



## **English Woodland Grant Scheme**

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Woodland Improvement Grant

August 2008

# Reversing Woodland Bird Decline

## North East England

**Purpose** This leaflet provides guidance on how to apply for this regionally focussed grant. It supplements the generic guidance on Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG), which is available from the [EWGS web site](#).

**Introduction** Wild birds are considered a good indicator of the general state of health of our wildlife and the countryside and they have been chosen as one of the Government's 15 headline indicators of progress towards sustainable development.

The 'Quality of Life' indicator shows woodland bird populations falling by 20 per cent among 33 species in the last 25 years. Some of these such as the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Spotted Flycatcher and Willow Tit have declined by more than 50 per cent since the late 1960s.

Working in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) 14 vulnerable species have been identified for attention through this grant in the North East. Seven of the species, Redstart, Wood Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Tree Pipit, Lesser Redpoll, Spotted Flycatcher, and Woodcock, are associated with the North Pennine valleys, the A68/69 corridors, Northumberland National Park and fringe. Others such as the Willow Warbler, Garden Warbler, Marsh Tit and Bullfinch are more widely distributed, while the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Hawfinch are scarce. If you wish to include work in your application to benefit these last two species please talk to the Forestry Commission beforehand. Distribution maps can be found on the RSPB web site: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/projects/targeting/index.asp>

Much of the decline can be attributed to changes in woodland management regimes through either low levels of activity or changes in woodland composition.

This grant will be targeted at woodlands where work to encourage early successional scrub or old growth and dead wood and any other appropriate work, will have a beneficial effect on identified woodland bird populations.

**Eligibility** In order to be eligible for this grant applicants must meet the following:

- The general criteria and conditions for Woodland Improvement Grant

- (WIG) apply – refer to the WIG guidance for further details
- The application must specify which of the species the work will benefit
  - The woodland must be within one of the target areas for the species chosen (visit RSPB web site above)
  - The work must benefit the chosen species and be in accordance with the criteria outlined in appendix 1
  - The FC normally expects a management plan to assess the appropriateness and priority of proposals, as well as to put them in a wider context. If there is no plan, the woodland should have a Condition, Opportunities & Threats (COT) Assessment undertaken. An [electronic version of the COT](#) is available for download in the WMG section of the website [www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wmg](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wmg)
  - In order to assess the effectiveness of this grant and to compare with similar initiatives, applicants must agree to periodic monitoring of the woodland by, or on behalf of, the RSPB.

Each eligible application site will be visited by an FC officer and probably an RSPB officer to assess the location to ensure the work proposed is appropriate and will benefit the chosen species.

Grant will be paid at 80% of Standard Costs for the agreed items in the proposed work schedule. The operations and standard costs are listed in *Operations Note 9 – Standard Costs*, available from the [EWGS document library](#). Other operations listed as interventions below will be paid as units of standard costs special funds.

This WIG fund is limited to payments in the financial years 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to 31 March 2012. Claims must be received by 28 February in the financial year in which the payment is due. Funds are limited and will be awarded on a first come first served basis. The maximum contribution for each application is £1500.

**How to Apply** Both EWGS 1 General Details form and EWGS 5 Woodland Improvement Grant form must be completed and submitted with an OS Master Map ® showing the areas for which grant is sought. Applications must be submitted by 28 February in the financial year before the first payment is due.

**Further Advice and Information** Further information can be obtained from your local Woodland Officer by contacting the Regional office at Rothbury on 01669 621591 or the Southern Area office at Hamsterley on 01388 488721.

**Other Advice** The EWGS website [www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs) contains all the information needed to apply for grant support. Details relating to grants specific to NE England are available at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/northeastengland>. If you do not have access to the internet, you can request any of the information from your local Forestry Commission office.

We recommend getting professional advice on woodland management and grants. A list of national and regional professional organisations is available at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/infd-74adb> or from your local office at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6VMDZD>.

**Versions** Version 1.0 issued 21 August 2008

## Appendix 1

# Reversing Woodland Bird Decline

## Western Atlantic-type Oakwood assemblage

<i>BIRD ASSEMBLAGES</i>	<i>KEY AREAS IN THE NORTH EAST</i>	<i>POTENTIAL ISSUES DRIVING DECLINE</i>	<i>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</i>	<i>INTERVENTIONS<sup>i</sup></i>
Redstart	North Pennine valleys/dales; A69/A68 corridors; Northumberland National Park and fringe	Loss of older trees especially on glade/woodland edge; lack of grazing to maintain open ground structure; shortage of natural nest holes	Establish ability to control grazing; retain deadwood; provide nest boxes where relevant; extend woodland in appropriate locations e.g. ghylls	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; standing deadwood creation; nest boxes; tree establishment to extend woodland;
Wood Warbler	North Pennine valleys/dales; A69/A68 corridors; Northumberland National Park and fringe	Insufficient grazing to maintain open shrub layer; may be instances where excessive grazing is causing loss of nesting habitat and preventing regeneration	Establish ability to control grazing; retain deadwood; extend woodland in appropriate locations e.g. ghylls	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; tree establishment to extend woodland
Pied Flycatcher	North Pennine valleys/dales; A69/A68 corridors; Northumberland National Park and fringe	Insufficient grazing to maintain open shrub layer; may be instances where excessive grazing is preventing regeneration; lack of nest holes may be an issue but provision of nest boxes should be cautious	Establish ability to control grazing; provide nest boxes (at appropriate density) where relevant; retain deadwood; extend woodland in appropriate locations e.g. ghylls	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; standing deadwood creation; nest boxes (at appropriate density); tree establishment to extend woodland;

