

SPECIES RECOVERY

Our commitment to nature

An outline of our proposals for species recovery
in East Devon AONB



Species Recovery

Devon is rich in wildlife and important for the conservation of many species. At least 16000 species that occur here are considered to be either threatened with extinction in the British Isles or are nationally scarce.

In committing to the National Association for AONBs [Colchester Declaration](#) (2019) we and other UK AONBs have collectively pledged:

That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030

What we have done so far

Since its establishment in 2002 the AONB Partnership has delivered and supported a variety of habitat and species related activity across the AONB, but we have never adopted a particular species to champion.

The process for shortlisting species proposed by the NAAONB mirrors that undertaken by the Devon Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for its Special Species using a criteria-based approach.

They are special because they are rare and are regarded as being in danger or threat of extinction or loss. For more details of the Devon Special Species process see [HERE](#).

A focus on East Devon

We sifted the key species on the Devon Special Species list for those with particular relevance to East Devon and presented them to the AONB Partnership for consideration.

At its 27 April 2020 meeting the East Devon AONB Partnership completed a survey ranking each species between 1-5.



Pearl bordered fritillary © Butterfly Conservation

The result of the ranking is shown below.

The list indicates partnership opinion regarding which priority species should be targeted for conservation efforts within the East Devon AONB.

Species	Rank	Score
Devon Whitebeam (and allied species) <i>Sorbus devoniensis</i>	1	21
Heath potter wasp <i>Eumenes coarctatus</i>	2	19
Eurasian beaver <i>Castor fiber</i>	3	17
Scaly cricket <i>Pseudomogoplistes vicentae</i>	4	16
Cirl Bunting <i>Emberiza cirulus</i>	4	16
Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	5	15
Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>	5	15
Hazel dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	5	15
Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	6	13
Grey long-eared bat <i>Plecotus austriacus</i>	6	13
Brown hairstreak <i>Thecla betulae</i>	7	10
White spot <i>Hadena albimacula</i>	8	8
Wood white <i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	8	8
Pearl-bordered fritillary <i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	9	7
Zipperback hoverfly <i>Chrysotoxum elegans</i>	10	5
Spanish long-snouted crane fly <i>Helius hispanicus</i>	10	5
Bracket fungus <i>Fuscoporia wahlbergii</i>	11	4
Oak polypore fungus <i>Piptoporus quercinus</i>	11	4
Brown-banded carder-bee <i>Bombus humilis</i>	11	4
Apple Lace Bug <i>Physatocheila smreczynskii</i>	12	3
Mediterranean oil beetle <i>Meloe mediterraneus</i>	12	3
Marsh fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	12	3
Morris's wainscot <i>Photedes morrisii</i>	13	1
Devonshire wainscot <i>Leucania putrescens</i>	14	0
Least cigar-gall fly <i>Lipara similis</i>	14	0
A rove beetle <i>Actocharis readingii</i>	14	0
Black mining bee <i>Andrena pilipes</i>	14	0
Broad-faced furrow bee <i>Lasioglossum laticeps</i>	14	0
Willow Tit <i>Poecile montana</i>	14	0

This ranking was a starting point for us to consider our approach to developing species recovery in the AONB.

As part of the feedback, two additional species were suggested by partner's for consideration; Heath Lobelia and Yellowhammer.

In 2020, the Devon Local Nature Partnership completed a review of the Devon Special Species list, on which our shortlist was based.

This data was used to further refine our focus and, using the top 10 ranked species in this table (left), decide a short-list of species for the AONB to concentrate on.

Our species

Following the survey of the AONB Partnership, our assessment of the feedback and liaison with other parties, the AONB team has established a short list of 8 species for focused action under our commitment to nature through the Colchester Declaration.

In identifying our 8 species from the prioritised shortlist, we were mindful that other species of importance to East Devon are already a priority for other agencies and organisations – e.g. Beavers, Cirl Bunting, Heath Potter Wasp.

We also sought where possible to identify where AONB action would build on previous activity of the AONB Partnership - e.g. Bats/Heath lobelia.

