



***CARAVAN CLUB ECOLOGICAL  
SITE APPRAISAL***

Broad Park Caravan Club Site  
Higher East Leigh  
Modbury  
Ivybridge  
Devon



**General Information**

**Site Name and County:** Broad Park, Devon

**Grid Reference:** SX 691 522

**Area:** 5.2 hectares

**Survey Date:** 14/08/09

**Recorder:** James Godbeer, JUST ECOLOGY

**Weather Conditions:** Overcast, light breeze, 20 °C

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### **Site Description**

The Broad Park Caravan Club site is situated approximately 3 km to the east of Modbury. The site comprises 121 caravan pitches, both hard standing and grass, with narrow strips of woodland and tall hedgerows both surrounding the site and providing screens between the different areas. To the southeast is a playfield and dog walking area.

### **Context**

The local area surrounding the site is consists mostly of pasture and arable farmland. There are some patches of woodland present within the surrounding area although none are immediately adjacent to the site. The nearest designated site is Andrews Wood SSSI located approximately 1.4 km to the southeast.



### **Habitat Information**

**Broad Habitats Present:** Amenity grassland, improved grassland, hedgerow, broad-leaved woodland plantation.

**National BAP Priority Habitats Present:** Hedgerow.

**Caravan Club BAP Features:** Species-rich hedgerow, rough grassland, broadleaved woodland.

**Subsidiary Habitats Present:** Species-rich, species-poor hedgerows, rough grassland.

#### **Grassland communities:**

The grassland areas within the caravan park are managed amenity grassland, dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* with frequent White Clover *Trifolium repens* and occasional Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*. The current warden has left the margins uncut, which although only done for the first time this year already shows an increased diversity with species such as Red Champion *Silene dioica*, Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris* and Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum* all recorded in these areas.

The recreation field and dog walking area are less intensively managed than the caravan pitches although they are very similar in composition; the current warden has allowed the east half of the recreation field to become rough grassland with a mown walk around the edge (see *Figure 1*).



Figure 1: View of area of unmanaged grassland.

### **Hedgerows:**

Hedgerows are present, surrounding the site, the majority of which are mature and species poor. These are formed mainly by Hazel *Corylus avellana* with a few individuals of Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, and the occasional Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* standard. The ground flora is somewhat sparse due to the heavy shading of the hedgerow but Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* was noted with the remaining species provided by the adjacent grassland described above. One section of species-rich hedgerow was present on the northeast site boundary. This was formed by numerous woody species comprising Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Hazel, Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. Other species noted within the hedgerow and ground flora include Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca*, Yorkshire Fog, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Bracken, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and Creeping Buttercup. A short section of hedge is also present in the centre of the site formed by Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, Hawthorn and Blackthorn with Bramble, Red Fescue, Ribwort Plantain, Yorkshire Fog and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* within the ground flora.

### **Broad-leaved plantation:**

Broad-leaved plantation is present in abundance across the site and appears to have been planted recently - probably within the last 30 years as it lacks any veteran trees. The majority is dominated by Ash leaving a few sections dominated by Alder *Alnus glutinosa*. Wild Cherry *Prunus avium* and Pedunculate Oak occur frequently with

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occasional Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Hazel, Hawthorn, Beech and Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. Ground flora varies across the site but Bramble and Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* are abundant with frequent Ribwort Plantain, Cock's-foot, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius* and occasional Rosebay Willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Ivy *Hedera Helix*, Lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum*, Male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* and Hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium*.



### **Habitat Evaluation**

The amenity grassland and improved grassland are of limited botanical diversity, being dominated by a few vigorous grass species. Grassland which has been closely managed is of limited value to most animal species, with the exception of species such as Badger *Meles meles* and Mole *Talpa europaea*, which benefit from the increased earth worm content of the soil. No evidence of these species was observed. The current warden has actively tried to encourage wildlife on site by leaving unmown margins around the wood areas and along some of hedgerows, as well as a large area occupying the north of the playfield. The margins have already shown an increase in diversity and although the large area is not particularly diverse it may eventually provide habitat for ground nesting birds.

There is one section of hedgerow on the site that can be described as species-rich, defined by having more than five woody species per 30 m section. All of the hedgerows on site are well developed and provide dense structures that may be used by animal species. The broad-leaf plantation, although not particularly diverse in terms of plant species, is likely to provide habitat for a range of animal species.



### **Species Information**

**National BAP Species:** Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*.

**Caravan Club BAP Species:** Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*.

**National BAP Species Potential:** Various bat and bird species, some potential for reptiles (e.g. Adder *Vipera berus*).

**Caravan Club BAP Species Potential:** Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Swift *Apus apus*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Adder *Vipera berus*.

