

## **OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**9TH OCTOBER 2019**

### **Encouraging populations of redstart and spotted flycatcher in the Outwoods**

On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Nigel Symes, Head of Sector Advice at the RSPB and woodland specialist visited the Outwoods as part of a team event with the RSPB's Business Advice Unit.

Nigel made a few recommendations for wildlife conservation in the Outwoods, and identified suitable habitat for redstart and spotted flycatcher. These species are priority species for the RSPB, due to their conservation status. The redstart is Amber-listed and the spotted flycatcher Red-listed. They have not yet been recorded in the Outwoods but, according to records (accessible through the Woodland Wildlife Toolkit at <https://woodlandwildlifetoolkit.sylva.org.uk>), they have been recorded in the Outwood's local area. The Outwoods could sustain breeding populations of both species, the only limiting factor appears to be lack of nesting sites.

The solution would be to provide suitable nest boxes for both species. Spotted flycatchers require bespoke open-fronted nest boxes, whilst redstart use standard nest boxes. It may be useful to locate nest boxes in clusters of two or three to reduce competition with more common bird species such as blue tits and great tits. The nest boxes should also be located away from the main path to avoid any vandalism.

For more information, please see the species factsheets attached.

## Common Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

**Areas and status:** Largest populations in the uplands of north and west Britain. Now more localised in lowlands, with higher densities around the New Forest, North Midlands and South West England. Sharp population decline in 1960s/70s, largely stable since. BoCC amber list.

**Woodland type:** Upland oak woodland, upland mixed ashwoods, upland birch woodland, wood pasture and parkland, lowland broadleaved, coniferous woodland but preference for broadleaf.

### Preferred habitat niches:

- Mature, open-spaced woodland, preference for open oak-birch woods
- Often on woodland edge adjacent to semi-natural habitat; also in mature scrub on bracken slopes
- Preference for heavily wooded landscapes and larger woodland blocks of >5ha, although scarce in south-east England
- Nests in tree holes, often forages in sparsely vegetated field layer

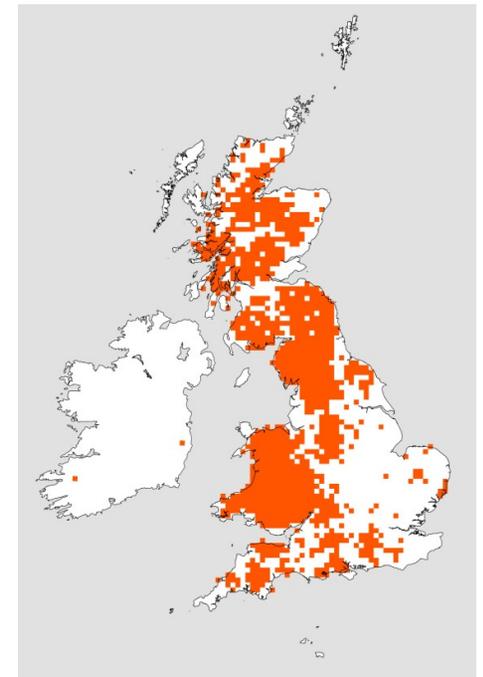
### Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Loss of older trees especially where woodlands are adjacent to open landscapes such as farmland
- Succession causing infill/crowding of mature trees and loss of open structure in woodland interior
- Lack of low-intensity grazing to maintain field layer structure
- Invasion by holly, beech, rhododendron etc. replacing open structure
- Agricultural improvement of land adjacent to otherwise suitable woodland edges



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Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	Comment
Establish ability to manage grazing/browsing	Graze to maintain open character of understorey and to create or preserve areas of bare ground and sparse vegetation (territories focused on these). Aim for a light understorey with open space within it
Thinning crowded stands to encourage tree canopy growth/partial halo-thinning	Selectively thin, retaining >75% canopy to limit understorey regeneration through maintaining shade, while encouraging bigger trees by providing space for development. Select for bigger trees, especially oaks, retain trees with natural holes etc. Partially halo-thin semi-mature oaks
Long term rotation of group felling	To aid oak regeneration which needs good light to germinate and thrive in small gaps, over a long rotation (>100 years), but excluding areas for old growth (determine at site level)
Glades with mature edge trees	Create glades (diameter at least 1.5 x mature canopy height) with mature edge-trees
Create/manage rides with mature edge trees	Create rides (width at least 1.5 x mature canopy height) with scalloped edges and mature edge-trees and/or in-ride trees
Retain/create/manage scattered scrub at woodland edge habitat interfaces	Particularly where adjacent to open upland habitats – where suitable promote gradation from woodland through scattered trees and scrub to open habitat. Avoid planting on top of other high priority habitats. Rotationally manage woodland edge scrub for varied structure including open space
Restore parkland and wood pasture	Remove tree and scrub infill around veteran and mature trees to promote open structure. Retain a scatter of replacement trees to ensure continuity
Retain/enhance deadwood	Retain all in tree, standing and fallen. Also retain wind or operationally damaged trees to develop dead wood and nest sites. Create new deadwood, using partial stem injection if possible
Provide nest boxes where needed	Only where lack of natural tree holes is limiting population. Provide nestboxes in small groups through woodland, sited >2m from the ground with a south easterly aspect to avoid exposure to prevailing bad weather and provide some warmth in spring
Remove invasive woody vegetation	Aim to remove all rhododendron and control other invasive woody species as appropriate
Plant new native woodland habitat where suitable	This species prefers well wooded landscapes – increase suitable woodland cover in landscape. Make sure that any planting is appropriate in the landscape and do <b>not</b> plant on top of other priority habitats



