

Habitat Information Sheets - Glossary

Worcestershire Habitat Inventory

This glossary accompanies the series of guidance notes produced by Worcestershire County Council to aid interpretation and use of the information within the web-based Worcestershire Habitat Inventory.

What is the Worcestershire Habitat Inventory?

The Worcestershire Habitat Inventory 2 (WHI2) is a digital mapping project involving field-by-field survey of the county. Machine-led habitat and land use identification was carried out using a variety of different remote earth observation data. Completed in 2020-2021, WHI2 also incorporates datasets including ground-based surveys, the national priority habitat inventory as published by Natural England and historic survey data. The latter includes the habitat and land use mapping completed between 2005-2008 using aerial photograph interpretation and previously provided in WHI1.

The WHI is intended as a tool to aid decision making by planners, land managers, conservation bodies and others, principally to inform the targeting of habitat restoration and creation projects but also to assist in Biodiversity Net Gain planning and delivery. Analysis of the WHI2 data allowed mapping of the strongest intact networks of semi-natural habitat with the highest potential wildlife value, the Habitat Network Maps, which will help users target the most appropriate interventions when planning habitat creation or restoration.

Coppicing

A traditional tree or shrub management practice of cutting woody vegetation at the base and allowing it to regrow. Done on a short to medium-term cycle – perhaps 7-15 years – the harvested timber can be used for a variety of purposes.

Ecosystem

A community of living organisms interacting together and with their surrounding environment as an inter-dependent system.

Eutrophication

The end result of the addition of substances such as nitrates and phosphates to an aquatic system, which raises nutrient levels in the water artificially and can lead to responses such as algal blooms.

(Habitat) mosaic

A number of different vegetation (habitat) types in close proximity within a given area, often having increased environmental and wildlife value through their association with each other.

(Habitat) network

A network of physical connections across the landscape between areas of semi-natural habitat, through linear corridors or 'stepping stones', which reduces the effects of fragmentation and allows species to move.

Laying (of a hedgerow)

A traditional hedgerow management practice of partially cutting through stems at the base and then bending and positioning them to form a stock barrier.

Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites (Local Sites)

Local Sites are selected for having high county-level importance for their wildlife or geology. Local Sites have no legal protection but their importance is recognised by local planning policy. They are identified and listed by members of the Worcestershire Local Sites Partnership.

Non-native (species)

A species that has been introduced (deliberately or accidentally) into a location that is outside of its natural climatic range or distribution.

(Natural vegetation) succession (or ecological succession)

The natural observed process of change over time in the (plant) species structure of a particular habitat.

Pollarding

A traditional tree management practice of cutting all the branches repeatedly, usually between 2-3m above ground so that livestock cannot reach the regrowth. Done on a long cycle – perhaps 20-50 years – the harvested timber can be used for a variety of purposes. A tree that has undergone this type of management is referred to as a pollard.

Rhizome

A plant root with nutrient storage properties and the capability to send out new shoots and roots from nodes. Plants that have rhizomes spread by vegetative reproduction as well as by seed.

Ridge and furrow

A pattern of undulating ridges frequently seen in fields in the English countryside on land managed as part of an open, strip-field system during the Middle Ages and subsequently not ploughed or otherwise altered by modern farming machinery. The ridges were created by the use of non-reversible horse or oxen-drawn ploughs that turned the soil over repeatedly towards the centre of the strip, resulting over time in the formation of a series of ridges and furrows.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The SSSI designation gives legal protection to the best sites for wildlife and geology in England. SSSI's are designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Translocation (of species)

The moving of species, either individually or as a group, from one location to another for conservation purposes.