 740600

e-mail: info@gwentwildlife.org

Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales

Tel: 01656 724100

e-mail: info@welshwildlife.org

Other toolkits available are:

No.1 Neutral Grassland (Hay Meadows)

No.2 Neutral Grassland (Pasture)

No.3 Acid Grassland

No.4 Calcareous Grassland

No.5 Marshy Grassland

No.6 Marsh Grassland (with Marsh Fritillary)

No.7 Heath

No.8 Hedgerows

No.9 Salt Marsh & Coastal Grazing Marsh

No.10 Ponds & Lakes

No.11 Scrub control

No.12 Bracken control

No.13 Invasive weed control (natives – thistle, dock etc.)

No.14 Invasive weed control (aliens – Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam etc.)

No.15 Ffridd (Coedcae)

No.16 Blanket Bog

No.18 Upland Flushes

No.19 Post Industrial

No.20 Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel control

Further useful documents include:

The Management of Semi-natural Woodlands - 4. Upland Mixed Ashwoods -

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg004.pdf/\\$FILE/fcpg004.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg004.pdf/$FILE/fcpg004.pdf)

The Management of Semi-natural Woodlands - 5. Upland Oak Woodlands -

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg005.pdf/\\$FILE/fcpg005.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg005.pdf/$FILE/fcpg005.pdf)

Information on Ash Dieback

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-8udm6s>

This Toolkit has been produced as part of the Eastern Valleys Uplands Project which is funded by the Welsh Government Nature Fund 2014-2015



TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH



BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