■ Breeding

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## Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

**Areas and status:** Widespread throughout UK. Rapidly declining across much of its UK range, although declines slower in the south-west BoCC red list.

**Woodland type:** Range of native woodland types, eg lowland mixed broadleaved woodland, wet woodland and semi-natural pine

### Preferred habitat niches:

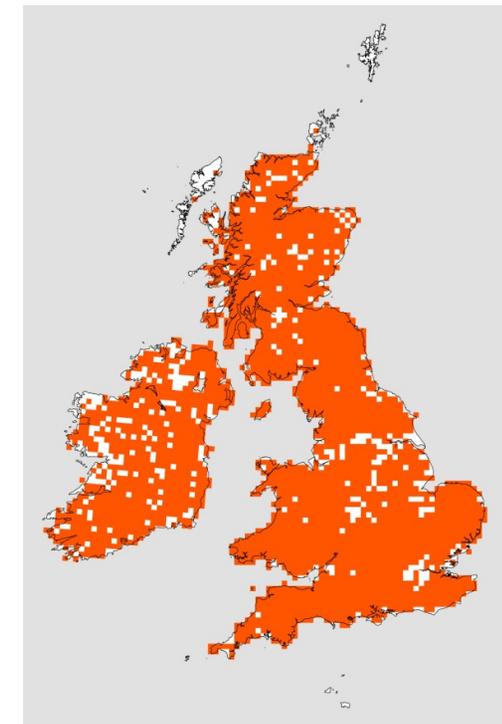
- Mature, tall, well structured woodland
- Nests in open cavities, crooks of branches, against tree trunks and walls, often concealed by climbers e.g. ivy and honeysuckle
- Nest height 1.5 to >10m
- Likely to occur in more natural landscapes

### Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Simplification of stand structure; loss of mid strata understorey, gaps and open space
- Reduced management leading to stand crowding, increased shade and reduced invertebrates
- Lack of, or too much grazing may lead to lower invertebrate prey abundance
- Lack of climbers to conceal nest sites, hence increasing predation risk
- Damage to understorey and field layer due to invasive woody plants
- Lack of dead wood features limiting natural nest hole availability



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Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	Comment
Thinning simple-structured or crowded stands. Partial halo-thinning of semi mature trees	Selective felling to reduce shading, create space for tree growth, understorey, shrub layer, and ground flora development. Partially halo-thin semi-mature trees that are crowded, to allow girth and crown development, and create open space for foraging flights.
Manage understorey, e.g. by small scale coppice or re-instate coppice with standards system	Rejuvenate understorey by coppicing small sections. Where appropriate, (re)instate coppice with standards system to provide mature trees. Manage grazing and browsing to maintain varied understorey. Control / remove invasive woody vegetation.
Ride enhancement, glade creation or improvement	Develop/manage wide rides & glades (e.g. widened ride junctions) with shelter, in-feature trees, and irregular edges. Enhance micro-climate (create sheltered sunny patches) for invertebrate prey. Ride and glade width should be at least 1.5 x mature canopy height where possible, with 3-zone management of edges (short grassy zone grading to longer vegetation, to scrub edge).
Retain and enhance deadwood	In tree features such as dead boughs with cavities, retention of snags to provide nest sites and increase volume of invertebrates.
Retain ivy and other climbers	Potential nest sites. If there is a need to manage, ensure a good proportion is retained at any one time.
Diversify simplified woodland edge away from prevailing winds/Enhance woodland edge	Thin along sheltered woodland edge to provide diverse structure.
Retain/create/manage scrubby woodland edge habitat interfaces Provide buffer strips to woodland edge	Promote gradation from woodland through scrub to open habitat. Rotationally manage woodland edge scrub to provide a variety of structure including open spaces and mature edge-trees. Create grass buffer strips, especially alongside intensive agriculture, to buffer woodland from pesticides and provide sheltered invertebrate habitats.