

'Trees ... will teach you that which you can never learn from masters.'

St. Bernard 1090-1153

The specialness of Shotover's woodlands

Woodlands are one of the most precious and valued places that people can go to 'get away from it all'.

A wood nurtures the spirit, calms the mind and helps you feel close to nature. Simply 'being in woodland' can (and does) have a profound effect on many people.

Shotover's woodlands are full of wildlife, and you can see this for yourself on a sunny day in spring or summer. On entering the wood you might be greeted with a cacophony of birdsong, the glimpse of a squirrel or even a fox or deer. Further into the wood you may come across butterflies chasing each other along the sunlit paths or a bumblebee searching for nectar among the woodland flowers.

Shotover's woodlands can feel surprisingly wild and un-tamed because of their abundance of old trees and undisturbed habitats; but for the exceptionally rich wildlife to survive woodlands need to be sensitively managed to ensure the plants and animals have the right conditions to thrive.

Woodland ecology

Shotover Wildlife's woodland ecology work brings together the knowledge, skills, and experience of naturalists to increase our understanding of the ecology of Shotover's woodlands, both on the hill and on the lower slopes. We take an integrated approach to woodland ecology, incorporating information and data for as many species groups and niche

habitats as possible including flowers, mosses, fungi, dead wood, veteran trees, butterflies and other insects.

Wildlife management carried out by Shotover Wildlife in the SSSI (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) has been based on our sound knowledge of the reserve.

Through survey work, study and research it has been established that the woodlands are important for some particularly special species, a number of which are extremely rare. Shotover Wildlife is working to ensure these species and their habitats are fully understood.



There are 4 types of woodland at Shotover: Ancient woodland, secondary woodland, scrub, and plantation, and all have their place in the contribution they make to the diversity of Shotover.

Ancient woodland. The definition of ancient woodland is that there has been woodland on the same site since at least 1600.

The trees themselves are not necessarily ancient though. It is the woodland *habitat* that is ancient, i.e. the soils, archaeological features, boundaries, and the presence of particular plants and other wildlife.

Ancient woods support long-established woodland flora and fauna including 'Ancient

Woodland Indicator' species. These plants and animals find it difficult to colonise new places.

Conservation Action Plan

A Conservation Action Plan for Brasenose Wood has been produced by Shotover Wildlife which focuses on coppice, rides, diversity of woodland structure (including ponds), dead wood, and veteran trees.

Coppice. Traditional coppice is where the stems of shrubs (usually Hazel) are cut or 'coppiced' close to the ground. Nature's response to the cutting is to sprout new shoots from the base or 'stool'. Traditionally these straight sticks were used for making wood products such as hurdle fences.

Brasenose Wood is predominantly Oak trees with Hazel shrubs between. The wood is divided into blocks called 'coupes' which are coppiced on a rotation. This allows light to reach the woodland floor and stimulates a new flush of spring flowers and the wildlife they support.

Eventually, as the coppiced shoots mature, the shade increases and reduces the light level once more and the spring flowers begin to recede until the next time the Hazel is coppiced.

The coppicing cycle contributes to the woodland's diversity of wildlife. However, some areas of the wood are left entirely un-managed as some species require an undisturbed habitat.

Rides. Some of the rides (paths) have been widened and new sunny glades created to provide enhanced conditions for butterflies, other insects and wild flowers.

Secondary woodland is a habitat that has developed more recently. Much of Shotover's secondary woodland (such as on Shotover Hill) has gradually increased since Shotover was farmed back in the mid 20th century (Westhill Farm and Brasenose Farm).

Survey work by Shotover Wildlife has established that the secondary woodland has become an important habitat in its own right, supporting vulnerable birds and other wildlife.

Scrub woodland is young woody vegetation which has developed where previous management has ceased. If left to mature it would become woodland. At Shotover it consists mostly of gorse, elder, hawthorn and blackthorn. Scrub is often seen as 'taking over', and something to be removed. However, scrub has its place, and at Shotover only needs to be controlled when it is out of balance with other habitats or when necessary to maintain it at a particular stage of development for the wildlife it supports.

Plantation woodland. Planted trees are found in Slade Camp Field and small areas on Shotover Hill. They include native Field Maple and Cherry as well as exotic species such as Hickory. Tree planting is no longer appropriate in a reserve such as Shotover but existing plantations need to be managed as part of the overall woodland ecology.

Lichens, fungi and mosses of the woodland.



Woodland is the natural home of lichens, fungi and mosses. These organisms fulfil a most important role in

woodland ecology by supporting the bottom of nature's food chain, providing food, shelter, and moisture for many thousands of tiny creatures that in turn, become the food of larger animals.

The importance of dead wood.

Fallen and standing dead trees are a vital part of the woodland's ecology. As the tree slowly rots down it provides the conditions for a huge range of wildlife as well as the crucial function of nutrient re-cycling for new growth.

Without dead wood (lying or standing) the woodland would be deprived of one of its most essential contributions to biodiversity.

Shotover Wildlife is an independent voluntary organization founded to research and communicate the importance of Shotover Hill for wildlife

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WOODLAND ECOLOGY on SHOTOVER

