



Black Poplar (*Populus nigra* var '*betulifolia*')



This plan has not been reviewed since 2002 and black poplar is not a UK BAP species. This plan exists to highlight ongoing work with this species in Shropshire.

Native black poplars are only found in Britain, northern France, western Germany and parts of Asia. Their preferred habitat is lowland river floodplains, and they are found throughout England and Wales.

Black poplars are either male or female, and a viable population needs trees of both sexes growing fairly close to each other. For a fertilised seed to grow, it must fall on damp mud in June and stay damp and uncovered until October. Historically, female black poplar trees have been systematically removed as they produce large amounts of seed fluff in the spring. Consequently the female tree is now very rare.

1 Objectives and Targets

1.1 Objectives

- A. Protect and maintain existing populations of native black poplars, ensuring no further loss or fragmentation.
- B. Increase the number of native black poplars through propagation and planting in additional areas of suitable habitat.
- C. Establish and maintain a comprehensive understanding of the distribution, status and ecological requirements of the native black poplar through research, survey and monitoring.
- D. Promote communication, education and awareness of the status and needs of the native black poplar.

1.2 Targets

- Ensure that all known specimens of native black poplar in Shropshire are protected through Tree Preservation Orders by 2005.
- Undertake a survey and full inspection of all known trees by 2007.
- Identify suitable sites and draw up a strategy for the successful establishment of additional black poplars by 2005.

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

2 Current Status

2.1 Importance

The black poplar is an endangered species in Britain. Lack of female trees has led to a decline in reproductive success of this species.

2.2 Trends

The native black poplar fell out of favour as a timber tree after hybrid black poplars became commercially available in the mid 19th century. Since then little new planting has occurred in the countryside, although male trees have been planted in some urban areas due to their resilience to pollution. Lack of planting coupled with demanding requirements for successful reproduction has resulted in the black poplar's current status as an endangered species.

2.3 Population and Distribution

During the past 30 years many national surveys of the black poplar have been undertaken by the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI). In Shropshire, independent surveys have been carried out by Fiona Cooper, with a particular focus on identifying trees of local provenance.

The precise Shropshire population of black poplars is unknown. The native black poplar is usually found singly or in small groups in hedgerows and along watercourses. Most black poplars occur in the southern part of the county, along the River Severn and its many tributaries.

3 Current Factors Affecting the Species

- Habitat loss due to drainage for intensified agriculture and other changes in land use.
- A reduction in successful seed production due to an imbalance in the ratio of male and female trees.
- Absence of specific protection for existing trees.
- Hybridisation between the native black poplar and other trees.
- Lack of information on the distribution and status of the black poplar.
- Lack of genetic diversity amongst remaining mature trees due to isolation and fragmentation of their habitat, making them more susceptible to extinction.

4 Current Action

4.1 Policy and Protection

- The black poplar has no legal protection. However individual or groups of trees can be protected through Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs),
- Some trees can be protected if located on land designated for nature conservation or within hedges protected by the Hedgerow Regulations.

4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- Survey work undertaken by Fiona Cooper, including genetic fingerprint analysis.
- Cuttings have been propagated and planted in various locations around the county.

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5 Key Habitats

- Bankside habitat and river or stream floodplains.
- Wet woodlands and hedgerows.

6 Complementary Plans

Shropshire Arable Field Margins HAP

Shropshire Floodplain Grazing Marsh HAP

Shropshire Hedgerows HAP

Shropshire Rivers and Streams HAP

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Habitat / Species	Action Code	Action text	Location of action	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Assisting
Black Poplar	SHR BLP CA 01	Support the work of the national Black Poplar Working Group and provide regular updates on the status of black poplar in Shropshire.	Shropshire	2002	-	AONB	EA SWT
Black Poplar	SHR BLP CA 03	Advise landowners of the importance of maintaining the existing stocks of black poplar in Shropshire.	Shropshire	2002	-	AONB	EA FWAG SC SWT
Black Poplar	SHR BLP CP 01	Increase public awareness of the status of the black poplar.	Shropshire	2002	-	EA	AONB SWT
Black Poplar	SHR BLP SM 01	Ensure that correct silvicultural management techniques are adopted when undertaking work on black poplar trees.	Shropshire	2002	-	EA FC AONB	SC WT NT SWT SC-ORS
Black Poplar	SHR BLP SU 01	Re-survey sites with black poplars and undertake full tree inspections to monitor their status	Shropshire	2002	2007	AONB	EA SC SC-ORS

Key to Organisations

AONB	Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership
EA	Environment Agency
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
FWAG	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
SC	Shropshire Council
FC	Forestry Commission
NT	National Trust
SC-ORT	Shropshire Council Outdoor Recreation Service
WT	Woodland Trust

Plan created 2002

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