

Contacts

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Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is a registered charity with more than 11,000 members supporting its work to protect the county's wildlife.

To find out how to join, contact us or visit our website.

Further Information

Great Trees of Derbyshire

The Great Trees of Derbyshire Project is an ambitious initiative aiming to map and celebrate Derbyshire's veteran trees. We are encouraging as many people as possible to join in with this exciting project and need people to:

- Let us know the locations of veteran trees within the county.
- Put us in touch with owners of veteran trees.
- Research the history of local trees.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Derbyshire Wildlife Trust at the address above.

The website of the Ancient Tree Hunt is also full of useful information: www.woodland-trust.org.uk/ancient-tree-hunt

Before considering any management of veteran trees or the land around them, consult a copy of:

Read (2000) *Veteran Trees: a guide to good management*. English Nature, Peterborough.

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Veteran trees are the great survivors of the modern landscape. Once valued as working trees within the local economy, these ancient trees may be many centuries old. Veteran trees have long been the focus of local stories and legend and many have become treasured in the areas where they are located.

However, over time, most have become forgotten and neglected. Others have been lost due to development, through more intensive agriculture and land use or for safety reasons. These survivors are slowly and silently disappearing.

the value of veteran trees

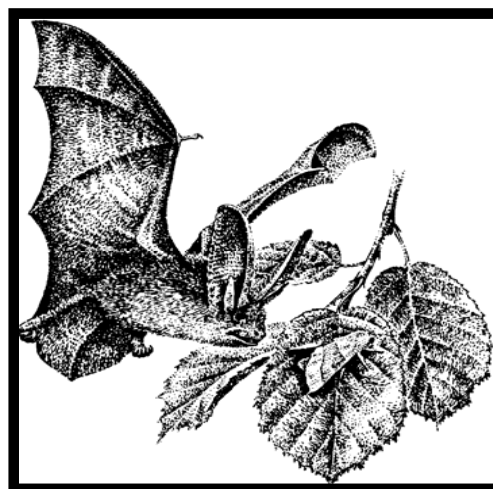


The Value of Veteran Trees

What is a veteran tree?

Although there is no adequate definition of a veteran tree, in practice they can be identified through a number of characteristics, including:

- A large girth for the species concerned
- A hollow trunk
- A large quantity of dead wood
- Fungi living on the dead wood
- An 'old' look.



Why are they important?

The value of veteran trees for wildlife is enormous. A single veteran oak may have major trunk cavities, water pools in the canopy, sap runs, standing dead wood both within the trunk and in the canopy, loose bark, rotten heart wood, dead wood on the ground, fungi growing on it and a myriad of other micro-habitats.

The micro-habitats that veteran trees provide have the potential to be a suitable home for a very wide range of invertebrates: it has been estimated that there are more than 1600 species of saproxylic (dependant upon dead or dying wood) invertebrates in Britain. A veteran tree will also support the plants that grow upon the bark of ancient trees, fungi living on the dead wood, birds feeding on the invertebrates and bats roosting within the tree itself.

A key to the value of veteran trees lies in the longevity and stability of these micro-habitats in close proximity to each other. A single veteran may provide suitable conditions for a huge variety of fungi and invertebrates for a period lasting several centuries.

Almost as important as the trees themselves is the fallen dead wood on the ground around them. It forms another vital micro-habitat and should be preserved wherever possible.

Principles of veteran tree management

As all veteran trees are unique, management should be considered on a tree-by-tree basis. However, two general principles should be considered when dealing with veteran trees.

Dead wood is a good thing

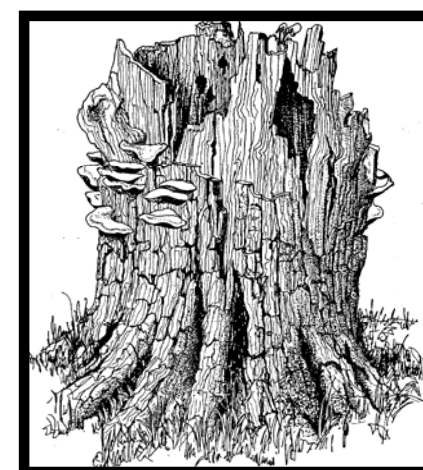
Sympathetic management of dead wood is key in maintaining the value of veteran trees due to the number of organisms that are dependent on it. If all fallen branches and standing dead wood were to be removed from a woodland, it may lose more than 20% of its resident species!

All types of dead wood are valuable, and whether in the canopy, in the trunk or on the ground, it should be retained wherever feasible.

Context is vital

The context in which a veteran tree is growing, the management of the land immediately surrounding it and the presence or absence of other veteran trees nearby, is a vital component of successful management.

The most sympathetic land-use to surround veteran trees is unimproved grassland. The application of fertilisers and herbicides can have adverse affects on lichen and fungi and may change the soil fungus communities, which is detrimental to the tree.



Grazing is the traditional form of management on many parkland sites, but over-grazing can restrict tree regeneration and may damage young growth. Excessive trampling or use of vehicles around the base of the tree may cause compaction of the soil and damage to the tree's root system. Arable operations can also destroy tree roots and cause soil compaction problems.