

# Wood warbler

## Status

BoCC Amber listed because a significant decline in breeding numbers since 1994.

## Population

Approximately 7,500 territorial males.

## Habitat

Closed canopy woods with little mid-strata or shrub layer are favoured, particularly in western sessile oak and in birch woods.

## Conservation issues

The causes of the decline are not well understood, and as egg survival has increased recently, it suggests that the causes are not associated with the early breeding season.

## Ecology

*Feeding:* wood warblers feed exclusively on invertebrates during the nesting season, and take some fruit in autumn. Prey is searched for in foliage and twigs in the canopy; they also fly-catch and hover to pick from foliage.

*Breeding:* the nest is in a formed, slight depression on the ground amongst vegetation, or sometimes under a log or fallen branch. It is a domed construction of grass and bark, and is lined with finer grasses and hair.



Frits van Duijn/Foto Natura (EJPA)

Clutches of five to seven eggs are laid from mid-May (later in the north). Although second clutches are unusual they may be laid up to early July. Incubation takes 12–14 days, and the chicks fledge in 12–15 days.

## Management issues

Wood warblers breed where the shrub layer is sparse, often where it is suppressed by grazing, similar to that favoured by pied flycatchers.

There is a need to balance grazing pressure to ensure the continuity of open structure required, but at the same time provide replacement trees. Control of grazing intensity and timing is therefore needed. Excessive grazing pressure will also make the ground layer unsuitable for nesting.



**Figure 2.15**  
Breeding distribution of the wood warbler in England.