

# Teacher notes

## The effects of habitat loss in Badger Wood

### Ancient Woodland

Ancient woodland is land that has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD.

**Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland** is an ancient woodland site that has retained many of its natural characteristics such as native tree and shrub cover. It has never been planted, although it is likely to have been managed in the past by coppicing or felling and so cannot be considered a totally natural woodland.

**Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)** is ancient woodland where the original native tree cover has been felled and replaced, often with non-native conifers.

Ancient woods are our richest habitats for wildlife. They are a great source of evidence for environmental change, archaeology and economic and social history. They are a constant source of beauty and inspiration. Our remaining ancient woodland is scarce and covers less than 2% of the UK. It cannot be increased so what survives is precious and must be protected and where necessary, restored.

Ancient woodland can contain a wide variety of habitats that have enormous diversity. The older trees may have grown very large with thick, cracked, fissured bark and rot holes, which all provide unique microhabitats for many different species. Ancient woodland, can contain a distinctive assemblage of plants. These include familiar species such as wood anemone, wood sorrel and bluebell, as well as a variety of lichens and fungi.

### The Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading charity dedicated solely to the protection of our native woodland heritage. By acquiring woodland sites we bring them into our care and protection. Many of our woods were previously threatened by change of landuse such as development.

Woodland Trust woods are sympathetically managed for wildlife and public enjoyment. We also create new native woodland.

Since we were founded in 1972, we have grown to care for and protect over 1,100 sites covering 19,000 hectares (47,000 acres). This includes many nationally and internationally designated sites as well as small urban and village woods.



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## The effects of the new route through Badger Wood on the environment (see the worksheet with the maps of the route)

### Marshy area drained

- Many special bog plants, such as marsh marigold, ragged robin and marsh orchids grow here and they are quite rare.
- The marsh attracts dragonflies, butterflies and other insects.
- Small birds and animals, including frogs, toads and newts rely on the plants and insects found here for cover and for food.

### Pond drained

- Frogs and toads must return to water to spawn. They use the same ponds every year so if the ponds are drained they will not be able to find them.
- Discuss with children what the consequences of this could be: reduced numbers of frogs and toads, therefore less prey for other woodland creatures. The frog is also a predator of insects, snails etc. so this could have a long term effect on the biodiversity of the woodland.

### Route of stream diverted

- Streams support specialised plants and animals such as water voles, sticklebacks, and waterweeds.
- They also provide links or corridors between habitats.
- If the stream is diverted the wildlife will be disturbed and some species may be lost.
- Frogs and toads that use slow moving parts of the stream when spawning may be forced to travel further away.

### Bluebells dug up

- Bluebells are a native species and are protected by law (Section 13 of the Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981).
- UK has 30% of the global population of bluebells.
- Their success depends upon the amount of sunlight reaching the woodland floor. They thrive in good soil with partial shade. If the trees they are growing under are removed there will be too much light for healthy growth.
- If bluebell bulbs are dug up and transplanted, they are often damaged and the plants are lost.

### Wildflower meadow built over

- In recent years over 95% of our wildflower meadows have disappeared.
- Many wild flowers are food plants for a variety of insects. This, in turn, attracts birds and animals to the habitat.
- They are the natural homes for many species of butterfly, bee and grasshopper.
- As well as being important for a wide variety of wild flowers and insects, they are beautiful to look at and are part of our natural heritage.
- A new wildflower meadow would take many years to become established.



# Teacher notes

## 50 Mature trees surrounding pond removed

- Old trees play a unique part in our landscape. Each one has its own special characteristics and distinct history.
- Their age and the range of potential habitats that individual trees might contain will mean that they can support large numbers of species.

## Piles of rotting logs cleared

- Rotting wood supports many hundreds of different species of invertebrates. These include centipedes, hoverflies, woodlice, mites and beetles. It is consequently important for the birds, such as the Greater Spotted Woodpecker, which feed on them.
- Dead wood is also important for rare invertebrates such as the Stag Beetle, which is a rare, protected and beautiful beetle, with huge jaws (like antlers).
- Dead wood is the host for different types of fungi such as bracket fungi, which then provide food for a number of different insects and small mammals.
- For the reasons given above, it is important to leave some dead wood where possible, for example, when thinning trees.

## Ancient tree cut down

- Ancient trees support some of the most important wildlife in Britain.
- Ancient trees support life forms that can live nowhere else. Many of the species are rare and declining and cannot easily move to new trees.
- The ancient tree in Badger Wood will have survived damage from generations of people, storms and maybe even wars! It is irreplaceable.
- For more information about how to protect ancient trees and woodland go to the Woodland Trust
- Woods Under Threat' website: [www.woodsunderthreat.info](http://www.woodsunderthreat.info)

## Hedgerows removed to provide access for machinery

- Hedgerows have been an important feature of British countryside since the Enclosure Acts of the early 18th Century, although there have been hedgerows as early as the Bronze Age. They were first used as stock enclosures and boundary markers, but also provided berries, nuts, firewood and other resources.
- Hedgerows are important habitats in their own right. They are especially important for butterflies and moths, birds, bats, small mammals and a vast number of insects.
- They are important nesting sites and source of food for birds.
- Various animals rely on the presence of hedgerows. Rabbits sometimes burrow under hedges and badgers can use hedge banks for their setts. Hedgehogs commonly feed, breed and hibernate in hedges.
- They provide shelter and protect the trees and plants from the wind.