**Other Noteworthy Species:** None observed but anecdotal evidence of Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, Skylark *Alauda arvensis* and Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*.

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## Avifauna:

The site had numerous species of bird. The current warden has erected a number of bird feeders and bird boxes (see *Figure 2*), which have been used this year by Blue Tits. Species either seen or heard on site during the survey were Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blue Tit *Parus caerulea*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* and Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*. They are likely to be feeding on the supplies of invertebrates, fruit, seeds, and buds present, as well as bird feeders. A pile of Woodpigeon feathers was noted in the northwest corner of the site and site warden confirmed that this was a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* kill.



Figure 2: View of area of bird feeders and boxes already present on the site.

The habitats present are used by other bird species not encountered on the day of the survey. A bird information book has been produced by the wardens providing information on the bird species they have witnessed on or near to the site. The list comprises some 25 birds the most notable not previously mentioned being Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*, Skylark *Alauda arvensis* and Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*.

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### **Invertebrates:**

The limited botanical diversity on the site comprising common plant species makes the presence of rare species and high invertebrate diversity unlikely. The woodland and hedgerows are likely to provide the best opportunities for invertebrates. Numerous Honeybees *Apis mellifera* were observed within a small planted flowerbed near the site entrance and a number of Large White *Pieris brassicae* butterflies were seen around the site.

### **Herpetofauna:**

No evidence of reptiles or amphibians was observed on the day of the survey. However the wardens gave anecdotal evidence of a Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* near to the site entrance and an Adder *Vipera berus* in the west of the site near an area used for grass arisings. No ponds are present on site or apparent in the surrounding landscape. However, the presence of a Great Crested Newt on site would suggest that there is at least one pond within 500 m of the site, although newts have been known to travel over 1 km from their breeding ponds. The woodland and hedgerows on the site have the potential to support amphibians, including Great Crested Newts, in the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle. The distribution of Great Crested Newts in Devon is somewhat restricted so the newt observed on the site may be part of a locally important population.

With regard to reptiles the site has a few areas which may be used by reptiles such as sunlit hedgerows and woodland edge. Adders are generally shy animals and avoid humans; it is unlikely that Adders are frequent visitor to the site and may have strayed from areas of scrub away to the west.

### **Mammals:**

The warden confirmed the presence of a bat roost within the roof space above the site office although the species is unknown. Bats may also be roosting within the other permanent buildings on site, such as the toilet block, but the roosting potential of the woodland is regarded as low as there were no trees with visible cracks or splits that may be used by roosting bats. The woodland and hedgerows do however provide good foraging habitat for a number of bat species and may also be used by bats passing through as navigational flight lines. No conclusive evidence of any other mammals was observed on the day of the survey, although the warden has observed a Badger on site. A few days before the survey a dead Badger was observed at the side of the road near to the site, believed to be a road traffic accident involving the visiting Badger. Badgers, particularly those living in rural areas, tend to live in social groups so it is possible that Badgers will be seen on site in the future. The woodland or hedgerows are unlikely to support rarer species due to the woodlands young age, restricted range of species, and isolation within the surrounding landscape. The hedgerows, woodland and areas of rough grassland are expected to support a range of common small mammals such as Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* and Field Vole *Microtus agrestis*.

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## **Fungi:**

No fungi were seen. The trees on site are not yet mature enough to have developed any interesting fungi, although the accumulated deadwood at ground level may be host to species of fungi that fruit at other times of the year.



## **Species Evaluation**

Despite the limited plant diversity, the site still provides opportunities for various animals such as bats and birds a number of which have conservation designations, either for their rarity, declining populations or distribution.

The most notable of the bird species are Song Thrush and Yellowhammer, which are both UK BAP species. In addition, Song Thrush, House Martin and Swallow are Caravan Club BAP species.

The woodland and grassland areas provide invertebrates, fruit and seeds for smaller birds. The availability of these invertebrates could be increased extending the areas of unmown grassland. This would be particularly beneficial to the Swallow and House Martin, both of which are Caravan Club BAP species.

The warden confirmed the presence of bats roosting within the office roof space and foraging on the site although species are unknown. None of the trees within woodland look old enough to support roosting sites (no crevices, holes or cracks were observed), but the site provides good foraging areas particularly along the woodland edge, which provides cover and invertebrate prey. A nocturnal survey with bat detectors would be necessary to identify species. Many bat species are listed on the UK BAP, and all are European protected species.

## **Management Recommendations**

A number of bird species are known to use the site, including some that are of conservation concern in the UK. It is likely that the site also provides habitat for invertebrates and small mammals. It should be noted that the present survey was conducted on one day in August and therefore cannot be regarded as a complete evaluation of the site. Further species are likely to be recorded on the site at different times of year, and through further survey and/or casual observations.

