

Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

A programme of woodland, grassland, wetland and water quality improvements

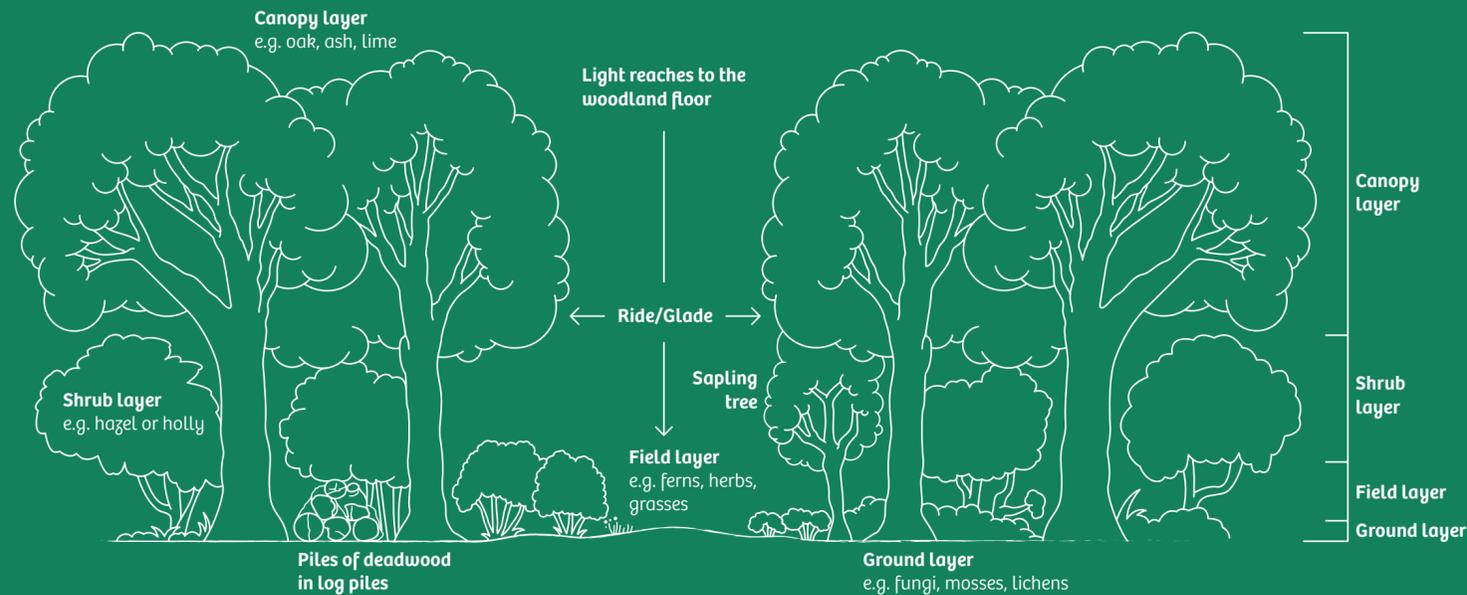
This project has enabled habitat enhancements in twelve of Solihull's woodlands

Solihull Council's woodlands are a key component of the landscape and are important for people and wildlife.

Managing our woodlands ensures that they have more variation in structure, age and species of trees which will increase their biodiversity – attracting and supporting a greater range of wildlife and plants.

Woodlands are composed of a variety of plants of differing heights and shapes. This gives a distinct vertical structure – canopy, shrub, field and ground layers.

Thinning the canopy creates the necessary space and light to enable trees to prosper and allow the next generation of saplings to establish. It also opens glades and rides, creating open areas that attract completely different flowers and wildlife from the rest of the wood.



The woodland structure diagram shows the layers and how rides /glades allow light into the woodland.

Most woodland butterflies are sun-loving insects and the majority only breed in open rides and glades which provide warm and sunny micro-climates. Bats also use rides for hunting attracted by the rich insect life.

Bills Wood

Bills Wood is a broad-leaved semi-natural ancient woodland, with locally important oak-bracken-bramble vegetation. The wood has several ancient woodland indicator species including crab apple, small leaved lime and yellow pimpernel. The wood contains particularly good examples of wood banks. Historic land tax records from the 1780s show that the wood was coppiced.

Part of the woodland had been planted with grey poplar – a hybrid of aspen and white poplar. It is a large tree which freely suckers and had spread throughout the woodland harming other species. As part of this management work the grey poplar was felled and the area replanted with a mix of locally native tree and shrub species.

Some species of animals and plants found in the wood



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Muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*) was introduced into the UK from China in the 20th century. It can be seen locally in woodland, parkland and gardens. They eat the shoots from shrubs and woodland herbs and brambles. It's a small, stocky deer about the same size as a medium dog. It is gingery-brown, with a pale underside, darker stripes in its face, and small, single-pointed antlers. They are known as 'barking deer' because of their dog-like calls.



Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) is a deciduous tree which has pale grey bark and sometimes a short, twisted trunk which develops ridges with age. Mature trees can grow to 30 metres and live for more than 300 years. Finches and tits and small mammals eat the seeds in autumn.

The tawny owl (*Strix aluco*) is the UK's largest common owl and is known for making the familiar 'twit twoo' call during the night.

This call is made by both a male and female owl calling to each other. Sensitive sight and hearing allows owls to locate small animals like voles and mice, while their wing feathers have a soft furry edge enabling soundless flight. They normally mate for life and a pair will defend their shared territory from other owls. Nesting usually takes place in spring in hollow trees or an old crow's nest.



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