

LIFE IN AND AROUND AN ANCIENT TREE

ANCIENT TREES ARE HOME TO 2,000 INVERTEBRATE SPECIES ALONE

Lichen are made up of two tiny living things: a fungus and an alga. These benefit from living together. Some are very rare and only found on ancient trees. This Pox lichen is found on the bark of Beech trees where rainwater trickles down.

Tree loving bats use habitat features found in ancient and veteran trees. The Barbastelle bat breeds and hibernates under loose, lifted bark or in natural cracks and cavities.

Rot holes are often filled with rainwater making them ideal places for some hoverfly species to lay their eggs. The larva of the Western wood-vase hoverfly, known as a rat-tailed maggot, feeds on rotting leaves in rot holes until it pupates and emerges as an adult.

Rare specialist fungi such as the Oak polypore feed on the heartwood of trees, providing food for some of our most colourful insects. As the wood decays, tree hollows are formed, providing vital habitat for wildlife.

Blossoming Hawthorn provides an important source of pollen and nectar for many insects such as hoverflies and beetles.

There are hundreds of beetle species that live in deadwood habitats. One of the rarest, the Violet click beetle is found at just 3 sites in England! It lives in the hollows of Ash and Beech trees, feeding on decaying wood which can take an astonishing 100 years to build up.

1. Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) on a decaying tree stump
2. Oak polypore (*Piptoporus quercinus*) growing on exposed heartwood
3. Pox lichen (*Pyrenula nitida*) found growing on a rain track
4. Barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*) roosting behind loose bark
5. Knothole moss (*Zygodon forsteri*) found growing on a rain track
6. Lesser spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) resting by a woodpecker hole
7. Western wood-vase hoverfly (*Myolepta potens*) larva in a rot hole
8. Western wood-vase hoverfly (*Myolepta potens*) adult on Hawthorn blossom
9. Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) an important pollen and nectar source
10. Coral tooth fungus (*Hericius coralloides*) on decaying fallen deadwood
11. Violet click beetle (*Limoniscus violaceus*) living in a tree hollow

ANCIENT TREES ARE HOME TO SOME OF OUR RAREST WILDLIFE; PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT DEPEND UPON DECAYING WOOD AND AGED BARK. AS A TREE GROWS OLD, IT SLOWLY DEVELOPS VALUABLE WILDLIFE HABITAT SUCH AS CRACKS AND CREVICES, DEAD BRANCHES, HOLLOW CAVITIES, ROT HOLES AND LOOSE BARK. MANY CREATURES CAN BE FOUND LIVING IN ANCIENT TREES FROM INVERTEBRATES SUCH AS BEETLES TO BATS AND BIRDS, FUNGI AND LICHEN. THE ILLUSTRATION SHOWS A SCENE OF AN ANCIENT TREE WITH SOME OF OUR RAREST DEADWOOD SPECIES AND THE PARTS OF THE TREE THEY MAKE THEIR HOME.