

## Introduction

Woodland, for the purposes of this HAP includes Ash Woodland, Oak Woodland and Wet Woodland. This HAP will look at each of these areas individually.

Within England, there is little if any natural woodland left due to centuries of management. Some woods though do have a long history and have stood for many hundreds, if not thousands of years. Because of this they have a unique woodland flora and fauna derived indirectly from the original 'wildwood'. Some woodland species do not readily colonise new woods, even if they have been there for centuries and so only occur on these ancient sites. These are our ancient semi-natural woodlands.

### Our objectives for Woodland are:

To increase the number of woods under favourable management and to increase the resource with new planting;  
To promote their value for nature conservation;  
To restore degraded ancient woodland sites.

Such woodlands are very special and, because they have often survived by chance, they are very rare. In fact less than 0.08% of our remaining woodland is ancient semi-natural. This makes them very important both historically and for nature conservation.

Management has had a strong influence not only on the survival but also on the character of woodland. Originally much woodland would have been managed as coppice for both timber (shipbuilding, house construction etc) and for charcoal. Coppice is where trees and shrubs are regularly cut down and allowed to re-grow, leaving only a few big trees each time.

This has changed in the past few hundred years or so to high forest. High Forest is where there is an even aged, tall woodland canopy with trees grown for straight timber.

A wood though is not just a group of trees; there are many types, each

with a range of plants and animals suited to particular conditions. In Scarborough, these include, amongst others, Ash Woods, Lowland Oak Woods, and Wet woodland.

### Ash Woodland

These occur mainly on lime rich soils and vary depending on whether they are on deep, moist soils or on thinner drier ones. In Scarborough, most of this woodland type will be lowland Ash wood developed on the deeper clay soils. Typically they would have Ash and English Oak as dominant canopy trees, with Hazel dominating the underwood. Other species would include Field Maple, Wych Elm, Cherry, Limes, Sallows and Spindle amongst many others. They support a rich ground flora often dominated by Dogs Mercury, with Dog Violet, Goldilocks (a woodland buttercup distinguished by having odd numbers of petals), Early Purple Orchid, Giant Bellflower, Primrose and, more rarely Herb Paris, Baneberry and Wood Spurge.

### Oak Woodland

These tend to grow on more neutral to acid sites and can range from heavy wet clays to drier, lighter sandy soils. Again they are dominated by Ash to a greater or lesser extent and Oak, but Sessile Oak or Sessile/English Oak hybrids are much more in evidence (English Oak has stalked acorns and unstalked leaves, whilst Sessile Oak has unstalked acorns and stalked leaves). Other trees include Elm, Limes etc but on the more acid sites, Birch, Rowan and Holly increase and Hazel disappears. The ground flora is often dominated by Bluebells, Bramble, Honeysuckle and Wood Anemone. More rarely species such as Chickweed Wintergreen occur. On more acid sites, the ground vegetation can be sparse being limited to Wavy Hair Grass, Woodrush, Bracken, Bilberry, Wood Sage, Hard Fern and Buckler Fern.

### Wet Woodland

As the name suggests, these are the very wet woodlands found where soils are waterlogged. Such woods are dominated by Alder, Downy Birch and Willows, with Hazel, Guelder Rose, Oak, Hawthorn and Blackthorn occurring, depending on the conditions. Very often they can appear to be scrubby in character with smaller, multi-stemmed trees rather than tall woodland. They can also have a complex and rich flora and fauna associated with them varying from Sphagnum moss to Stinging Nettle, Sedges and Common Reed and can include such species as Marsh Marigold, Marsh Hawksbeard, Marsh Cinquefoil, Water Avens and Yellow Flag.

## Woodland



Above: Woodland in Spring .

Below: Ash Woodland  
(Photographs by Graham Megson)



### Links to Habitat and Species Action Plans and Guidance Notes.

Priority habitats and species associated with this HAP:

**Bats, Otter, Rare Flowers incl. Baneberry, Woodcock, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Chickweed, Wintergreen, Song Thrush, Bullfinch and Spotted Flycatcher**

Action Plans have been prepared for those in bold.

