

Living Heritage



WOODLAND
TRUST

The Woodland Trust legacy newsletter No. 9, Spring 2008

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This is the second of our regular series looking at rare and endangered species in our legacy woods (woods acquired or maintained with legacies left to the Woodland Trust).

These articles demonstrate how a legacy gifted to the Trust not only helps to safeguard our native woodland but also supports the thousands of species which rely on those woods, especially those most vulnerable to changes in environment and habitat.

This year we are focusing on birds under threat, some of which were, until fairly recently, a common sight in the countryside. The population status of the UK's 247 wild bird species was reviewed recently by a partnership of conservation organisations. They placed each species onto one of three lists – red, amber or green – depending on how threatened they are. Forty species are on the red list, i.e. the most threatened, 121 are amber-listed, and 86 are green-listed.

Our article features a few of the Red Listed species which can be found at our legacy sites and are thereby benefiting directly from legacies left to the Trust. And it's not all bad news, as you will see!

The black grouse – declining fast



The male black grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*), or 'blackcock', is about the size of a hen, with black plumage and white under-tail coverts. The female is slightly smaller with mottled grey-brown plumage, and both sexes have a red patch called a 'wattle' above each eye. Adults feed on berries and seeds, and the buds and shoots of trees and shrubs, whilst young chicks feed on insects.

Blackcocks participate in fascinating territorial and breeding displays in an open area of ground or arena known as a lek, the females selecting the most impressive males to mate with.

The birds are found on moorland edges where moor meets grassy fields; in areas of scrubby willow; and in birch and conifer woodland. Though not classed as woodland birds, they represent the diverse wildlife that is increasingly coming under our care as the Trust takes on more landscape-scale sites such as Glen Finglas (our largest legacy site), where semi-natural woodland, scattered veteran trees, heath and grassland form a mosaic of habitats around mountain and loch.

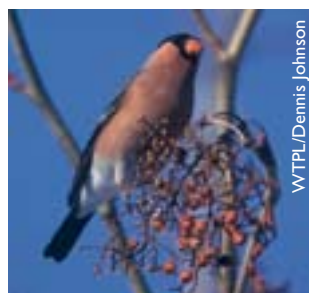
The black grouse is one of the fastest declining birds in the UK, largely owing to changes in land use, and is now mainly confined to the uplands of Scotland, with a few surviving strongholds in areas of Wales and the North of England. Many landowners, managers and conservation organisations are now working together to aid the birds' recovery and there is still hope that the overall downward trend can be reversed.

To attract a mate during lekking, blackcocks give a strange rhythmic call interspersed with a sneeze-like call!

Bullfinch – no longer in the pink?

The male bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) is unmistakable with his bright pinkish-red breast and cheeks, grey back, black cap and tail, and bright white rump; whereas the female has a brown breast. Bullfinch's are around 15cm in length and can be found in woodlands, orchards and hedgerows, but particularly woodland edges.

Sadly, there has been a steep and rapid decline in the breeding population – more than 50% – over the last 25 years. One of the causes is likely to be



Willow tit and marsh tit –

brothers in adversity



Both of these tits are endangered – the marsh tit (*Parus palustris*) having declined by 50% in the last 25 years, and the willow tit (*Parus montanus*) by 80%. The willow tit is so similar to the marsh tit that it wasn't recognised as a separate species until 1897. Unlike the marsh tit, however, it excavates its own nest hole in rotten tree stumps and so has developed a strong head and thicker neck. It also has a more untidy black bib and, usually, a pale panel in the wing.

Both species eat insects and seeds, though the willow tit's diet also includes berries; but their choice of habitat varies – with the willow tit preferring willow thickets in damp places and the marsh tit choosing deciduous woodland, copses, parks and gardens.

The willow tit hunts for food in the lower levels of vegetation but rarely lands on the ground.

Both species can be found in a number of legacy woods including Hardwick Wood in Devon and Hackfall in North Yorkshire.

the removal of farmland trees and hedgerows, and a reduction in the quality of remaining hedges due to frequent trimming. This leads to the loss of nesting habitat, particularly hedges and thickets, and the loss of food sources (buds, seeds and fruits).

Bullfinches can be found in at least 14 of our legacy woods, including Wormley Wood in Hertfordshire and New Pale Wood in Lancashire.

ies in our legacy woods

Red kite – now flying high



David Hutton

Red kites (*Milvus milvus*) are a chestnut red with striking white patches under their wings, a whitish head, and long, deeply forked red tails. Adults vary

in size between 61 and 66cm in body length and weigh 0.7 - 1kg. They prefer deciduous woodland and areas with scattered trees, and feed mainly on carrion, small mammals such as rabbits, and invertebrates.