## Upland Fringe assemblage

<i>BIRD ASSEMBLAGES</i>	<i>KEY AREAS IN THE NORTH EAST</i>	<i>POTENTIAL ISSUES DRIVING DECLINE</i>	<i>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</i>	<i>INTERVENTIONS</i>
Tree Pipit	A69/A68 corridor; Northumberland National Park and fringe	Loss of open-structure woodland through ageing and canopy closure; maintaining individual trees in clear fell areas; deer browsing removing nest cover	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; establish ability to control grazing; create scrubby woodland edge	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Lesser Redpoll	A69/A68 corridor; Northumberland National Park and fringe	Succession of preferred open habitats into more mature woodland	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; create scrubby woodland edge	Coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Willow Warbler	Widely-distributed species	Deer browsing affecting nesting habitat and scrub; heavy shade/canopy closure; uniformity at woodland edge	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; create scrubby woodland edge; establish ability to control grazing	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Garden Warbler	Widely-distributed species	Deer browsing affecting nesting habitat and scrub; heavy shade/canopy closure; uniformity at woodland edge	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; create scrubby woodland edge; establish ability to control grazing	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Spotted Flycatcher	A69/A68 corridors; Northumberland National Park and fringe	Decrease in glades and open rides; lack of grazing (insect food); loss of ivy; lack of natural nest sites	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement;	Coppicing; creation of standing dead wood; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; nest boxes

Woodcock	A69/A68 corridors; North Pennine valleys/dales;	Deer browsing leading to loss of shrub layer; drying out of wet woodland; recreational disturbance	increase deadwood; nest box provision Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; establish ability to control grazing; maintain/enhance naturally high water levels	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; ride management; scrub establishment in surrounding buffer (wood humidity); enhance wet features
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## Lowland Woodland assemblage

<i>BIRD ASSEMBLAGES</i>	<i>KEY AREAS IN THE NORTH EAST</i>	<i>POTENTIAL ISSUES DRIVING DECLINE</i>	<i>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</i>	<i>INTERVENTIONS<sup>i</sup></i>
Garden Warbler	Widely-distributed species	Deer browsing affecting nesting habitat and understorey; heavy shade/canopy closure; uniformity at woodland edge	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; create scrubby woodland edge; establish ability to control grazing	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Willow Warbler	Widely-distributed species	Deer browsing affecting nesting habitat and scrub; heavy shade/canopy closure; uniformity at woodland edge	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; create scrubby woodland edge; establish ability to control grazing	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Spotted Flycatcher	A69/A68 corridors; Northumberland National Park and fringe	Decrease in glades and open rides; lack of grazing; lack of natural nest sites	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; retain deadwood	Coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; nest boxes

Marsh Tit	East Durham (JCA15); Mid-Northumberland (JCA12); North York Moors Fringe; Tyne Valley	Deer browsing leading to poor shrub layer; shade reduction; loss of scrub at woodland edge	Establish ability to control grazing; create scrubby woodland edge; retain deadwood	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Willow Tit	Gateshead woodlands; East Durham (JCA15); North York Moors Fringe; Tyne Valley	Excessive deer browsing; increased shade/canopy closure; loss of shrub layer; lack of nest sites (can be addressed during thinning operations)	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; create scrubby woodland edge; retain deadwood; establish ability to control grazing	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone; nest-site provision including standing deadwood creation
Bullfinch	Widely-distributed species	Excessive deer browsing; closure of rides and glades; uniformity at woodland edge	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; create scrubby woodland edge; establish ability to control grazing	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; coppicing; ride management; thinning <sup>iv</sup> ; scrub establishment in buffer zone
Woodcock	A69/A68 corridors; North Pennine valleys/dales;	Deer browsing leading to loss of shrub layer; drying out of wet woodland; recreational disturbance	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland; ride enhancement; glade creation/improvement; establish ability to control grazing; maintain/enhance naturally high water levels	Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; ride management; scrub establishment in surrounding buffer; drainage management to achieve wetter ground conditions.

## Lowland Specialists Woodland Species with Restricted Range in the North East

<i>BIRD ASSEMBLAGES</i>	<i>KEY AREAS IN THE NORTH EAST</i>	<i>POTENTIAL ISSUES DRIVING DECLINE</i>	<i>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</i>	<i>INTERVENTIONS<sup>i</sup></i>
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Gateshead woodlands; Durham fringe woodlands	Tree crowding leading to a lack of open crowned	Restructure immature closed canopy woodland;	Coppicing; ride management, thinning <sup>iv</sup> ;

Hawfinch	Durham fringe woodlands; Gateshead woodlands	mature trees; lack of standing deadwood. Loss of woodland pools; effects of deer browsing; recreational disturbance	ride enhancement; increase deadwood Establish ability to control grazing; maintain/enhance naturally high water levels; restore woodland ponds	standing deadwood creation Fencing <sup>ii</sup> ; deer management <sup>iii</sup> ; restore woodland ponds
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<sup>i</sup> All of the listed interventions are potentially fundable using this grant except new planting that may be funded with Woodland Creation Grant.

<sup>ii</sup> Fencing alone is not sufficient to access grant; there must also be a commitment to exclude stock or maintain grazing of the prescribed type and at the prescribed level for a five year period.

<sup>iii</sup> Before grant aiding deer control we will need to be convinced that it is sufficiently well co-ordinated with neighbouring landowners for it to be effective.

<sup>iv</sup> Where thinning will incur a net cost.