

Heartwood - long term monitoring - Hedgerows

In 2010, a group of volunteers, led by Justine Mowe, came together to monitor and manage the existing hedgerows at Heartwood Forest with the objective of increasing their ecological value.

At the outset, four hedgerows were identified for continuous review. This was on the basis that they would be retained as hedgerow habitat following the completion of the woodland creation project at Heartwood Forest.

Baseline monitoring commenced in spring 2011, with further monitoring undertaken in Summer & Autumn 2011 and the winter visit in early February 2012. The lengths of hedges and exact locations were defined during the initial baseline year and following a further consultation between the group and the Woodland Trust in February 2012, four additional areas of hedgerow were identified for ongoing review and management.

Using survey criteria based on the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species 'Hedgerows for Dormice Project' (PTES, 2008 and Defra, 2007), and the Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) 'Biodiversity' and 'Air Quality' Survey Projects (OPAL, 2010). parameters were established for each survey visit as follows;

- Visual appearance
- Minor tree/shrub species
- Field signs and species of fauna
- Lichen and ground flora
- Changes identified from previous surveys
- Any recommendations to be incorporated into Heartwood Forest management plan

Each of the hedges identified has an individual purpose, which has been outlined in a 5 Year Management Plan by the group. Survey data collated to date, during each seasonal visit going forward, and from species specific monitoring of bats and small mammals that is planned to commence in Summer/Autumn 2012, will be recorded for annual analysis and to identify achievement of the strategic purpose. Through this monitoring and the physical management of hedge laying, it is anticipated that both enhancement of biodiversity and the natural linear boundaries within the forest will be improved.



Section of newly laid hedge

References

- Defra (2007) Hedgerow Survey Handbook. A standard procedure for local surveys in UK. Defra, London.
- Open Air Laboratory (2010) OPAL Biodiversity Survey, Discover what lives in a hedge, www.opalexplornature.org/ Natural History Museum, London.
- People's Trust for Endangered Species (2008) Hedgerows for Dormice; Improving Wildlife Corridors www.ptes.org/files/497_hfd_project_leaflet.pdf PTES, London
- Woodland Trust (2009) Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/support-us/appeals/england/heartwood-forest/more-information/

Text by Justine Mowe - June 2012

Photos: Towards Round Wood in 2010 by Bel Bluemel and Hedge laying in 2011 by Geoff Horn