In the 16th century they had been common scavengers of the streets, but by the 19th century they had been persecuted virtually to extinction, with just one pair

still successfully breeding in Mid Wales around the 1930s. Yet today there are 430 breeding pairs in Britain, thanks to the efforts of a few far-sighted conservationists who worked tirelessly to protect nests from egg thieves and started a re-introduction programme. However, it remains one of the relatively small number of birds of prey on the IUCN* Red list of endangered species.

They have been seen above a small but growing number of our legacy woods, including Skipton Woods in North Yorkshire, and Big Round Green in Buckinghamshire.

The red kite has a wingspan of nearly two metres and is able to stay in the air for many hours with hardly a beat of its wings.

Song thrush – growing quieter?

The song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) is a familiar and popular songbird whose numbers are seriously declining. Until 1940, they out-numbered blackbirds, but in the last 30 years that situation has been reversed, with their numbers reduced by half.

Smaller than a blackbird at around 23 cm, its habit of repeating song phrases

distinguishes it vocally from blackbirds. It can be found in woods, hedgerows, parks and gardens across the UK – wherever there are bushes and trees – and it feeds on worms, snails, fruit and insects.

The song thrush's song is usually the last to be heard before the woods go dark.

Evidence suggests that its decline is due to intensive agriculture, woodland degradation and agricultural drainage, and these main threats continue.

However, the latest surveys do suggest that song thrush numbers are starting to increase; and a species action plan – in which conservationists backed by the government work with and advise local landowners and farmers on adopting more sensitive farming practices – is having some success.

The song thrush can be found in at least 12 legacy woods including Trenant Wood in Cornwall and Wentwood in Monmouthshire.



Colin Vardell

◀ *Bullfinches carry insects and snails to their young nestlings in two pouches in their mouth.*



WTFPL/Maurice Walker

Lesser spotted woodpecker –

taking a hammering

The lesser spotted woodpecker (*Picoides minor*) is, at around 14cm, the smallest and least common of the three woodpeckers that are resident in Britain. They have barred wings and back, with the male distinguished by a red crown and the female by a pale creamy one.

These attractive birds can be found in open woods, copses, parkland, gardens and orchards, and the best time to look for them is in spring when they are active and most likely to 'drum'. They eat wood-boring insects, larvae and spiders, which they catch on their long tongue, as well as nuts and berries in the winter.

The population of lesser spotted woodpeckers has declined by 73% in the last 25 years but the reason is unclear. The British Trust for Ornithology has several theories including: competition with great spotted woodpeckers; reduction in dead wood suitable for foraging; loss of mature broadleaved woodland and non-woodland trees such as elms; and woodland fragmentation.

'Drumming' is done by the woodpecker to declare territory, not to make a hole, and the lesser spotted can drum 14 – 15 blows a second!

The lesser spotted woodpecker can be seen in legacy woods such as Beaulieu in Monmouthshire, and Milton in Stirling.

* Find out more at: www.iucnredlist.org

Mary Watkins

As many of you will know, the late Kenneth Watkins OBE founded the Woodland Trust in 1972 with a small group of like-minded individuals. His wife Mary was one of its staunchest supporters, often accompanying him on his many forays into the countryside as he looked for suitable woods to rescue and restore. She even designed the first Woodland Trust logo at their kitchen table. Sadly, Mary died last year, but the substantial legacy she has left the Trust will play its own part in shaping our woodland future.

Mary's love of woodland started long before she even met Kenneth. As her younger sister, Audrey, recalls, it was childhood visits to Delamere Forest in Cheshire that awakened Mary's life-long interest. She talked about those visits long after her return home, capturing her memories in drawings. Mary carried on drawing and painting throughout her life and the lovely picture below shows just how talented she was.

Before the war, Mary had intended to train as a primary school teacher, but when the war began she volunteered to work as a land girl, initially as a Timber Jill, then later as a farm girl. This led to a real interest in farming, and in 1946, Mary enrolled in the Moulton Agricultural Institute where she came first in the final exams. Whilst there she became firm friends with fellow student, Patricia Le Fanu, and after leaving Moulton they worked together for a year on a dairy farm in Hampshire before buying a farm at Harford on the edge of Dartmoor. Conditions in the early days were pretty basic, with no electricity



Kenneth and Mary Watkins on their wedding day

or running water. Eventually, however, Mary – who was a water-diviner – found an underground spring, and a reservoir was made and water piped to the farm.

