



**Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan 2012  
Orchard Action Plan**

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## List of habitats included

### National Priority Habitats:

- Traditional Orchards

### Local Priority Habitats:

- Community Orchards



## Habitat Descriptions

Traditional Orchards are defined as low intensity managed, low density groups of fruit or nut trees grown on vigorous rootstocks in permanent grassland. Cobnut plats are also included; Cobnuts which are a type of hazel are grown in a type of orchard known as a plat. The minimum size of a Traditional Orchard is defined as five trees with crown edges less than 20 metres apart. In the UK apples, pears, plums, damsons, cherries and quince are all grown in Traditional Orchards.

Traditional Orchards are a much loved and well established habitat in the UK. They make a large contribution not only to biodiversity but also to the character and attractiveness of the landscape. The range of wildlife found in any particular Traditional Orchard depends on the mosaic of habitats that make up that orchard. A Traditional Orchard can contain a mixture of any or all of these types of habitat:

- open woodland
- scrub
- veteran woodland
- grassland
- ponds
- walls
- hedgerows and hedgerow trees

Traditional Orchards have been shown to support a large range of rare and threatened species including nationally prioritised species and species included on the Red and Amber Lists of Conservation Concern. Despite supporting rare plants, lichens, invertebrates and mammals Traditional Orchards are becoming increasingly rare mainly due to neglect and agricultural intensification. It is estimated that since 1950 the area of orchard in England has decreased by 63%.

## Current Status

In 2007 traditional orchards were designated as a Priority Habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, following this the People' Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), in collaboration with Natural England, created an inventory of traditional orchards throughout England to support the Habitat Action Plan (HAP) and provide a much needed baseline of data from which to focus future conservation action. The creation of the inventory involved identification and condition assessment of orchards using aerial photograph interpretation and ground-truthing.

The inventory found 35378 individual traditional orchards across England covering 16990ha. Only 9% of these are in excellent condition, 46% in good condition and 45% of traditional orchards are in poor condition.

In South Yorkshire 211 traditional orchards have been identified covering an area of 33.3ha. None of these orchards are classed as being in excellent condition, 25% are in good condition and 75% are in poor condition.

There are currently 46 identified potential traditional orchard sites in Rotherham. The current condition of these orchards is unknown as further ground proofing is required.

## **Key Factors and Influences**

The following are considered to be the key issues affecting Rotherham's traditional orchard resource; they are not in any order of priority:

- Agricultural intensification: Old traditional orchards are being grubbed up and replaced with more economically viable orchards, or other more financially rewarding uses.
- Neglect: Due to a lack of understanding of traditional orchards and their importance many have been lost.
- Development: Many traditional orchards have been removed to make way for new developments.
- Increased imports of foreign fruit: High import levels of fruit from abroad make it difficult for local traditional fruit growers to compete.

## **Associated Habitats and Species**

Traditional orchards can be associated with any of the other priority habitats, as noted above; habitat mosaics will depend on ground and soil conditions, hydrology and management activity.

The list provided in Appendix One contains England Priority species that are associated with traditional orchard habitats and highlights which of these have been recorded in Rotherham. The list has been prepared by the Biodiversity Integration Groups, established to bring together habitat and associated species interests at an England level as part of Natural England led research.

## **Key Sites of Good Quality and of Concern**

The England Inventory of Traditional Orchards identified 46 potential orchard sites in Rotherham; mapping of these sites has been obtained. The current condition of these orchards is unknown as further ground proofing is required to determine sites of good quality and of concern.

Throapham Manor is a traditional orchard site owned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and work is currently being undertaken to produce a management plan for this site.

# Objectives and Targets

In order to support the delivery of national and regional targets the following are the proposed objectives for the Rotherham Traditional Orchard Biodiversity Action Plan. Actions have been proposed with the aim of achieving the objectives and targets; the following section contains a suggested programme of action and prioritisation of these actions.

## Objectives

1. No net loss of orchards across Rotherham.
2. Improve condition of traditional orchards in Rotherham.
3. Create new traditional orchards in Rotherham.
4. Raise awareness of the importance of traditional orchards.
5. No loss of local fruit varieties.

## Targets

1. Restore 2 traditional orchard sites to good condition each year.
2. Create at least 2 new orchards by 2015.
3. Hold at least 1 awareness raising event each year.
4. Create full inventory of local fruit varieties by 2015 and monitor every 5 years.