Our rationale for selection was based on the following key factors:

- Each species has been confirmed by the AONB Partnership as a priority worthy of consideration
- Each species is on the revised Devon Special Species list/regarded as being of conservation concern
- Each species has potential for broad public engagement and citizen science approaches
- Collectively, our species could form part of a landscape scale approach to nature recovery and have relevance across the AONB. (The species we have identified all have a common link with a farmed and wooded landscape).

Our priority species

Bats	Butterflies	Plants
Greater horseshoe bat Grey long-eared bat Bechstein's bat	Pearl bordered fritillary Small Pearl bordered fritillary Brown hairstreak	Heath lobelia Devon whitebeam

Next Steps

Our next steps will be to liaise with a range of individuals, partners and agencies to confirm and develop an individual Species Action Plan (SAP) for each of the above 8 species – our Elusive 8 - with a view to linking these with our proposals for a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB as a whole. The plans will seek to layout a path to delivery and reference resource requirements.

Our planning for this will take place across 2020/21 and up to 2024 and the next AONB Management Plan review.

We will seize funding opportunities wherever possible to advance this work. We are also hopeful that the rhetoric and positive noises from the findings/proposals of the Glover review, and the NAAONB Colchester Declaration commitment to nature, will translate into additional resources from Defra that will enable us to support this action for nature and species in East Devon in a concerted way with our partners.

Without Defra resourcing our capacity to deliver will be restricted.

Partnership consultation

The table overleaf identifies the key species we prioritised through the Partnership consultation, their broad habitat links and our proposed approach for each.

Species	Current IUCN status /trend	Habitat/Where in East Devon / threats	Who is already doing recovery work	What is being done	What more could be done by the AONB by 2030	Opportunity for public engagement	Exists in other SW AONBs?	Proposed action
FARM & WOODLAND HABITAT								
Devon Whitebeam (+ allied species) <i>Sorbus devoniensis</i>	Vulnerable – unknown trend	Not known - a deciduous tree, mainly found in hedgerows, but also found on coastal cliffs and woodlands. Threatened by the loss of hedgerows, competition from rhododendron, scrub overgrowth and development.	Exmoor NP promoting whitebeams	Exmoor NP promoting whitebeams	-survey AONB -confirm associated sp. -establish source -support planting/prop projects	- citizen surveys to ID and record associated species - tree propagation /nursery - planting campaign	North Devon is noted in LNP – Fingle Woods (NT)	Consider as key species
Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	Near threatened – decreasing	This species mainly feeds on dung beetles and noctuid moths and can be found foraging in cattle grazed pasture, woodland edges and hedgerows. Maternity roosts form during summer in buildings, whilst winter hibernation roosts are often in underground caves. Threatened by urbanisation and loss of grazed pasture and natural linear features.	DWT + Devon AONBs / Others	DGHB project – likely to continue in some guise post 2020	Build on the work to date and assist further in -PR campaign -surveys monitoring & -licencing support -habitat work Incl. hedges	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/events	South, North, Tamar, BHills, Dorset	Consider as key species
Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	Vulnerable – decreasing	Found mainly in deciduous woodlands, but also occupy parklands and coniferous woodlands. During the summer, they can be found occupying roosts in tree holes. Feed mainly on noctuid moths and flies, and hibernates in cellars, tree holes and underground caves during the winter. Beer Caves and Quarries in East Devon is a nationally important site for the bat	Devon Bat Group activity	Devon Bat Group + Orgs with suitable sites/habitat eg EDD C, NT, DS, CDE, RSPB, DWT, AVDCS/SVA/ OVA	-PR campaign -surveys/hunts -licencing support? -habitat work	-Surveys -habitat work -box creation -education/ awareness/ events	BHills, Dorset	Consider as key species
Grey long-eared bat <i>Plecotus austriacus</i>	Least Concern – unknown trend	Recent radio-tracking studies show that they tend to forage over meadows, grasslands, gardens and near forest edges, up to 6 km away from the roost. This species is an open or edge habitat forager, mainly feeding on lepidoptera and diptera. Most commonly found roosting during the summer in attics. During the winter, they will occupy caves, cellars and other underground sites for hibernation. Main centre of distribution is in Dorset and East Devon.	Back from the Brink	BfB activity	There are two known sites in East Devon which could serve as hubs around which to develop action inc -PR campaign -surveys/hunts -licencing support? -habitat work - act as local champion	-Surveys -habitat work -box creation -education/ awareness/ events	SDevon, Dorset	Consider as key species
Pearl-bordered fritillary <i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	Least Concern – stable	[distribution on western edges of AONB] Found in woodland clearings or rough hillsides with bracken. The foodplant for the larvae is the common dog violet and occasionally other violet species. Threatened by poor habitat management and decline in woodland management practices like coppicing.	Butterfly Conservation	BC activity on FC land - project ended in 2014	Confirm BC activity and opportunities -PR campaign -surveys/hunts -habitat work	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	SD, ND, Tamar	Consider as key species
Small pearl-bordered fritillary <i>Boloria selene</i>		This Fritillary is similar in size and habitats to the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. The two species may be seen together at certain sites as they share the same foodplant requirements.	Butterfly Conservation	TBC	Confirm BC activity and opportunities -PR campaign -surveys/hunts -habitat work	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	SD, ND, Tamar	Consider as key species

