

The State of Dartmoor's Key Wildlife 2011



The *Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan* covered the period 2001-2011 and included key species which were chosen due to their international, national or regional importance, along with some more common species of public appeal. Prior to producing *Living Dartmoor* (the follow on document to take forward biodiversity conservation over the next 10 years), it was decided by the Dartmoor Biodiversity Partnership to carry out an assessment of the current state of these key species to help inform the new initiative. The *State of Dartmoor's Wildlife* table represents this assessment and lists the species based on their conservation priority outlined in the wider status column.

General terms used in table:

Trend – Broad assessment of changes in numbers on Dartmoor based on the data for the past 5 years, or failing that, the last 10 years. These are indicative trends based on the best data available and expert opinion.

Monitoring Level – Indication of the data from which the trend assessment was derived.





Wider Status – The importance and trend of this species beyond Dartmoor.

■ UK BAP Species

Species	Trend	Monitoring Level	Wider Status
 Vigur's eyebright	Stable after decline	Annual survey of whole population	Endemic to Dartmoor and a few Cornish sites ■
 Graphina pauciloculata lichen <small>Image © Barbara Benfield</small>	Stable	Occasional surveys by Devon lichen group	Endemic to UK ■
 Southern damselfly	Up	Annual survey of colonies	Globally threatened; European protected species ■
 Marsh fritillary	Up after decline	Annual coverage of most sites with 5 year full survey	Globally threatened; EU protected; national decline ■
 Otter <small>Image © Laurie Campbell</small>	Stable after increase	EA otter spotter survey 2010 and incidental records	European protected species; increasing nationally ■
 Dormouse <small>Image © Pat Morris</small>	Stable	Partial survey AFW and DNPA 2007/08; nestbox schemes	European protected species; Rapid national decline ■
 Greater horseshoe bat	Stable	Annual roost visits and emergence counts at important roosts	European protected species; rapid national decline ■

Species	Trend	Monitoring Level	Wider Status
 <p>Image © Tom Marshall rspb-images.com</p>	Stable	5 yearly MOD funded surveys plus incidental sightings	Slight national decline ■
	Stable	5 yearly MOD funded surveys	High Conservation Concern; National decline ■
	Down	Survey every 5 years; intensive nest record survey 2010-2012	High Conservation Concern; National decline ■
 <p>Image © Andy Hay rspb-images.com</p>	Stable	Population monitored every 6 years	High Conservation Concern. Restricted to Devon and south Cornwall ■
	Stable after decline	Annual surveys of key sites	High conservation priority; Rapid national decline ■
	Stable	Annual coverage of some sites with 5 year full survey	High conservation priority; Rapid national decline ■
 <p>Image © Keith Warmington</p>	Down	Reintroduction site monitored annually	High conservation priority; other reintroduction sites doing well ■
	Stable	Some annual monitoring on Marsh fritillary sites	Nationally scarce; UK BAP priority species ■
	Stable	5-yearly full population survey	Near threatened; Dartmoor holds most of British population ■
	Stable	5-yearly site surveys	Vulnerable, Dartmoor holds all British population ■

Species	Trend	Monitoring Level	Wider Status	
	Deptford Pink	Stable after increase	Annual survey of main population	Vulnerable; Dartmoor holds largest British colony ■
	Golden plover	Down - Now extinct as a breeder?	Annual checks; 5-yearly MOD funded surveys and Mires Project surveys	Moderate conservation concern
	Dunlin	Stable	Annual checks; 5-yearly MOD funded surveys and Mires Project surveys	High conservation concern
	Curlew	Down	Annual monitoring through Wader Group	National decline, IUCN near threatened
	Buzzard	Up	Incidental sightings only	Low conservation concern
	Woodlark	Stable	Incidental sightings only	High conservation concern
				Image © Chris Gomersall rspb-images.com
	Salmon	Stable	EA surveys (large variation between rivers); Fisheries Associations	National decline
	Freshwater shrimp	Stable	Irregular site checks	Vulnerable in British Red Data Book
	Keeled skimmer	Stable	Mainly incidental sightings	Nationally restricted range
	Greater butterfly orchid	Stable	Annual monitoring at a few sites; incidental sightings elsewhere	Characteristic of Dartmoor haymeadows

Species	Trend	Monitoring Level	Wider Status
 Bog orchid	Stable	Some sites monitored annually	European and national decline
 Wild daffodil	Stable	AFW project in 2002/3, but otherwise incidental records only	National decline
 Flax-leaved St John's wort	Stable	Annual survey of some sites, 5 yearly of all	Near threatened; Dartmoor holds most of British population
 String of sausage lichen	Stable	Occasional surveys by Devon lichen group	National decline

Conclusions

- The general picture for the majority of key species chosen back in 2001 can be seen to be one of stability. This is usually the aim where there are no clear opportunities for habitat restoration or improved site management to increase population sizes. However in many cases, this has only been achieved by ongoing, targeted habitat management by conservation bodies, farmers and land owners. Continuing this effort in future years will be vital to maintain this diversity of wildlife on Dartmoor.
- The decreasing species tend to be those on the fringes of their world distribution such as Golden Plover and Ring Ouzel, and it is likely that climate change has been a contributing factor in their decline. For others like Curlew, the reasons for decline are unclear, although when populations become small they tend to become more susceptible to predators and other factors that healthy populations can normally withstand.
- Particularly encouraging have been the increases achieved through concerted conservation efforts over the last 10 years for the two globally threatened species, the Marsh Fritillary butterfly and the Southern Damselfly, which have national strongholds on Dartmoor. These successes have resulted from long-term partnership projects working with farmers and land owners to bring about habitat improvements which can be sustained through ongoing dialogue.

The Dartmoor Biodiversity Partnership is co-ordinated by Dartmoor National Park Authority and directed by a Steering Group which includes Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, RSPB, Duchy of Cornwall, MOD, Devon County Council, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Devon Wildlife Trust and National Trust.