

PRIORITY HABITAT FACTSHEET



*Traditional orchard (Paul Read),
Spotted Flycatcher (Neil Rolph), Common Toad (Paul Kitchener).*

Traditional Orchards

A mixed plantation (or hedges) five or more fruit and/or nut trees including apple, plum, pear, damson, cherry, walnut and cobnut, with canopies no more than 20m apart.

Trees may be multi-stemmed, have very short trunks or be grown as standards or half-standards on vigorous rootstocks; cobnuts and hazels are not routinely coppiced. Grass floor may be grazed, but is not mown short.

IMPORTANCE FOR WILDLIFE

This is the only Priority Habitat recognised for the importance of both the fruit crop with its associated great variety of fruit cultivars and the habitat itself. The patchworks of fruit trees and non-fruit trees, scrub, hedgerows, fallen dead wood and associated features such as ponds, together with the variety of fruit and nuts, attracts and supports a wide variety of species including insects and other invertebrates, mammals, birds, mosses, epiphytes, fungi and lichens.



IMPORTANT ASSOCIATED SPECIES

Birds

Hedge Accentor (Dunnock) *Prunella modularis*
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*
Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*
Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*
Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*
Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Mammals

Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*
Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*
Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*
Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus**
Soprano Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Reptiles and Amphibians

Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*
Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*
Slow worm *Anguis fragilis*
Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*
Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

Beetles

Stag Beetle *Lucanus cervus*

Moths

Goat Moth *Cossus cossus*
Knot Grass *Acronicta rumicis***
Brown-spot Pinion *Agrochola litura***
Beaded Chestnut *Agrochola lychnidis***
Green-brindled Crescent *Allophyes oxyacanthae***
Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis***
Large Nutmeg *Apamea anceps***
Centre-barred Sallow *Atethmia centrago***
Dark Brocade *Blepharita adusta***
Mottled Rustic *Caradrina morpheus***
Figure of Eight *Diloba caeruleocephala***
September Thorn *Ennomos erosaria***
Dusky Thorn *Ennomos fuscantaria***
August Thorn *Ennomos quercinaria***
Spinach *Eulithis mellinata***
Garden Dart *Euxoa nigricans***
Small Emerald *Hemistola chrysoprasaria***
Ghost Moth *Hepialus humuli***
Rustic *Hoplodrina blanda***
Rosy Rustic *Hydraecia micacea***
Lackey *Malacosoma neustria***
Brindled Beauty *Lycia hirtaria***
V-moth *Macaria wauaria***
Dot moth *Melanchnra persicariae***
Rosy Minor *Mesoligia literosa***
Buff Ermine *Spilosoma luteum***
Pale Eggar *Trichiura crataegi***
Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae***
Dark-barred Twin-Spot Carpet *Xanthorhoe ferrugata***

Fungi

Orchard Tooth *Sarcodontia crocea*

*Suffolk Priority species

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



Images: Top – Dunnock (Steve Roach). Bottom, left to right – Orchard Tooth (Rob Parker), Song Thrush (Neil Rolph), Ghost Moth (Paul Kitchener), Hedgehog (Dušan Veverkolog/Unsplash).

FACTORS AFFECTING HABITAT IN SUFFOLK

- This habitat is found in small patches within or adjacent to settlement and it is extremely susceptible to loss from construction projects and conversion to gardens or pony paddocks
- Orchard production is under commercial pressure and traditional orchards are less economically viable. Increasing organic production and marketing of traditional varieties can help traditional orchards. However old, small orchards, especially in the claylands, are still under severe pressure.
- Site management issues: Neglect of trees and inappropriate pruning; Inappropriate grazing, and/or lack of tree protection from grazing animals; Poor management of grassland around the trees; Failure to replace trees as they are lost.



HABITAT MANAGEMENT ADVICE

- Create continuity by planting young trees, keep old varieties going by grafting to make new trees. Plant a mix of early, mid and late-flowering trees for longer-lasting food sources.
- Standing decaying wood is valuable, retain dead wood, hollow trunks, cracks in bark and rot holes, that support saproxylic insects and provide nesting / roosting areas for birds and bats.
- Keep standing deadwood as long as possible. Where it must be pruned stack it nearby and create log or brushwood piles.
- Leave unwanted fruit on the tree or where it falls as an important source of food in the autumn and winter.
- Maintain a varied orchard floor. Staggered and late mowing, and leaving a strip of rough grassland, improves habitat and enables flowering plants to set and disperse seed. Leave an area uncut to for insects to overwinter. Remove grass cuttings and avoid adding fertilisers as low fertility grassland supports greater diversity.
- Keep some grass short as a habitat for grassland fungi. Leave patches of nettles and brambles, nettles are the larval food-plant for several species of butterfly and brambles provide a late source of nectar, an abundance of fruit, thorny shelter and a great predation ground for insectivores.
- Maintain a suitable grazing regime to ensure invasive scrub is kept down, a supply of dung is present to support specialist invertebrates, and flowering plants/shrubs are retained.

Apple tree (Emmalee Couturier/Unsplash).



VISION FOR SUFFOLK

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

WHERE TO FIND FURTHER INFORMATION

Barnes, G. and Williamson, T. 2021 *The Orchards of Eastern England: History, Ecology and Place*.
Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press

Fruit ID • www.fruitid.com

JNCC Habitat Description (pdf)

- <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/2829ce47-1ca5-41e7-bc1a-871c1cc0b3ae/UKBAP-BAPHabitats-56-TraditionalOrchards.pdf>

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 England – Traditional orchards information notes

- <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/19007?category=9001>

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

People's Trust for Endangered Species – *Traditional orchards: a guide to wildlife and management* (pdf)

- <https://ptes.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/orchard-guide-edition2.pdf>

Suffolk Traditional Orchards Research Group – advice notes

- <https://issuu.com/suffolkbis/stacks/e17734c0a31d4a20a429e710ebda2115>

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Habitats Explorer • <https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/habitats/farmland/orchard>

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