Just a few minutes walk from the farm lived brothers Kenneth and Leon Watkins who shared a house. In the fullness of time, Pat married Leon and Mary married Kenneth (see photo). So the two friends became Sisters in Law, and Kenneth and Mary started on a marriage partnership that would encompass many interests and achievements, not least the birth of the Woodland Trust!



Dead thistle, 1969

Photo courtesy of Audrey Clayton
Drawing by Mary Watkins

Did you know that Kenneth Watkins was a racing driver in the late 40s and early 50s, and came 5th in the 1949 British Grand Prix at Silverstone driving a Cooper Mark III?

ADVICE COLUMN

Q *I will be leaving a substantial legacy to the Woodland Trust in my will. Would the Woodland Trust be willing to act as an executor and if so, what do I need to do?*

A Yes, we would be happy to act as an executor of your will. All you need to do is to ensure that your solicitor includes our full name and address (The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Dysart Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL), as well as our registered charity number (294344). We would be grateful if you would let us know if the Woodland Trust has been appointed as your executor.

Q *I would like to leave a legacy to the Woodland Trust to create a new wood at the edge of my town. Would that be possible?*

A Unfortunately, the more you restrict your wishes, the more difficult it becomes for us to fulfil them, especially as the legacy may be decades in the future. For instance, creating a new wood at the edge of your town might be quite impossible because of land cost and availability, so the likelihood is that your legacy could not be used, as instructed.

This is particularly sad if you would have been quite happy for woodland to be created in, say, the general area of the country rather than specifically on the town edge. Of course, an unrestricted legacy avoids these problems altogether as it allows the Woodland Trust to decide how best to utilise the legacy and gives us the ability to respond quickly to a threat to woodland, or to an opportunity.

Q *I want to leave a monetary legacy to the Trust but I'm not sure whether to state a specific amount or a percentage.*

A If you state an amount of money, you might want to ask your solicitor to index-link it so that the value doesn't change over the years. The advantage of a stated amount is that you know exactly what you are giving, but the disadvantage is that it doesn't keep abreast of changes in your estate. A percentage will take account of fluctuations in the value of your estate – both up and down – and is often an easier way of sharing out the estate, especially if you have lots of beneficiaries. Your solicitor will advise you, according to your circumstances.

Helen Billing
Senior Legal Officer

Love blossomed in a pig sty!

Lewis and Margaret Trump found out about woodland dedication when they contacted the Trust to discuss leaving us a legacy in their wills and were inspired to dedicate a woodland grove to each other: 'while we are still around to see it'.



Lewis and Margaret Trump with Michelle Byrne

They first met in 1966 at a Rugby Club dance at Trebarfoote Manor, North Cornwall, on the edge of Trebarfoote Wood, where their eyes locked across a crowded pig sty, which fortunately had been cleaned and was being used as a bar for the occasion!

To discuss their legacies, and to find the perfect spot for their bench, they met up with local Regional Development Officer, Michelle Byrne, and Senior Woodland Officer, Malcolm Allen. The photo shows Lewis and Margaret with Michelle on their newly installed bench, overlooking a meadow in the middle of the wood, where the occasion was toasted with a flask of tea and saffron cake.

"It was a beautiful day and the bench looked absolutely right. What better place to have our memorial than Trebarfoote Wood where we have such fond memories of the start of our life together."

For information on woodland dedication, please see enclosed booklet or visit www.dedicatetrees.com

Competition

WIN AN FSC* HAND-CRAFTED OAK BENCH FOR YOUR GARDEN



Chiddingstone bench

Enter our competition below and you could be the lucky winner of a Chiddingstone bench** – delivered direct to your home. We will also be giving away a free wild flower identification swatch to the first 2,000 correct entries we receive – so don't delay!

Just write the answers to the following questions on a postcard, complete the tie-breaker and send to our Grantham address (see back page), marked **LH COMPETITION**. Don't forget to include your name, address and/or membership number! The questions all relate to items in this magazine.

Q. 1: What is the courtship arena of the black grouse called?

Q. 2: What was the most popular article in the last edition of *Living Heritage*?

Q. 3: What year were Skipton Woods leased to the Trust?

Now complete the following tie-breaker using no more than 20 words: A legacy left to the Woodland Trust will change our landscape for the better because...

Closing date: June 20th 2008

*Forest Stewardship Council certified timber extracted from the Trust's own sites as part of essential management work.

**No cash alternative.

Winner will be notified by end of August 2008. Result will be published in *Living Heritage* No. 10. Staff, trustees and their families are not allowed to enter.

