The Importance of Woodland for Pollinators

Woodlands can be increasingly important for some pollinator species, if managed correctly. This guide highlights why woodlands are important for pollinators and how woodlands can be managed to encourage pollinators

How Pollinators Use Woodlands

- Flower visiting—Woodlands can provide a wide range of flowers between March and October, providing nectar and pollen for many species of pollinators. These not only serve pollinators that might be breeding in a wood but also pollinators from other habitats nearby or even from some distance away.
- Larval development - Woodlands can support a variety of invertebrate breeding and nesting habitats
- Overwintering—the sheltered nature of woodland, and the presence of dead wood, old trees, leaf litter and dense vegetation makes it a valuable habitat for hibernating adult insects such as queen bumblebees, queen social wasps and certain butterflies and hoverflies; also the overwintering larvae, pupae and eggs of resident species. Hibernating adult bees, flies and butterflies are usually the first pollinators to emerge in spring.

Some Scarce Pollinators Known to Occur in Woodlands

Some rare pollinators of woodland (excluding wood pasture specialists)

Bees: *Andrena ferox*, *Eucera longicornis*, *Osmia pilicornis*

Butterflies: Duke of Burgundy, Heath fritillary, Marsh fritillary, Pearl-bordered fritillary, Purple emperor, Wood white

Hoverflies: *Blera fallax*, *Caliprobola speciosa*, *Chalcosyrphus eunotus*, *Cheilosia carbonaria*, *Rhingia rostrata*

Beetles: *Gnorimus nobilis*

The Important Features of woodland and their Management

- Woodland edge—Woodland edge can be much like the margin of a ride or clearing, and the management principles are broadly similar. For pollinators, shady north-facing edges usually have less value than sunny south-facing ones but may become valuable in droughts or hot periods.
- Rides and clearings—These can extend sunny woodland edge into the heart of a wood and for much of the foraging season, these are the main places where pollinator foraging is concentrated. It is important that rides and clearings are sufficiently large and sheltered to provide decently-sized, warm and sunny conditions.
- Coppiced areas—Coppicing can be highly beneficial for pollinators. Newly coppiced areas often produce spring blooms of flowers.
- Dead wood—This is a surprisingly diverse resource that included features associated with dead as well as living trees, this provides foraging and nesting resources for a variety of pollinator species. It is important to encourage both quantity and variety of dead wood, including that which has arisen naturally and any spare wood that has resulted from felling.
- Topography—Even relatively flat woods can feature small-scale topography such as wood banks, exposed root plates of windblown trees, ditches and small pits and quarries. These features can be particularly valuable for ground-nesting bees when they are in warm, sunny and dry locations. Even if topography does not exist, it may be possible to create it during mechanised management activities.
- Hydrology and wet features—Wet woodland and other wet features in woods, including ponds, ditches, seepages and water courses can be very valuable for pollinators. It is important that wet woodland is not drained. Limited tree-felling to create marshy clearings can be beneficial for pollinators but shaded wet woodland is important too, so it is important to encourage both. It is also worth considering whether a new pond or non-draining ditch can be incorporated within a wood that lacks wet features.

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