

Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Areas and status: Scarce to absent as breeding bird in SW England, W of Dorset/Somerset. Elsewhere, widely if locally distributed in Scotland (other than higher uplands), northern England, parts of southern and eastern England. Most wintering birds of NE European origin. BTO estimate 20% decline in 20 years. Breeding range less than half its extent in 1960s. BoCC red list.

Woodland type: Lowland mixed woodland, Upland oak woodland, Upland mixed ashwoods, Wet Woodland, Conifer plantation.

Preferred habitat niches:

- Various woodland types with open structure and access to open damp foraging habitats, including old pastures as well as young (thicket stage) woodland.
- Well wooded landscapes; denser populations clustered around areas such as the New Forest and Forest of Dean.
- A ground nester so presence of shrub ground cover and leaf litter important

Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

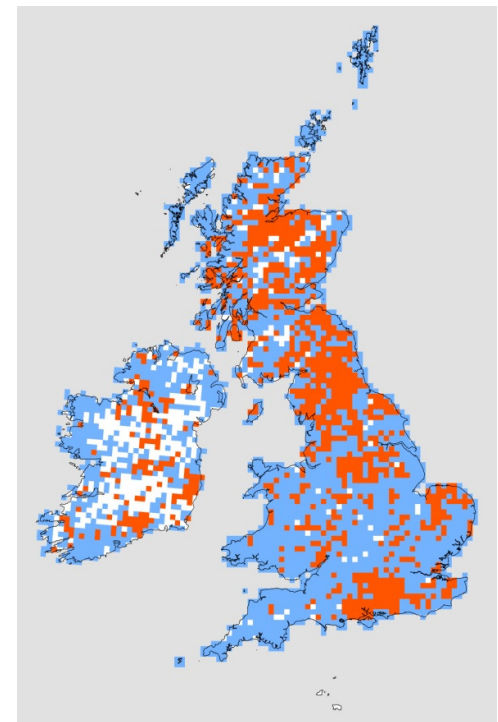
- Deer and/or sheep browsing leading to loss of shrub layer
- Drying out of woodland soils
- Recreational disturbance, eg roaming dogs off leads
- Loss of canopy gaps and within-wood open space due to under-management
- Changes in plantation management leading to loss of shrub cover, canopy gaps, clearfells coups etc

Potential habitat management solutions:

<i>Prescription</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Thinning: restore immature closed canopy woodland: glade creation & improvement	Thin to provide canopy gaps, glades (1 to 3ha) and restore shade-stressed shrub and ground layers.
Glade creation/enhancement	Provide continuity of within-wood open space by a) create permanent glades (varying sizes to suit wood) or b) temporary clearings through group fells etc.
Ride enhancement	Wide rides with cover for foraging; 2 and 3 zone. Provide where public access is low/include blind-ended rides.
Manage browsing & grazing	Reduce where excessive (causing loss of cover). Some grazing & browsing may be beneficial in keeping open conditions. Assess need for and best options (stock type, season, level, requirement for fencing).
Maintain & enhance soil moisture levels	Manage drainage to retain water on site; dam/weir within wood drains. Buffer wood from external drainage
Buffer woodland edge to intensive agriculture	Apply graduated edge structures: thicket > scrub-grass mosaic > field margin. Damp rough grassy margins could aid foraging.
New woodland creation	Avoid intensive establishment regimes (eg herbicides, plastic mulch mats). Reduce woodland isolation



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■ Breeding
■ Wintering

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