Brown hairstreak <i>Thecla betulae</i>	Least Concern – stable	Locations not known - Found in hedges, scrub and woodland edge where Blackthorn is prominent and not flailed every year. Adults sometimes feed lower down on flowers such as Hemp-agrimony, Common Fleabane and Bramble. They congregate to mate and feed on aphid honeydew. Blackthorn is the main food plant and eggs are laid on young branches. Threatened by hedgerow removal and annual flailing.	Butterfly Conservation	Butterfly Conservation	Confirm BC activity and opportunities -PR campaign -surveys/hunts -habitat work	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	BHAONB, Dorset, (poss also Mendips,	Consider as key species
Heath Lobelia <i>Lobelia urens</i>	Vulnerable	Rare in Britain (South & SW England) in lowland areas up to 210 metres high. Not threatened in Europe. Found in communities on grassy heaths, rough pastures, and open heathy woodlands, often on woodland margins on infertile acid soils; found in low-lying terrain, often valley bottoms. The soils are seasonally waterlogged.	Legacy to Landscape (AONB Project)	L2L seed collection and research	AONB seed collection /propagation & receptor site ID/planting - awareness raise	-Receptor sites/survey -seed collection -education/ awareness/ events	Possibly also BHAONB?	AONB to pilot a local project in 2020 as follow on to former project work started via Legacy to Landscape project
Eurasian beaver <i>Castor fiber</i>	Least concern – increasing	River Otter	DWT, CDE	River Otter Beaver Trial key project in Devon and nationally	Not a significant amount in addition to DWT at the moment	- limited at present whilst in trial phase -education/ awareness/ events	Blackdown Hills	Support others /Keep under review
Cirl Bunting <i>Emberiza cirius</i>	Least concern – stable	-associated in UK with mixed farmland, (relative of yellowhammers) feed in summer on invertebrates (eg, grasshoppers) in grassland and in winter on seeds in arable habitats, particularly weedy stubbles. Nest in hedges and scrub. Species recovered from just 118 pairs in 1989 to over 1,000 pairs in 2016. UK popn. is range-restricted mostly confined to Devon farmland towards the coast between Exeter and Plymouth, a small self-sustaining reintroduced population in Cornwall	RSPB, NT, PHCT/CDE	RSPB and NT programmes + PHCT/ CDE to western end of AONB	A key priority for RSPB - assist in survey/ monitoring	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	South Devon	Support others /Keep under review
Hazel dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Least Concern – unknown trend	A typically arboreal mammal found occupying habitats where new growth arises after woodland management such as coppicing, ride widening, and thinning or glade creation. Feed on a variety of food items throughout the year including hazelnuts, blackberries, flowers and insects, before hibernating for winter. Threatened by poor habitat management, loss of habitats and commuting routes.	PTES campaigns for 20yrs	Devon Mammal Group + most wildlife / Orgs with suitable sites/habitat eg EDD C, NT, DS, CDE, RSPB, DWT	-PR campaign -surveys/hunts -licencing support? -habitat work	-Surveys -habitat work -box creation -education/ awareness/ events	All	Support others /Keep under review
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Least Concern – decreasing	This is a characteristic species of the transition zone between woodland and open country, such as (extensively managed) farmland with hedges, forest clearings, young plantations, scrubs, heath and natural grasslands.	RSPB has produced recovery notes for farmers	Tbc	Liaise with RSPB over possible actions - key measures inc. wildflower margins and late hedge management (post Sept)	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	All	Keep under review – symbolic species but in relatively good numbers across the area albeit in decline.