## Proposed Actions

### Policy and Legislation

- Look to incorporate existing protection methods into traditional orchard sites. The protection frameworks that are available include:
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): This is the best form of protection currently afforded to traditional orchards, although most traditional orchards with this protection usually lie coincidentally within a larger SSSI designated area.
  - Tree Preservation Orders (TPO): Local authorities can use TPOs to protect fruit trees or group of trees with amenity value.
  - Local Nature Reserves (LNR): LNRs are a statutory designation that can be made in collaboration with Natural England by a local authority if they own the land. In an LNR the wildlife interest must be taken into account in all decision concerning the land.
  - Local Wildlife Sites (LWS): Important sites for wildlife are protected through local planning systems.
- Review criteria for LNR and LWS to ensure appropriate traditional orchard sites can be included under these designations.
- Identify key traditional orchard sites in the area.

### Site Management, Safeguard and Land Acquisition

- Declare LNR and LWS designation for appropriate traditional orchard sites.
- Ensure existing traditional orchards are appropriately protected from new developments.
- Using Throapham Manor as an example, encourage land owners to maintain and restore traditional orchard sites.
- Encourage local schools and community projects to create new orchards using traditional management methods.
- Seek sources of funding for current orchards and creation of new orchards.
- Encourage planting of local fruit varieties.

### Advisory

- Develop a contact strategy to approach traditional orchard land owners and encourage them to manage their orchards.
- Provide management advice to orchard owners.
- Provide orchard owners with information on possible funding options for management such as agri-environment schemes.
- Provide information on local fruit varieties for new orchards.
- Advise orchard owners on opportunities provided by traditional orchards, e.g. fruit juice, cider etc.

### Future Research and Monitoring

Prepared by Andrew Benson (Sheffield Hallam University) on behalf of Rotherham Biodiversity Forum  
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- Visit identified traditional orchard sites to carry out ground proofing and determine current condition of orchards. Findings should be reported to People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES).
- Create inventory of local fruit species diversity.
- Ensure all data is shared with Rotherham's Biological Records Centre.
- Carry out ecological surveys at traditional orchard sites to identify all species present.
- Ensure protection of local fruit varieties.
- Keep up to date records of traditional orchard sites, conditions, and owners.

#### Communication and Publicity

- Promote good management of traditional orchards through demonstrations at Throapham Manor site.
- Raise awareness of the importance of traditional orchards through media.
- Publicise and hold apple day events.

# Suggested Programme of Action

## Contacting Land Owners

Using GIS data showing possible sites of traditional orchards in Rotherham efforts should be made to contact land owners of these sites. Such is the nature of traditional orchards some land owners may be unaware that they have a traditional orchard on their land and many are unlikely to be aware of the great value that traditional orchards hold. Rotherham Biodiversity Forum should strive to make land owners aware of the value of their traditional orchards and should aid them with the provision of information which may help to safeguard and improve the quality of these traditional orchards. One option available is to write to land owners and include an information pack which will include information on:

- Grants
- Protection options
- Business opportunities
- Helpful contacts/links for further information

If the land owners are to be convinced to put time and resources into restoring and conserving their traditional orchards they must be provided with as much information and help as possible. This course of action should require minimal resources from Rotherham Biodiversity Forum partners after the original information packs have been delivered, although it is advised that a representative for traditional orchards in Rotherham is available to give additional information if required.

## Survey Plan

It is important for Rotherham Biodiversity Forum to keep an itinerary of traditional orchards. The current itinerary gives locations of potential traditional orchard sites. Adding more detail to this itinerary would be beneficial for monitoring delivery of targets and any future changes. The identification of key species, habitats or local fruit varieties on an orchard could increase the funding options available to the orchard owner. Beneficial information that should be gathered includes:

- Current condition of orchard
- Current use of orchard
- Current biodiversity value of orchard
- Type of fruit tree present, including species variety of fruit

The most practical way to compile this information would be to carry out a single survey of each site by an adequately able person. However this would be a costly option. There are a number of alternative options available to retrieve the desired information:

- Initially survey all sites only for condition and current use only.
- Include a brief questionnaire in land owners' information pack requesting the current condition and use of the traditional orchard. (A simple guide on how to determine the condition of a traditional orchard should be included in information pack.)
- Survey a selected number of sites each year to gradually build up a database. This option would make it difficult to monitor any changes.

