



# Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



Your Living Landscape

Natural Networks

Conference venue & meeting rooms

News

Campaigns

Food & Farming

Grasslands

Water & Wetlands

Woodlands

▶ Deer impact in woodlands

Planning & Development

Frequently Asked Questions

Living Seas

## Woodlands

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**Ancient semi-natural woodlands are a magnificent feature of the Worcestershire countryside. They are rich in wildlife, including a number of specialist species, and can also be great places for quiet recreation.**

### Woodlands in Worcestershire

Britain is the second least wooded country in the EU, with Worcestershire as a county slightly below the national average for woodland cover. Much of what remains is in the northwest of the county, focussed on the Wyre Forest. The percentage of land with biologically rich semi-natural ancient woodland in the county is just 2.5%.

Many of Worcestershire's most biologically important woods were damaged from the 1950's onwards through conversion to conifer plantations. Thankfully, the value of these remnants of ancient woods is now recognized and many are now protected and managed with their wildlife value in mind.

### Woodland management

Whilst our woodlands are often ancient landscape features and are therefore relatively stable, they have still developed with the influence of humans and woodland wildlife and flora have adapted to our management. We therefore actively manage our woods through coppicing, ride widening and other forestry operations to create warm, sunlit microhabitats that benefit insects and wildflowers as well as producing better nesting habitat for many of our rarest woodland birds.

If you're visiting our reserves after recent forestry work, the results can look quite drastic in some cases. The Trust is

### Our blogs

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attention even the most drastic works can contribute to a much richer woodland for the future.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust owns or is involved in the management of several of Worcestershire's most important semi-natural ancient woods, including Chaddesley, Tiddesley, Grafton, Trench and Monk woods.

### Isolation and fragmentation

One of the main problems facing our woods is isolation from each other. Most ancient woodland species do not disperse far or fast, making them very vulnerable and slow to recover. Dog's mercury, like many woodland plants, spreads only through cloning itself and even in ideal conditions spreads a maximum of one metre per year. If lost, re-colonization is unlikely and research has shown it can take 400 years for an isolated plantation to take on the species composition of ancient woodland.

Fragmentation of our woods is another major problem, with over half of our ancient woodlands less than 5 hectares in size, and only five in Worcestershire bigger than 100 hectares, making species loss and inability to re-colonise a pressing problem.

To combat this, our Living Landscapes strategy is designed to look at ways to connect our most important woods to allow movement of woodland species along wildlife corridors and to work with partners such as the Forestry Commission and Natural England to promote good management of important privately owned woodlands.

We aim to promote a countryside with large well-connected woods, managed well to produce sustainable timber products and improved wildlife benefits, with sustainable access for the public.



### Find out more about woodlands

For more information about woodlands and woodland management in the UK please click on the following links to:-

[Our response to ash dieback](#)

[The Wildlife Trusts woodland management page](#)

[The Forestry Commission homepage](#)

[The Forestry Commission ride management document](#)

For information about our detailed study on the woodland specialist Bechstein's bat at [Grafton Wood](#) you can [download our full report](#).

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