Recommendations are made below for retaining, and enhancing as much ecological value as possible from the site's use as a caravan site. These are intended as suggestions; and due to the practicalities of operating a caravan site, not all of these may be possible.

- The woodland and hedgerows on site represent the most valuable habitat resource and the current management is minimal. This policy should be continued particularly with regard to the deadwood and leaf litter, which is better to be left in situ rather than 'tidied up'. Consideration should be given to the removal of non-native species such as Sycamore, the numbers of which are

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minimal, in order to promote the growth of native species. Selective thinning could also be used to remove weaker trees and allow larger mature trees to develop, avoiding the tall leggy appearance of trees in this type of woodland. Mature trees are more likely to develop cracks and rot holes that can be used by a variety of animals, as well as being home to invertebrate species and fungi.

- Areas of grassland around the caravan pitches and in the playfield which have been left unmown should continue to be left and any incoming wardens should be encouraged to continue the work started by the current wardens. Consideration should be given to extending some of these areas where possible.
- The grass will need to be cut occasionally to prevent succession to scrub. A cut would be best timed in late July onwards, when the breeding seasons of any ground nesting birds and mammals have been completed. Over time, this will also benefit plant species, allowing them to set seed first, and hopefully a higher botanical diversity to develop.
- The Caravan Club CBAP states that herbicide and pesticide use on sites should be eliminated. If pesticides are used, elimination would boost invertebrate populations, which in turn would benefit the species which feed on them.
- Wardens should take care not to disturb active nests during any site management activities. All nesting wild birds are legally protected against disturbance under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Any woodland or hedgerow management must be done outside the bird breeding season, which typically runs from March – August.

#### **Further Suggestions to Enhance the Wildlife Value of the Site**

- Consideration should be given to the seeding of the new areas of unmanaged grassland and the woodland using appropriate wildflower mixes. Where possible these seeds should be locally sourced using the *Flora Locale* code of practice, to support the genetic integrity of local wild plant populations.
- Bird feeding stations are already present on site near the office but additional feeders could be added at one or two places across the site. These would support small birds, especially during the winter when the other sources of invertebrates, fruit and seeds already present on site become limited.
- Three raised feeders and one ground feeder could be placed at each feeding station. The raised feeders could be filled with husked sunflower seed and general purpose food plus fat balls. The ground feeder could catch spillages from above, and provide various kitchen scraps, bread and apples.
- In general, ground feeders and other food put out at ground level should be placed a safe distance away from hedgerows and bushes, so that birds are not

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tempted into striking distance of cats. However, a few apples can be placed near cover for Song Thrush, which prefer to feed in quiet corners.

- The feed provided at aerial and ground feeders should be tailored to suit the most notable bird species present (although in doing so they will also benefit many other birds). The Yellowhammer (UK BAP) is a ground feeder which prefers to eat grain and sunflower hearts, although it will also occasionally use bird tables. The Song Thrush (UK and Caravan Club BAP) likes to eat fat, sultanas, apples and various kitchen scraps at ground level.
- A number of bird boxes are already present on site but mainly confined to the area around the site office. The provision of additional bird boxes at other locations on the site will provide additional nesting opportunities.
- There is anecdotal evidence of a bat roost with the roof space of the office building and the some of the other buildings on site may be used for roosting although there is currently no evidence of this. The site offers good foraging habitat for a variety of bat species, however the woodland lacks suitable old trees for roosting. Therefore, bat boxes could be erected to provide roosting sites. The choice of bat box can depend on the species present, but the Schwegler 2F bat box is a good general design that will attract many species. If bat boxes are erected, it is best to position three around a pole, trunk or wall. Bats are very particular about the internal conditions of bat boxes, so providing several bat boxes with different aspects creates differences in temperature, humidity etc. thereby increasing the chance of colonisation.
- There is a small chance that reptiles may be present, particularly in the south where the Adder was spotted. The provision of rough grassland and stone surfaces for basking may encourage them onto the site.

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## Species list

A current list of species confirmed as present on site is provided below. Please note this may be expanded by further survey.

### Birds:

<u>Latin name</u>	<u>English name</u>
<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Buzzard
<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Greenfinch
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon
<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Jackdaw
<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Yellowhammer
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Swallow
<i>Parus caerulea</i>	Blue Tit
<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Wren
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush
<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Mistle Thrush

### Invertebrates:

<u>Latin name</u>	<u>English name</u>
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Honeybee
<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Large White

### Plants:

<u>Latin</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords-and-ladies
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male-fern
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog

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<u>Latin</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass
<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle
<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>	Hart's-tongue
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat Willow
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan
<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	Dandelion
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted Vetch