

Dartmoor Wet Woodland Project

The Dartmoor Wet Woodland Project will be targeting specific valleys which already contain wet woodland. It will look for opportunities to help owners and farmers enhance, extend and join up existing areas within the valley system.

What needs to be done?

The aims of wet woodland conservation are fairly straight forward:

- protect existing wet woodland;
- allow extension of existing wet woodland where this does not encroach on other important habitats;
- link separate areas wherever possible;
- encourage water retention;
- control (alien) invasive plants.

Frequently, little or no intervention is needed where wet woodland already exists, except to protect it. Fencing livestock out of the wood is beneficial where poaching is causing problems. Fencing off an adjacent damp field corner, to enable the woodland to spread naturally and blocking drains to hold water within the woodland will also be beneficial. (Don't dam natural waterways running through the woodland, as this may have negative effects downstream and cause other problems.)

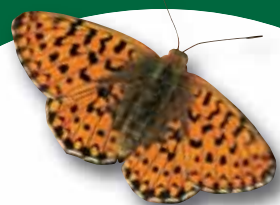
Action for Wildlife Partnership

The Action for Wildlife Partnership has been working since 2001 to help people who live and work within Dartmoor National Park to take practical action to benefit Dartmoor's wildlife, in particular key habitats and species from Action for Wildlife: the Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan.

Further Information

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Images on red pages: Willow flowers © DNPA ;
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Woodland event © DNPA



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Action for Wildlife
Partnership

Dartmoor Wet Woodland Project

Cover photograph: Wet woodland © R.Knott 1178naturalenvironment/actionforwildlifewetwoodlandsleaflet/10/08/mac

Wet woodland has its own special character, usually dominated by willow trees, with alder in more mature, wetter stands. Ferns and sedges are frequent and mosses and liverworts are everywhere. Because they are wet underfoot (and often overfoot), wet woodlands are usually avoided by people, giving them an aura of being primeval or mysterious.

Wet woodland will often be part of a mosaic of valuable wildlife habitats found within a valley system. Wet woodlands are usually small parcels of land, so are very vulnerable to loss through clearance or drainage.

Wet woodland is a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan because of losses in its extent.

Dartmoor's wet woodlands

Dartmoor has about 800 known areas of wet woodland but all of these together add up to only 462 hectares (1,150 acres), less than 5% of the woodland on Dartmoor. Most are tiny, some as little as 0.1 hectare (1/4 acre) in size.

On Dartmoor it is often a recent habitat found alongside other wet habitats. Because of its transient nature and tendency to occur in small pockets, its loss can easily be overlooked.

Dartmoor's Wet Woodlands

The impressive royal fern can grow up to 2 metres tall © DNPA

Advice and support

Action for Wildlife staff will be on hand to provide habitat advice and liaise with partners to facilitate and support project work.

For example, where the woodland is in an agri-environment scheme, or in a target area, Natural England may be able to provide funding and support. Where watercourses are involved, or land drainage issues arise, the Environment Agency will be able to offer advice and support as these activities may require consent.

Dartmoor National Park Authority can provide habitat assessment, management advice and assistance with establishing new wet woodland.

The rarely seen lunar hornet moth is dependent on willow © John Walters



Willow warblers are now in decline



© Environment Agency

What's important about wet woodland?

Wet woodland provides habitat for many characteristic plants including golden-leaved saxifrage, greater tussock sedge and ferns such as royal fern. Other important species include otters, declining birds such as lesser redpolls and willow warblers and many specialist invertebrates.

Wet woodland can also help raise water quality and prevent flooding.

Otters frequently use this undisturbed habitat © Laurie Campbell

