

Glossary

Our quickguide to wildlife and conservation lingo.

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A

Acid Grassland

Grasslands that develop over nutrient poor, acidic soils

Ancient Woodland

Woodland in Britain that originated before 1600 AD. Ancient woodland can also be secondary woodland

C

Carr

Woodland growing on soils with permanently high water levels and dominated usually by alder or willow

Chalk Grassland

A type of grassland and associated plants that grow in thin calcareous soil over chalk bedrock

Coppice

A traditional method of woodland management in which multiple stems are allowed to grow up from the base of a felled tree. The stems are then cut every few years. In the past this would have provided fuel and wood for making tool handles, fencing and charcoal.

E

Emergent

Aquatic plants rooted in water but growing up above the water surface

F

Fen

Plants found in chalky wetland areas typically composed of willowherbs, meadowsweet, reed canary grass and various sedges

G

Glade

An open area in woodland, created by felling trees, which is warmer and brighter than the surrounding woodland and offers ideal conditions for many butterflies and wildflowers

Grass Heath

Strongly acid grassland with many species of plants characteristic of heathland but lacking heather or heaths

Ground Flora

Plants which grow at the lowest level of a plant community. They rarely grow to a height greater than one metre

H

Habitat

The living place of a plant or animal or a community of plants and animals

Heathland

An area characterised by heather and heaths growing on acidic, nutrient poor, mineral soils. Only remnants of true heathland exist in Hertfordshire

I

Invertebrate

Animals without backbones such as insects, spiders and snails

M

Micro-habitat

A small scale part of a habitat where the ecological conditions are different from the main habitat, e.g. a rotting log within a wood

N

Neutral Grassland

Any grassland which is neither strongly acidic nor strongly calcareous

P

Pollard

A tree that has been felled at two or more metres above ground level in order to produce a crown of poles. The poles would have been traditionally used like coppice poles but are grown out of reach of grazing animals. The crowns are often valuable nesting sites for birds

R

Rank Vegetation

Grassland or marshes that have not been cut or grazed for some time and have become tall, tussocky and dominated by coarse species of grass

Ride

A wide path or track clearing through woodland which is sheltered but receives sunlight to the ground. They are often rich in wildflowers and butterflies

S

Scrub

A general term used to describe a community of tree and shrub species which colonise open ground, particularly grassland

Secondary Woodland

Woodland occupying a site that has not been wooded continuously since the last ice age. It may be a product of natural succession or of planting on formerly unwooded land

Standard Trees

Trees within a coppiced woodland which are allowed to grow to maturity and traditionally then felled or large timber

Succession

The gradual replacement of one plant community by another leading ultimately to an equilibrium state

U

Unimproved

Grassland which has never been treated with chemical fertilizers or herbicides and as a result is usually rich in wildlife