LIVING HERITAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

A big thank you to all of you who took the time to complete the questionnaire in our last issue, which enabled us to get a real insight into your opinions about the magazine. We thought you would like to know the key results (see table, right) and the most frequently raised questions (see below):

Q: Why don't you include a legacy section in *Broadleaf* instead of having two separate publications?

A: *Broadleaf* is already very full and it was also felt that the legal information and references to wills contained in *Living Heritage* would be at odds with *Broadleaf's* general content and style.

Q: How can you justify the cost when the money should be spent on trees?

A: *Living Heritage* is the Trust's main way of inspiring legacy giving

which is one of our most important sources of income, resulting in many thousands of acres of precious woodland being saved. It raises many times more income than it costs so in effect the money is being spent on trees.

Q: Can I receive *Living Heritage* by email in the future?

A: Yes, absolutely – it's green and saves the Trust money. Just email your request and we'll set it up for you.

Your views

89%

thought *Living Heritage* was a good way of showing how important legacies are to the Trust

83%

thought the length of the newsletter was 'about right'

67%

rated 'Rare and Endangered Species' their favourite article; followed by 'Five Natural Gems' with 22%

94%

liked the overall look of the newsletter

0%

Percentage

100%

Four natural gems

Legacies from Woodland Trust supporters are helping to change the face of the countryside for the better. Here we highlight four more woodland 'gems' that have benefited directly from legacy income:

1 Coed Gwernafon – Bird's-eye views



WTPL/Peter Westley

Spectacular views from the very top of Coed Gwernafon in Llawr y Glyn, near Llanidloes, Powys, are only one of the reasons why this wood is such a gem. The walks are pretty spectacular too, and with the installation of a new circular footpath and three new footbridges, access has been opened up to new woodland areas. The site is predominantly sessile oak and birch on a moderately to steeply sloping hillside, cut by several west flowing streams running in deep gullies. In spring it hosts carpets of bluebells, and in August it's full of delicious bilberries.

At 77 acres (31 hectares), Coed Gwernafon is one of the largest areas of western oak woods in Wales, and has been designated a European protected area, and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Anyone making it to the top will be rewarded with views over the Trannon and Llawr y Glyn valleys, including an old motte and bailey castle, and with the chance to rest for a while on the newly installed cleft oak bench. The site was purchased with a generous legacy from a keen bird watcher, who wanted his memory to live on with the birds in a beautiful Welsh wood. And in Coed Gwernafon, his wish has come true.

Coed Gwernafon

2 Plora Wood – Hidden secrets

Plora Wood in Innerleithen is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and an ancient woodland site with records going back to at least 1143. At 52 acres (21 hectares) it is one of only five oak woods of more than 30 acres in the Scottish Borders. With a peaceful and intimate feel, the ancient wood slopes above the rich alluvial floodplain of the River Tweed, providing glimpses of the dramatic landscape across the Tweed valley beyond. Apart from mature sessile oak, there are many other tree species, particularly beech, horse chestnut, lime, sycamore, birch and some conifer.

Wild flowers abound here, including primrose, bluebell, wood anemone, figwort and the unusual upland enchanter's nightshade with its toothed leaves. Delicate yellow tormentil also grows beneath the gnarled and twisted oaks, its woody roots once used to cure stomach ache.

A nationally rare fungus, *Rimbachia arachnoidea*, grows in the eastern part of the wood, as well as locally rare woodland specialist species such as wood brome, toothwort, hairy woodrush, and dog's mercury. The birdlife is equally varied, ranging from chiffchaff and redstart, to goldcrest and green woodpecker.

The deepest part of the oak wood is difficult to get to, leaving its secrets still waiting to be discovered.

A single legacy financed the thinning of non-native conifers to give the understory a chance to flourish, and to encourage regeneration of native broadleaf species.



WTPL/Roy Barlow

Plora Wood



3 Skipton Woods – Royal Connections



Part of the recent path upgrade in Skipton Woods

For almost 1,000 years, Skipton Woods in North Yorkshire have been owned by Skipton Castle, and in 1991 they were leased to the Woodland Trust for 75 years. The woods were originally managed to provide fishing and hunting, and more recently for timber, building stone and water, which means that little remains of the wild oak and ash wood that would once have stood there. Nevertheless, the 36 acre (15 hectares) site is designated ancient semi-natural woodland and is made up of broadleaves such as oak, ash, cherry and hornbeam, along with some Scots pine and Norway spruce.

Green and great spotted woodpeckers can be found within the woods, along with kingfishers, herons and roe deer, and particularly exciting, red kites. Much of the ground flora is representative of ancient woodland, including dense carpets of spring-flowering wild garlic, bluebells and dog's mercury.