COAST AND BEACH HABITAT								
White spot Hadena albimacula	Tbc	Undercliffs – Axmouth - This species of noctuid moth is found on coastal cliffs and slopes, and its larvae feed on the seeds of the Nottingham catchfly. Occurs on undercliffs east of Axmouth where threatened by non-native plants and scrub encroachment	Natural England	NE on Undercliffs NNR	Support NE action on Undercliffs	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events		Support others /- Keep under Review
Wood white Leptidea sinapis	Least Concern – stable	Coastal east Devon - Inhabits woodland rides and glades, and mosaics of shrub, tall grassland and hedgerows. Breeds in tall grassland or light scrub in partially shaded or edge habitats. Larval food plants include a variety of legumes including meadow vetchling. Threatened by loss of unmanaged woodland and woodland rides. Strongholds now West Midland, Northants & East Devon coastline.	Highlighted by Butterfly Conservation	NT/NE management on coastal sites tbc	Possibly identify pathways for expansion of known populations	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	BHAONB SDAONB, DorA ONB	Support others /- Keep under Review
Scaly cricket (aka Atlantic beach cricket) Pseudomogoplist es vicentae	Vulnerable – Decreasing	Found in shingle beaches, living under rocks and beach debris, often associated with the seaweed strandline - Branscombe Beach	NT/NE	NT/NE management on coastal sites	Limited options on a foreshore location at Branscombe	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events		Support others /- Keep under Review
Zipperback hoverfly Chrysotoxum elegans	Tbc	Locations tbc - This attractive species is a striking wasp mimic. A scarce species with a strong association with Devon, its national range and populations are thought to be declining. The larvae have not been found but are likely to be associated with ants. This species favours sunny south-facing coastal slopes, often in clearing among gorse and blackthorn scrub. It is threatened by loss of unimproved grassland, especially through scrub invasion reflecting a lack of grazing	NT/NE	NT/NE management on coastal sites	Support initiatives for Coastal cliff/scrub management – key partners to lead probably NE/NT and possibly CDE	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events		Support others /- Keep under Review
Spanish long- snouted crane-fly Helius hispanicus	Tbc	Known in the British Isles only from two or three seepages running down the coastal cliffs of the Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs, close to Axmouth Harbour. Threatened by cliff-stabilisation works, changes in hydrology, and by septic tank discharges from properties above.	NE	NE on Undercliffs NNR		-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events		Support others /- Keep under Review
HEATHLAND HABITAT								
Southern damselfly Coenagrion mercuriale	Near Threatened – decreasing	Pebblebeds - shallow, well-vegetated, base-rich runnels and flushes in open areas in East Devon and the N fringes of Dartmoor. Most sites are on wet heathland or grazed moorland edge, and breeding occurs in slow flowing streams and runnels.	RSPB, PHCT, DWT, EDDC	Key species on Pebblebed Heaths NNR	Support NNR management	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	Tbc	Support others /- Keep under Review
Heath potter wasp Eumenes coarctatus	Tbc	Inhabits open heathland, requires streams, pools or puddles for nest construction. Females construct spherical nests (pots) and require water to do so. Threatened by loss of open heathland, encroachment of scrub. Devon heaths are a national stronghold (Pebblebeds)	PHCT/RSPB/ DWT/EDDC	Key species on Pebblebed Heaths NNR	Support NNR management	-Surveys -habitat work -education/ awareness/ events	Cornwall, Dartmoor, Dorset, South Downs,	Support others /- Keep under Review

Our commitment

- We will work with colleagues and partners locally, regionally and nationally to confirm our approach to species recovery using a landscape scale/ assemblage approach.
- Our approach will enable us to play a key role and will encourage action, public engagement and influence change.
- We cannot target activity on all species listed in our initial survey and because some species are already priority species for partner organisations operating in our area, we will focus our activity appropriately, supporting partners activities wherever possible. There is a role for us to raise awareness and promote action for species at risk more broadly alongside any targeted action we take.