

Fact Sheet Eight

Biodiversity



Designated sites

- Five candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC). Cotswold Beech Woods, Rodborough Common (limestone grassland), Bath and Bradford-on-Avon bat roosts, Dixton Wood and Bredon Hill (both for deadwood invertebrates)
- Three National Nature Reserves (NNR). Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods, Bredon Hill and Wychwood Forest.
- 89 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- 2 Local Nature Reserves (LNR). Cooper's Hill and Leckhampton Hill

Habitats and species

- The AONB contains 3,000ha of unimproved limestone grassland. Of this, 1,500ha is Jurassic limestone grassland (CG5 upright brome/tor grass). This is approximately half of the entire national resource of CG5. In the 1930s approximately 40% of the Cotswolds was covered by unimproved limestone grassland. The remaining 3,000ha cover just 1.5%.
- A survey of bird populations in 2002 recorded 86 species and showed that 20 species occur in the AONB in nationally important numbers including five red-listed (Linnet, Yellowhammer, Skylark, Starling and House Sparrow) and one amber-listed (Dunnock) species. Nine of these species are dependant on farmland (Jackdaw, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer, Whitethroat, Skylark, and Starling).
- There are 14 sites nationally for Cotswold Pennycress, 10 are within the AONB, most in a cluster around the Guitings and Naunton.
- The only UK population of a small snail *Lauria Sempronii* is found on two short stretches of drystone wall at Edgeworth.
- The AONB has one of the two sites in the UK for Round-Leaved Feather Moss, two of three sites in the UK for the Violet Click Beetle and the two UK sites for *Cryptocephalus Primarius*, a leaf beetle.
- Previously only known from Windsor Forest, the bark beetle *Gastrallus Immarginatus* has been found on a number of sites in the north Cotswolds, especially on Bredon Hill. This area of the Cotswolds, especially the scarp, is particularly important for deadwood invertebrates.

- The Cotswolds are a stronghold for lesser and Greater Horseshoe Bats due to the network of old hedges, barns and stone mines. Areas of particular importance are around Bath and Bradford-on-Avon, to the north east of Cirencester and the former stone mines around Minchinhampton.
- The AONB is nationally significant for Small Blue and Duke of Burgundy butterflies and is part of the re-introduction programme for the large blue, which seems to have been successful on a site near Stroud.

During the preparation of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan (2008 -2013), a long list of habitats and species present in the AONB was collated by Cotswolds Conservation Board's Biodiversity Working group. Based on whether the habitats and species were a UK BAP priority, the existence of a significant resource within the AONB and if they were characteristic of the AONB, a list of priorities was identified. The priorities have been revised and adopted as part of the new management plan.

A number of species have been identified that are of importance within the Cotswolds AONB or are characteristic of the AONB.

Of these species the following are agreed priorities;

- farmland birds, such as Skylark, Linnet, Corn Bunting
- Pearl Bordered Fritillary
- arable plants
- Juniper
- Cotswold Pennycress
- bats
- dormouse
- water vole
- brown hare
- otter
- limestone grassland butterflies
- Violet Click Beetle
- White Clawed Crayfish
- Bath Asparagus

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Eight habitat types have also been identified as important and/or characteristic. Of these the following are priorities;

- ancient woodlands
- unimproved limestone grasslands and meadows
- rivers, streams and wetlands
- arable fields
- areas important for bats (batscapes)
- wood pasture, veteran and parkland trees
- hedgerows
- field margins

The AONB management plan can be found on the board's website at www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Joint Character Areas (JCA)

Natural Areas were launched in 1993 as a framework for setting nature conservation objectives. They are parts of England with similar wildlife and natural features and reflect geology, land use and land use history. In 1996 the Natural Areas were revised to integrate the natural and cultural aspects of the landscape, to produce 'Joint Character Areas' (JCA). The Cotswolds AONB lies mostly within the Cotswolds JCA. However, parts of the Cotswolds AONB lie within the Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges JCA, Avon Vale JCA, Upper Thames Clay Vales JCA, Northamptonshire Uplands JCA, Dunsmore and Feldon JCA and the Severn and Avon Vale JCA which contains Bredon Hill, an important outlier of the Cotswolds AONB.

The key features identified by English Nature for the Cotswolds Natural Area are:

- Wildflower rich limestone grassland
- Geology
- Ancient woodland

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