Skipton Woods

Prior to the Trust's management, only limited access was allowed, but now the site has full public access at all times and in 2007 we completed a major path upgrade. Some sections had been truly horrendous, and flights of steps were converted to slopes for easier access. A very long section of the river bank was rebuilt to create a higher level path to replace the one washed away in 2005. Seats were installed, along with new gates suitable for wheelchair access; and the old bridge was replaced with one accessible to people of all abilities. A vital legacy was instrumental in helping the Trust to make these improvements and open up this ancient, beautiful wood to everyone.

4 Glover's Wood – Wildlife haven

Glover's Wood is an ancient woodland delightfully situated on the slope of a bowl-shaped valley, west of the village of Charlwood in Surrey. It's one of the largest areas of woodland in the Surrey Weald, extending to 237 acres (96 hectares), of which the Trust owns 69 acres (28 hectares) – all designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It contains unusual ferns, eight species of orchid – including the fly orchid, bird's nest orchid and the greater butterfly orchid – 29 butterfly species, and some rare crane flies. There are also two ponds, several streams and a floating sphagnum bog of botanical interest.

Glover's is a mixture of secondary and ancient semi-natural woodland, including species such as oak, hazel, ash, birch, hornbeam and isolated scatterings of wild service, field maple, wild cherry and small-leaved lime. Sedges and rushes exist in damper areas around the ponds. On higher ground, the ground flora is species rich, with yellow archangel, bluebell, honeysuckle, dog's mercury, and violets.

A share of a generous legacy has played an important part in helping to improve access in this lovely wood.



Glover's Wood



COMMON ASH (*Fraxinus excelsior*)

Description: The ash is a magnificent large deciduous tree with a long silvery grey trunk and distinctive black leaf buds. It can reach a height of 45m and live up to 200 years, though some individuals can survive for over 300 years. The 20 – 30cm leaves have 9 to 13 toothed oval leaflets arranged in pairs along a central stem, with a single one at the top. Clusters of small brown flowers appear in spring before the leaves, and the seeds – known as keys – stay on the trees through the winter, only falling in spring.

Habitat: Prefers moist but well drained, fertile, mostly calcareous soils, although found on all except poorest and acid soils. Has a natural distribution throughout the British Isles and Europe into Asia Minor and the Caucasus, but is rare north of Great Glen in Scotland. They must have full light to thrive and do not cope well with heavy shading. They are also suitable for coppicing if felled before maturity.

As a medicine in the past: The bark and leaves of the ash have been widely used for medicinal purposes over the ages. Before the introduction of Quinine, its bark was used as a remedy for intermittent fevers, and in powdered form it was prescribed for intestinal worms. Ash leaves were used as a diuretic and laxative, and ash leaf infusions were a traditional country remedy for renal colic. It was also a treatment for dropsy and rheumatic and arthritic conditions.



Yes, the ash is a truly remarkable and incredibly useful tree!

The Cow Bridge ash in Gravenhurst, Bedfordshire is a unique veteran of 4m 18cm in girth – and one that holds a special place in many people’s hearts. Unfortunately, vandals have started fires in the hollow of the tree on several occasions, despite the addition of a door to block the cavity.



The latest door, however, proclaims: “Here be Dragons”. Let’s hope that these dragons guard the tree well!

(Taken from our Ancient Tree Hunt website: www.AncientTreeHunt.org.uk)

Phenology timeline				
Flowers appear	Leaves appear	Seeds appear	Leaves fall	Seeds ripen
April	May	June	Oct	Oct

Uses of wood – past & present: Ash is a pale creamy wood that is strong and elastic. It’s ideal for hockey sticks, oars, paddles, rudders, billiard cues, cricket stumps, polo sticks, long bows, spears and tool handles, and is also used for veneer and furniture. It burns fragrantly with very little smoke due to low water content, even when green.



WTPL/Pete Holmes

Mike Crawshaw

Are YOU willing to save a wood?

This newsletter shows the very real difference legacies can make. If you are now considering remembering the Woodland Trust in your will – thank you. We would be grateful if you could fill in the pledge form enclosed. It is not binding in any way but it does help us plan for the future.

Contact us

Contact us for our free comprehensive brochure which explains the will-making process step by step, translates legal jargon into everyday language and gives real examples of what legacies have enabled the Woodland Trust to achieve.

Write to: **The Legacy Team, The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL**

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Email: **legacies@woodlandtrust.org.uk**

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Why not have a look at our simple guide to making a will by visiting our website at

www.legacies.org.uk