## Woodland Sites in Scarborough

Ash/Maple - 15 sites

Oak - 13 sites

Upland Oak/Bracken - 3 sites

Wet Woodland - 10 sites

### What you can do to help:

**Enjoy woodland flowers and fungi without picking them.**

**Leave fallen timber to decay rather than burning it.**

**Try and keep to paths.**

Because of their nature, wet woodland rarely forms extensive stands, mainly occurring as small patches within other woodland types where the conditions favour them, for instance around springs and flushes or along streamsides. The Vale of Pickering would once have had extensive stands of this type.

Associated with all semi-natural woodland types is a rich invertebrate and bird fauna. The structure of woodland is important in this and features that are especially valuable besides a diverse structure are the number of mature/senescent trees, the extent of dead and decaying timber, clearings, flushes, streamsides, silt areas etc.

### The Resource

In Britain as a whole only 0.08% of woodland is ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland, with Yorkshire and Humberside having 6.5% of the national total. Regionally there is thought to be some 436 ha of wet woodland.

Although the region and Scarborough Borough has a reasonably extensive and diverse woodland community, within the Local Plan area it is much more limited. Areas such as the Wolds and the Vale of Pickering are effectively devoid of any ancient woodland and what is present is essentially recent plantation and degraded in nature. The main areas of significant woodland occur on the fringes of the North York Moors. Here they tend to be concentrated on the sides of valleys that have been difficult to use for any other purpose.

This is especially the case around Whitby, which has some of the best woodlands within the plan area. In particular the Larpool and Cockmill Woods have a diverse flora including woodland on the banks of the tidal Esk. This has a saline influence including species such as Hemlock Water Dropwort.

Within designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), however, there are only some 200ha of deciduous wood. The majority of this though is secondary woodland within other SINC sites; only 10 sites have been designated primarily for their woodland interest. These cover about 63.5ha but only 5 sites covering perhaps 24.5ha could be considered significant ancient semi-natural woodland. This is mainly Ash/Oak woodland with small areas of wet woodland. Information on

the native woodland resource though is very sketchy and difficult to interpret and much in need of updating.

In the Wolds there are no woodland sites designated as SINCs although there is one SSSI. This is mainly a secondary woodland of interest for one plant species. There are no woodland SSSIs within the plan area.

In the Vale of Pickering, the extent is very limited and of the once extensive wet woodland tracts, none have survived. Its paucity now is due entirely to past drainage and agricultural improvement. Where they do occur, it is mainly because the conditions are such that the possibility of agricultural use is limited or has been abandoned. The only known sites that are of any significance are at Fox Covert and Wykeham, which have areas of Birch and Alder with Common Reed in the field layer.

### Threats

In general, threats to remaining ancient woodland are much reduced, with the Forestry Commission (FC) exerting stricter controls on the felling and management of woodland. There is, however, still some threat to native woodland sites from inappropriate or changed management practices and from replanting ancient woodland sites. One particular problem can be balancing the needs of health and safety in managing or removing old trees, particularly those with cavities in, and their value for nature conservation.

A particular problem for certain woodland types is the spread of invasive alien species, notably in acid woodlands, Rhododendron in wet woodlands, and Himalayan Balsam in wet woodlands. These can both spread very aggressively and dominate the field or shrub layer.

Drainage can also be a problem with wet woodlands and for wet woodland mosaics within larger woodlands. Here the pressure to provide conditions for more productive species can lead to drainage that can have a direct effect on the extent of wet woodland. Scrub clearance of willow can also be a problem although it is not thought to be significant. Such work does not necessarily require licensing.

A further threat, at least to Alder, is the spread of Alder Root disease, a disease that could be as disastrous as Dutch Elm disease was. Such die back of a particular species has a knock on effect to the insects that are reliant on them.

Sudden Oak Death is another fungal disease to watch out for.

