

## Dartmoor Habitat Action Plan for Field Boundaries and Isolated Trees

This plan addresses the action necessary to conserve wildlife that thrives in Dartmoor's hedgerows and hedgerow trees, hedge banks, stone walls and isolated trees. On Dartmoor, some boundaries can clearly be identified as part of the reave system, the field banks of our Bronze Age ancestors some 3,500 years ago. Field boundaries are a living part of our history.



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*Old ash pollards near Holne*

Over 600 flowering plants, 1,500 insects, 65 birds and 20 mammals have been recorded as living or feeding in hedgerows. The sheer extent of the habitat, particularly in rural areas like Dartmoor, means that it is of great importance for the survival of many species. The variety of trees and shrubs found in Dartmoor's field boundaries are a characteristic feature, and often confirm the age of the boundary in the landscape. Species-rich hedgerows are the most valuable to wildlife (see definition in Appendix 1) and are used by rare species such as cirl bunting and the greater horseshoe bat, as well as rapidly declining species such as the brown hairstreak butterfly, dormouse and song thrush. Primrose, early purple orchid and bluebell are amongst the most characteristic plants of hedge banks, which support a wide range of wildlife such as the Red Data Book Little Robin (*Geranium purpureum*), and provide nest sites for birds, including the redstart which is largely restricted to western counties of England.

Numerous stone walls which enclose fields on the edge of the moorland provide a substrate for a large variety of mosses, lichens and ferns (see separate Action Plan), and shelter for nesting birds (eg. wheatear) and over-wintering amphibians.

Isolated trees have an open growth form, often living to a great age and bearing many cavities, which provide habitat for wildlife. These trees often support a rich community of lichens, and epiphytic plants such as polypody fern, pennywort and luxuriant mosses. In this form, the trees are referred to as veterans (see definition in Appendix 2). The conservation of the trees and their lichens is addressed in this plan, but the reader should also refer to the Woodland, and the Mosses, Lichens and Ferns Species Action Plans.

The dormouse and bats have their own action plans and the cirl bunting is included in the Hay Meadows and Species-rich Grasslands Action Plan.

A fuller description of the wildlife interest of field boundaries and isolated trees can be found in *The Nature of Dartmoor: A Biodiversity Profile* (2001).

## Distribution Map

It is not possible to produce a map of all these features, due to the sheer number and extent of boundaries and the lack of information on isolated trees.

## Definitions

### 'SPECIES-RICH HEDGE'

Species-rich hedges are those, which support one or more of the following:

- an average of five or more native woody species in a 30 metre length;
- in whole or in part, support the life-cycle of one or more of the following key species: dormouse, greater horseshoe bat, cirl bunting, small eggar moth, Devon carpet moth, brown hairstreak butterfly, Plymouth pear, Devon whitebeam, wild service tree, small-leaved lime, purple ramping fumitory, balm-leaved figwort, bastard balm or hay-scented fern;
- contain any species included within Section 6 (3) of Schedule 1 of the *Hedgerow Regulations 1997*, effectively specially-protected birds, mammals and plants, and Red Data Book insects, other invertebrates and vascular plants;
- have at least six non-woody flowering plants or ferns which are typical of woodland e.g. primrose, bluebell.

### 'VETERAN TREE'

*The Veteran Tree Good Management Guide* defines the term by three guiding principles :

- trees of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of their age;
- trees in the ancient stage of their life;
- trees that are old relative to others of the same species.



*Interlinking field boundaries - Saddle Tor and Rippon Tor*

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## Field Boundaries and Isolated Trees Key Conservation Objectives and Targets

### Field Boundaries and Isolated Trees Objectives

#### Objective 1

*Halt further loss of species-rich hedges and hedge banks, and of stone walls, through neglect or removal.*

##### Dartmoor targets

- A** Retain all existing species-rich hedges and hedge banks.
- B** Maintain no net loss of other hedges, hedge banks and stone walls within agri-environment agreements.

#### Objective 2

*Achieve favourable management of all species-rich hedges by highlighting the problem of neglect or poor management and through provision of advice and financial incentives, as appropriate.*

##### Dartmoor target

- A** By 2008 design and initiate a programme of hedgerow workshops for farmers and other land managers to highlight the problem of neglect and poor management and provide advice and training where needed.

