

5 Biodiversity Conservation



Habitat creation
Species works



Habitat quality
Species status

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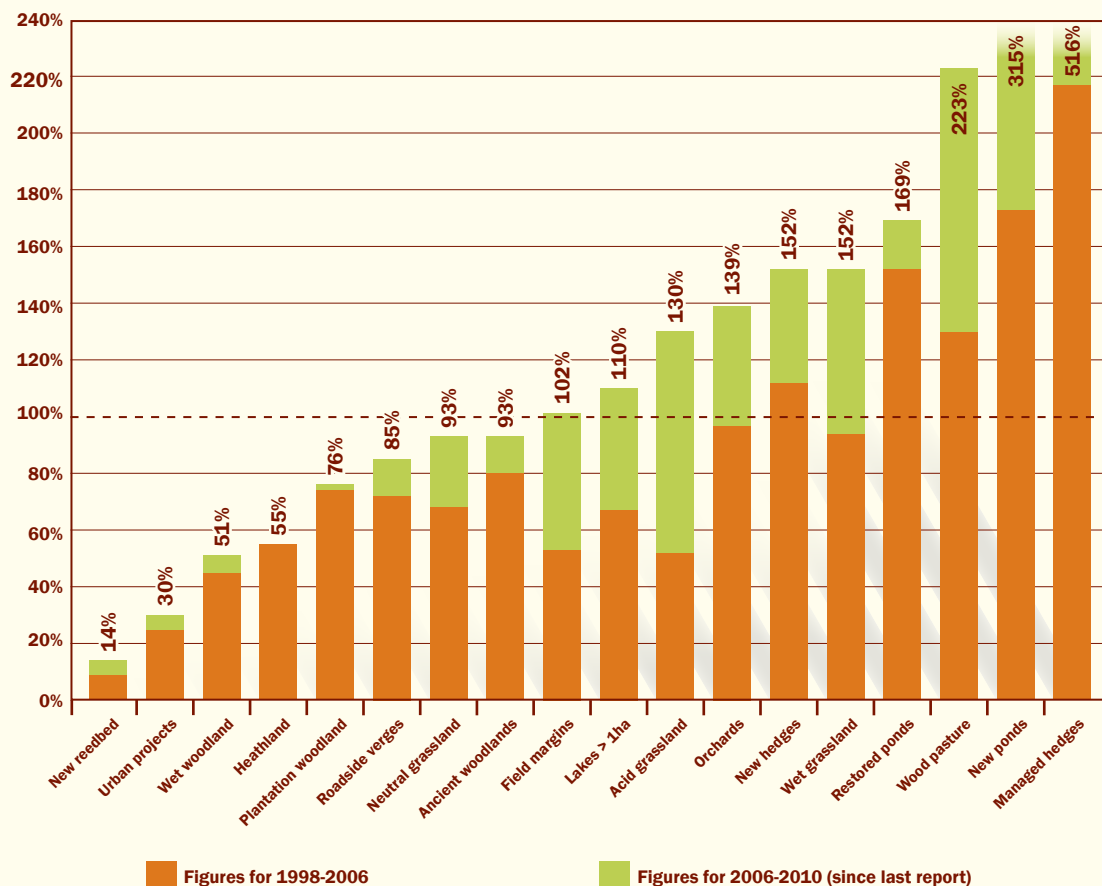
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The National Forest is creating landscape-scale ecological change that will ultimately link together around 20,000ha of new and existing woodlands, hedgerows, meadows, heathland and wetlands. This is creating a more resilient landscape for wildlife to thrive and adapt to climate change. This indicator measures how this activity has met the National Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2004–2010 targets and how it contributes directly towards achieving the UK BAP.

HABITAT PROGRESS

- Since 1995, 1,750ha of habitats have been created or brought back into management (in addition to land that has been tree planted). This represents an increase of 170ha since 2006/7^{1,2}.
- Since 1995, 91km of new hedgerows have been planted and 1031km of existing hedgerows have been brought back into management. This represents an increase of 9km and 581km respectively since 2006/7.¹

National Forest BAP: progress towards targets 1998 – 2010



HABITAT QUALITY

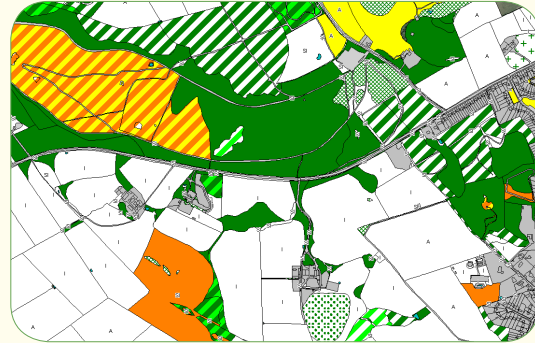
- The quality of habitats is just as important as the quantity, but there are few reliable and consistent datasets for habitat quality (within the Forest or nationwide). One measure is Natural England’s condition data for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In 2010, 63.1% (988ha) of SSSI units in the Forest were in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition³. This is significantly lower than the national average of 95.4%, but it is a poor indicator of wider habitat quality as SSSIs cover just 3% of the Forest area and it is skewed by the lack of improvement in two large sites.

NRP

- The National Forest Company also undertakes periodic ecological surveys at two newly-created Forest sites - Willesley Wood and Sence Valley Forest park. These show that local biodiversity interest has increased considerably between 1998 and 2005/6⁴.

LANDSCAPE-SCALE HABITAT NETWORKS

- The NFC has developed computer modelling techniques to map the connectivity of habitats at a landscape-scale. This informs decisions about habitat creation and management and is helping to achieve the long-term aim of creating a robust network of habitats to allow wildlife species to thrive and adapt to climate change.



SPECIES PROGRESS

- Work continues to enhance habitats to benefit the nine priority species identified in the National Forest BAP. Otters have now returned to every major river in the Forest; waterbodies enhanced for ruddy darter dragonflies has increased by more than 10% since 2007; and nest box programmes continue to support barn owl, redstart and bat species¹. (For full details see the National Forest BAP, 2011).



Redstart



Otter

* ACTION:

- 1) Continue to work with partners and landowners to meet National Forest BAP targets.
- 2) Work with partner organisations to develop joint habitat and species surveys.
- 3) Work with landowners to achieve connected ecological networks, at a landscape-scale, across the Forest.

DATA SOURCES:

- 1) NFC annual BAP monitoring [2010].
- 2) The National Forest Biodiversity Action Plan Audit – Middlemarch Environmental [1998].
- 3) Data from Natural England [2010].
- 4) Willesley Wood and Sence Valley Forest Park ecological surveys - Leicestershire Ecological Records Centre [1998 & 2007].