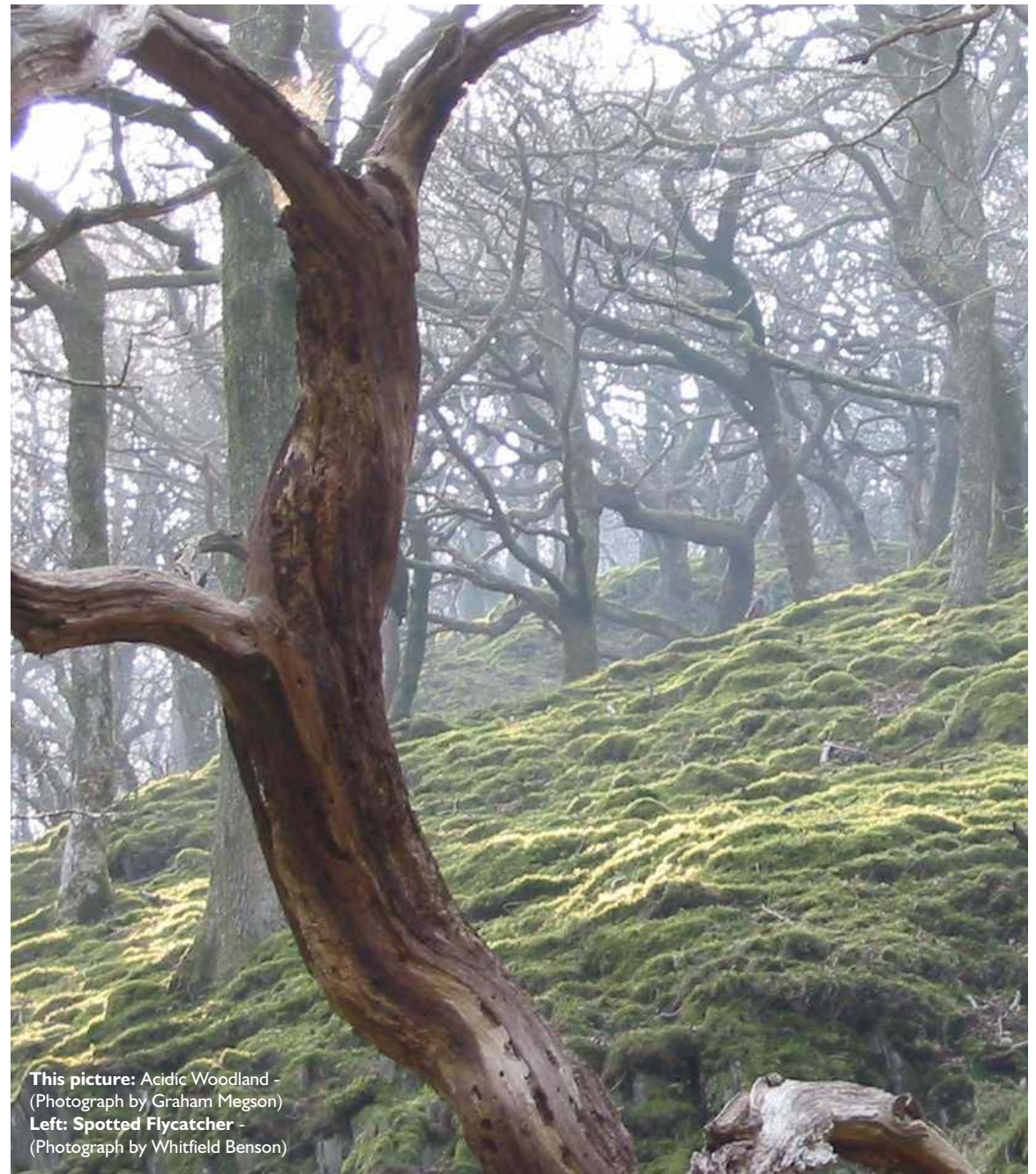
## Potential for Enhancement

Aside from the remaining semi-natural sites, there is always room for enhancing a woodland site. These include:

- Management to encourage a diverse structure;
- Leaving some over mature trees;
- Providing bat boxes/ bird boxes if no suitable sites are available;
- The re-establishment of coppicing; and
- Creating diversity of habitat by leaving fallen and standing dead wood, managing rides, maintaining wet hollows, ditches etc.

## Current Action

- The FC regulates timber harvesting through felling licences;
- A UKBAP action plan has been produced for Wet Woodland;
- The FC offers advice;
- Woodland planting, management and conservation is encouraged by Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and Woodland Improvement Grants Scheme (WIGS) available from FC;
- Woodland planting and conservation is encouraged by Agri-Environmental schemes; and
- Woodland advisory companies secure planting schemes using FC grant aid.



This picture: Acidic Woodland -  
(Photograph by Graham Megson)  
Left: Spotted Flycatcher -  
(Photograph by Whitfield Benson)