# Prioritising Future Actions

Key: **High Priority** **Medium Priority** **Low Priority**

	Action	Priority
Policy and Legislation	Look to incorporate existing protection methods into traditional orchard sites.	Medium Priority
	Review criteria for LNR and LWS to ensure appropriate traditional orchard sites can be included under these designations.	Medium Priority
	Identify key traditional orchard sites in the area.	High Priority
Site Management, Safeguard and Land Acquisition	Declare LNR and LWS designation for appropriate traditional orchard sites.	Medium Priority
	Ensure existing traditional orchards are appropriately protected from new developments.	High Priority
	Using Throapham Manor as an example, encourage land owners to maintain and restore traditional orchard sites.	Low Priority
	Encourage local schools and community projects to create new orchards using traditional management methods.	Low Priority
	Seek sources of funding for current orchards and creation of new orchards.	Medium Priority
	Encourage planting of local fruit varieties.	High Priority
Advisory	Develop a contact strategy to approach traditional orchard land owners and encourage them to manage their orchards.	High Priority
	Provide management advice to orchard owners.	High Priority
	Provide orchard owners with information on possible funding options for management such as agri-environment schemes.	High Priority
	Provide information on local fruit varieties for new orchards.	High Priority
	Advise orchard owners on opportunities provided by traditional orchards eg. fruit, juice, cider etc	High Priority
Future Research and Monitoring	Visit identified traditional orchard sites to carry out ground proofing and determine current condition of orchards. Findings should be reported to PTES.	Medium Priority
	Create inventory of local fruit species diversity.	Medium Priority
	Ensure all data is shared with Rotherham's Biological Records Centre.	Low Priority
	Carry out ecological surveys at traditional orchard sites to identify all species present.	Low Priority
	Ensure protection of local fruit varieties.	High Priority
	Keep up to date records of traditional orchard sites, conditions, and owners.	High Priority
Communication and Publicity	Promote good management of traditional orchards through demonstrations at Throapham Manor site.	Medium Priority
	Raise awareness of the importance of traditional orchards through media.	High Priority
	Publicise and hold apple day events.	High Priority



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# Appendix One - List of England Priority Species associated with Traditional Orchards

(Showing where these have been recorded in Rotherham)

Scientific Name	Common name	Classification	Rotherham
<i>Sarcodontia crocea</i>	Orchard Tooth	fungus (non lichenised)	
<i>Ramonia chrysophaea</i>	a lichen	lichen	
<i>Usnea articulata</i>	String-of-sausages Lichen	lichen	
<i>Orthotrichum obtusifolium</i>	Blunt-leaved Bristle-moss	bryophyte	
<i>Ampedus rufipennis</i>	a click-beetle	beetle	
<i>Gnorimus nobilis</i>	Noble Chafer	beetle	
<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	Stag Beetle	beetle	
<i>Meloe violaceus</i>	Violet Oil-beetle	beetle	
<i>Physatocheila smreczynskii</i>	Apple Lace-bug	bug	
<i>Aricia artaxerxes</i>	Northern Brown Argus	butterfly	
<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	butterfly	Yes
<i>Satyrrium w-album</i>	White Letter Hairstreak	butterfly	Yes
<i>Celypha woodiana</i>	Mistletoe Marble	moth	
<i>Cossus cossus</i>	Goat Moth	moth	Yes
<i>Philodromus margaritatus</i>	Lichen Running-spider	spider	
<i>Bufo bufo</i>	Common Toad	amphibian	Yes
<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Great Crested Newt	amphibian	Yes
<i>Carduelis cannabina autochthona / cannabina</i>	Linnet	bird	Yes
<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Hawfinch	bird	Yes
<i>Cuculus canorus canorus</i>	Common Cuckoo	bird	Yes
<i>Dendrocopos minor comminutus</i>	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	bird	Yes
<i>Emberiza citronella citrinella</i>	Yellowhammer	bird	Yes
<i>Motacilla flava flavissima</i>	Yellow Wagtail	bird	Yes
<i>Muscicapa striata striata</i>	Spotted Flycatcher	bird	Yes
<i>Parus montanus kleinschmidti</i>	Willow Tit	bird	
<i>Parus palustris palustris / dresseri</i>	Marsh Tit	bird	
<i>Passer domesticus domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	bird	Yes
<i>Passer montanus montanus</i>	Tree Sparrow	bird	Yes
<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Grey Partridge	bird	Yes
<i>Prunella modularis occidentalis</i>	Dunnock (Hedge Accentor)	bird	Yes
<i>Pyrhula pyrrhula pileata</i>	Bullfinch	bird	Yes
<i>Streptopeliaturturtur</i>	Turtle Dove	bird	Yes
<i>Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris</i>	Starling	bird	Yes
<i>Turdusphilo melosclarkei</i>	Song Thrush	bird	Yes
<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	Barbastelle Bat	mammal	
<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Hedgehog	mammal	Yes
<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Dormouse	mammal	
<i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	Bechstein`s Bat	mammal	
<i>Nyctalu snoctula</i>	Noctule	mammal	Yes
<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano Pipistrelle	mammal	Yes
<i>Plecotusauritus</i>	Brown Long-eared bat	mammal	Yes
<i>Rhinolophus ferrum equinum</i>	Greater Horseshoe Bat	mammal	
<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Lesser Horseshoe Bat	mammal	
<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Slow-worm	reptile	Yes
<i>Natrix natrix</i>	Grass Snake	reptile	Yes
<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Common Lizard	reptile	Yes

**Notes:**