

WOOD-PASTURE AND PARKLAND

Veteran trees and dead wood are essential to the survival of an array of invertebrates, fungi, lichens and mosses, and provide important natural roosting sites for many bat species. Tree replacement for the long-term future is essential.

UK Priority Habitats covered by this statement:

Wood-pasture and parkland

Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan habitats covered by this statement:

None

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Barton Park @ Stephen Hewitt

Description

Wood-pastures and parkland are the products of historic land management systems. They are a vegetation structure rather than being a particular plant community. Typically this structure consists of large, open-grown or high forest trees (often pollards) at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. They include wood-pastures and parklands derived from wooded commons, medieval deer parks and pastures with trees in them, plus ornamental landscape parks. The oldest trees are usually a range of native species but non-native species may have been planted or naturally regenerated. To be truly ancient a tree needs to be at least 200 years old. Wood-pastures are not only found in the lowlands, but extend into upland areas such as the Lake District and the Howgills.

The ancient veteran trees of wood-pastures and parkland have a distinctive saproxylic invertebrate fauna (which depends on dead or dying wood), and an epiphytic flora (lichens, fungi, mosses and liverworts growing on the trees themselves). Notable insects include a number of wood-boring beetles and flies of sap-runs and rot-holes. Parklands and wood-pasture can also be of interest for bats and birds.

Distribution and Extent

Parkland is largely associated with large country houses and estates, such as Lowther Castle, Levens Park, Holker Hall, Hutton-in-the-Forest, Armathwaite Hall, Corby Castle, Naworth Castle and Muncaster Castle.

Wood-pasture can be found at Gowbarrow Park along Ullswater, Rydal Park, Borrowdale and elsewhere in the Lake District.

Conservation Issues

Parklands and wood-pastures can suffer from a lack of younger generations of trees, which produces a skewed age structure. This leads to breaks in continuity of dead wood habitat and loss of specialised species dependent on this habitat. This lack of continuity is made worse by the isolation and fragmentation of the few remaining parklands/ wood-pasture sites in the landscape.

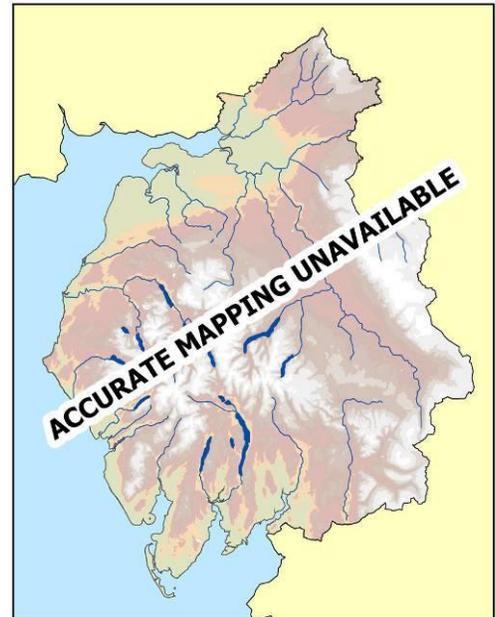
Inappropriate management is often an issue with parklands and wood-pastures. Under-grazing can lead to loss of habitat structure through bracken and scrub invasion; whilst over-grazing may result in bark browsing, soil compaction and loss of nectar plants. Pasture improvement through reseeding, deep ploughing, fertiliser and other chemical treatments, leads variously to tree root damage, loss of nectar-bearing plants, and damage to the soil.

The removal of veteran trees and dead wood for reasons of safety or tidiness where sites have high amenity use, or for forest hygiene can be a significant issue. Neglect, and loss of expertise of traditional tree management techniques (e.g. pollarding) can also lead to trees collapsing or being felled for safety reasons.

In parklands in particular there can be problems with damage to trees and roots from soil compaction and erosion caused by trampling by livestock, people and car parking, and vandalism.

Planning Considerations

- Any development that may impact upon wood-pasture and parkland habitat, or its species interests, would require an assessment of the likely effects on the habitat/species and, as necessary, appropriate protection and mitigation measures.
- The extensive root systems of old and veteran trees can be damaged by developing too close to the trees, or by additional soils being placed over the roots.
- Felling of old trees, or tree limbs, for safety or visual reasons is detrimental to the habitat.
- Fallen/ dying timber, important for wood-eating invertebrates and fungi, should be retained.
- Veteran trees have a high potential to host bat roosts.
- Veteran trees hold strong cultural associations with local communities.
- Most parkland and wood-pasture lies outside the SSSI system in Cumbria. But a small number of sites are designated as SSSIs.



Distribution of wood-pasture & parkland in Cumbria

- Some of the most important parks in landscape and historic terms are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England. This provides some protection to these parks as registration is a material consideration in planning terms.

Enhancement Opportunities

- Veteran trees can be made a feature of developments, provided that suitable care is taken to protect their roots from damage during construction and that the development design provides sufficient long term protection for the trees.

Key Species

The following Key Species could benefit from enhancement of this habitat, or be negatively impacted upon by inappropriate developments on or near this habitat:

Big Blue Pinkgill	Northern Yellow Splinter (a crane fly)	Wood Warbler
Pink Waxcap	Violet Oil-beetle	Natterer's Bat
Date-coloured Waxcap	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Noctule bat
Bearded Tooth (a fungus)	Spotted Flycatcher	Brown Long-eared Bat

Further Information

[Woodland Trust ancient trees web pages](#)

[Woodland Trust ancient tree guides](#)

[Countryside Stewardship Scheme](#)

[Bat Conservation Trust-Buildings, Planning and Development](#)

Contacts

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Current Action in Cumbria

- The Veteran Trees Initiative is a national partnership promoting the conservation of veteran trees.
- The Countryside Stewardship Scheme run by Natural England provides financial incentives to manage land in a way that is sympathetic to its nature conservation interest with specific ancient trees, wood-pasture and parkland options.