#### Objective 3

*Maintain overall numbers of isolated, veteran and hedgerow trees at least at current levels, through ensuring a balanced age structure.*

##### Dartmoor targets

- A** Continue the veteran tree surveys on a parish basis with the local communities, initiating coverage of a further 5 parishes by 2011.
- B** All veterans identified through the parish survey and other means to be available on a database by 2011.
- C** Maintain identified veterans, isolated and hedgerow trees through provision of advice and agri-environment agreements.
- D** Identify and manage suitable replacement trees in the immediate vicinity of veteran trees, and plant new hedgerows and isolated trees where necessary.

#### Objective 4

*Maintain and, if possible, increase the populations of woodlarks, ciril buntings and greater horseshoe bats within Dartmoor.*

See Hay Meadows and Species-rich Grasslands Action Plan (for woodlarks and ciril buntings) and Bat Action Plan (for greater horseshoe bats).

## Actions for Field Boundaries and Isolated Trees

Monitoring responsibility: Natural England

| Action   | Meets Objective/ Target | Deliverer |                 | Complete by |      |      |      |          | Date achieved |
|--|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|------|------|------|----------|---------------|
|  |                         | Lead      | Partners        | 2007        | 2008 | 2011 | 2016 | On-going |               |
|  |                         |           |                 |             |      |      |      |          |               |
| <b>Policy and Legislation</b>  |                         |           |                 |             |      |      |      |          |               |
| Implement and enforce the <i>Hedgerow Regulations</i>  | 1A, B                   | DNPA      | DHG             |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |
| Support the Devon Hedge Group, as the county forum promoting hedge conservation and practical skills retention     | 1A,1B, 3C, 2A           | DNPA, NE  | All             |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |
| Seek more resources from Government for boundary management  | 1A,1B                   | NE        | DNPA, ANPA, DHG |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |
| Provide adequate incentives for boundary maintenance, enhancement and restoration through agri-environment schemes | 1, 3C                   | NE        | DHG, All        |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |
| <b>Habitat Management</b>  |                         |           |                 |             |      |      |      |          |               |
| Retain all existing species-rich hedges and hedgebanks   | 1, 2A                   | All       |                 |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |
| Encourage retention of veteran, hedgerow and isolated trees  | 3C                      | DNPA      | FWAG            |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |
| Identify and manage suitable replacement trees in the immediate vicinity of veterans                               | 3D                      | DNPA      |                 |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |
| Encourage planting of new species-rich hedgerows and isolated trees where necessary                                | 3D                      | DNPA      |                 |             |      |      |      |          | ●             |

(cont.)

## Actions for Field Boundaries and Isolated Trees on Dartmoor (cont.)

| Action  | Meets Objective/ Target | Deliverer  |                                  | Complete by |      |      |      |          | Date achieved |  |
|---|-------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|------|------|------|----------|---------------|--|
|   |                         | Lead       | Partners                         | 2007        | 2008 | 2011 | 2016 | On-going |               |  |
| <b>Advisory</b>   |                         |            |                                  |             |      |      |      |          |               |  |
| Provide a programme of hedgerow workshops for farmers, contractors and decision makers to highlight neglect and poor management | 1, 2A                   | DNPA, DRST | FWAG, D HG, LANTRA, NE, NFU, CLA |             | ●    |      |      |          |               |  |
| Provide management advice and training where needed   | 2A                      | DNPA       |                                  |             |      |      |      | ●        |               |  |
| Share best practice in the implementation of the <i>Hedgerow Regulations</i>  | 1                       | DNPA       | DHG                              |             |      |      |      | ●        |               |  |
| <b>Research and Monitoring</b>  |                         |            |                                  |             |      |      |      |          |               |  |
| Extend the veteran tree surveys to a further five parishes  | 3A                      | DNPA       | Parish Councils, DCC, DHG        |             |      | ●    |      |          |               |  |
| Create a GIS database of veteran trees on Dartmoor  | 3B                      | DNPA       |                                  |             |      | ●    |      |          |               |  |

### Abbreviations used in this table:

ANPA - Association of National Park Authorities, CA - Countryside Agency, CLA - Country Landowners' Association, DCC - Devon County Council, DHG - Devon Hedge Group, DNPA - Dartmoor National Park Authority, DRST - Devon Rural Skills Trust, DWT - Devon Wildlife Trust, NE - Natural England, FWAG - Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Lantra - The Sector Skills Council for the Environment and Land-based Sector, Defra - Department for Environment, Food & Rural affairs, NFU - National Farmers Union, RA - Rural Action for the Environment

