

## PRIORITY HABITAT FACTSHEET



*Alder Carr at Syleham Road. (Brockdish),  
Cuckoo (Neil Rolph), Minor Shoulder Knot (Stuart Read).*

# Wet Woodlands

**Occurs on poorly drained or seasonally waterlogged soils and frequently associated with river valleys, flood plains, flushes, plateau woodlands, lakes and ponds.**

**Wet woodland habitats contain a range of National Vegetation Classification (NVC) stand types.**

**Contains alder, birch and willows as the predominant tree species, and sometimes ash, oak, pine and beech in drier areas.**

## IMPORTANCE FOR WILDLIFE

The mosaic of habitats provides diverse conditions which support a wide range of plants, invertebrates, birds and mammals. The high humidity and presence of damp bark supports a range of mosses and liverworts. An extremely large number of invertebrates are associated with alder, birch and willow and fallen dead wood in streams or fens provides specialised habitats.



## IMPORTANT ASSOCIATED SPECIES

### Birds

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*  
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*  
Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*  
Willow Tit *Poecile montanus*  
Siskin *Carduelis spinus*  
Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

### Mammals

Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens*\*  
Brown Long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*  
Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*\*  
Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*\*  
Nathusius' Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus nathusii*\*  
Soprano Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*  
Natterer's Bat *Myotis nattereri*\*  
Noctule Bat *Nyctalus noctula*  
Serotine Bat *Eptesicus serotinus*  
Otter *Lutra lutra*

### Beetles

Alder Flea Weevil *Orchestes testaceus*  
Sallow Guest Weevil *Melanapion minimum*

### Moths

The Concolorous *Chortodes extrema*  
Minor Shoulder Knot *Brachylochia viminalis*\*\*  
Small Square-spot *Diarsia rubi*\*\*  
Oblique Carpet *Orthonama vittata*\*\*  
Powdered Quaker *Orthosia gracilis*\*\*

### Flies

Southern Yellow Splinter *Lipsothrix nervosa*

### Plants

Native Black Poplar *Populus nigra* spp *betulifolia*\*  
Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*  
Common Reed *Phragmites australis*  
Purple Moor Grass *Molinia caerulea*  
Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata*  
Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage  
*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*  
Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*

\*Suffolk Priority species

\*\*Priority - Research Only. Common and widespread, but rapidly declining.



Images: Top – Otter (Neil Rolph). Bottom, left to right – Siskin (Neil Rolph), Pipistrelle Bats (Lucinda Spencer), Small Square-spot (Charles Cuthbert), Redpoll (Neil Rolph), Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (Colin Jacobs).



## FACTORS AFFECTING HABITAT IN SUFFOLK

- Loss of woodland through restoration to other conservation land uses, such as fen or reedbed.
- Poor management changing the structure, scrub invasion, a lack of regeneration and loss of diversity.
- Unusual flooding events leading to loss of water quality and changes in fauna and flora composition, occasional flooding is part of the normal cycle that the habitat is adapted to cope with.
- Colonisation by invasive non-native species such as Himalayan Balsam.
- Removal of moss-covered trees, deadwood, old or diseased trees, removing important habitats.
- Water pollution and nutrient enrichment from agricultural run-off.
- Water abstraction and drainage lowering the water table.



## HABITAT MANAGEMENT ADVICE

- Maintain 'naturalness' of woods where possible, avoiding sudden and drastic modifications.
- Leave any wet areas such as streams and ponds undisturbed.
- Manage woodlands according to the UK Forestry Standard
- The felling of wet woodland trees may need approval from the Forestry Commission

## NOTES

National Vegetation Classification is a common standard developed for nature conservation agencies containing a comprehensive classification and description of the plant communities of Britain, systematically named and arranged and with standardised descriptions for each.

### National Vegetation Classification (NVC) stand types found in Suffolk

- W1: Grey Willow – common marsh-bedstraw woodland  
*Salix cinerea* – *Gallium palustre* woodland
- W2: Grey Willow – downy birch – common reed woodland  
*Salix cinerea* – *Betula pubescens* – *Phragmites australis* woodland
- W4c: Downy birch – purple moor-grass woodland  
*Sphagnum* sub-community *Betula pubescens* – *Molinia caerulea* woodland *Sphagnum* sub-community
- W5: Alder – greater tussock sedge woodland *Alnus glutinosa* – *Carex paniculata* woodland
- W6: Alder – common nettle *Alnus glutinosa* – *Urtica dioica* woodland

These stands are found on flood plains as successional habitats on fens and mires, along rivers and streams, by flushes and in peaty hollows. The wet woodlands on the boulder clay in Suffolk tend to be considered as part of the ash – field maple – dog's mercury woodland *Fraxinus excelsior* – *Acer campestre* – *Mercurialis perennis* woodlands (W8 in the NVC) and are excluded from this factsheet.

The strongholds for wet woodlands are Suffolk Broads, the Waveney and Little Ouse Valleys and the Suffolk River Valleys ESA.

*Chicken of the woods on Alder (Paul Kitchener).*



## VISION FOR SUFFOLK

1. Improve knowledge of extent and quality of wet woodland.
2. Maintain the existing extent of wet woodland to ensure no net loss.
3. Re-create wet woodland as opportunities arise.
4. Encourage the restoration and improvement of degraded wet woodland.



## WHERE TO FIND FURTHER INFORMATION

Buglife – advice on managing BAP habitats

- <https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/habitat-management/wet-woodland>

Buglife – Notable invertebrates associated with wet woodland (pdf)

- <https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2019/06/Notableinvertebratesassociatedwithwetwoodland.pdf>

Forest Research – The Management of semi-natural Woodlands (pdf)

- <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/1766/fcpg008.pdf>

JNCC Habitat Description (pdf)

- <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/2829ce47-1ca5-41e7-bc1a-871c1cc0b3ae/UKBAP-BAPHabitats-64-WetWoodland.pdf>

JNCC – The National Vegetation Classification (NVC) • <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/nvc>

MAGIC website – interactive mapping information including designations • <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

*Making Space for Nature, a Review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network* 16 Sep 2010.

- Chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS. Defra website (pdf) • <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130402151656/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

Natural Environment White Paper June 2011 – *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* (pdf)

- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/228842/8082.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228842/8082.pdf)

Peterken, G.F., 1981 *Woodland Conservation and Management*. London: Chapman and Hall.

Rackham, O. 1980 *Ancient Woodland*. London: Arnold.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Habitats Explorer • <https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/habitats/woodland/wet-woodland>

Woodland Trust – Wet Woodland • <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/wet-woodland>

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