



***CARAVAN CLUB ECOLOGICAL
SITE APPRAISAL***

Cherry Hinton Caravan Club Site
Lime Kiln Road
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire



General Information

Site Name and County: Cherry Hinton, Cambridgeshire

Grid Reference: TL 482 557

Area: 4.2 hectares

Survey Date: 06/08/09

Recorder: James Godbeer, JUST ECOLOGY

Weather Conditions: Clear, light breeze, 25°C

Site Description

The Cherry Hinton Caravan Club site is situated on the southwest edge of Cambridge. The site was formerly a quarry until operations ceased in the 1950's and it became the present caravan site. The site comprises 55 caravan pitches, both hard standing and grass, and a tent area. A band of woodland surrounds the site and narrow strips across the site separate the site areas.

Context

The suburbs of Cambridge occupy the majority of the area to the north and west of the site. A disused chalk quarry lies immediately to the east; beyond this and to the south is predominately mixed-use farmland with a few pockets of woodland. The woodland on site and the adjacent disused quarry to the east form the Cherry Hinton Pit SSSI. Limekiln Close Local Nature Reserve is located approximately 80 m to the northeast of the caravan park entrance.



Habitat Information

Broad Habitats Present: Amenity grassland, hedgerow, semi-natural broadleaf woodland.

National BAP Priority Habitats Present: Hedgerow.

Caravan Club BAP Features: Broad-leaved woodland.

Subsidiary Habitats Present: Species-poor hedgerows.

Grassland communities:

Areas of managed amenity grassland can be found across the caravan park, dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* with frequent Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, White Clover *Trifolium repens* and Daisy *Bellis perennis*, and occasional Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*. In some areas adjacent to the woodland other species have begun to encroach, including Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris* and *Hedera helix* Ivy.

Hedgerows:

There are a few short sections of true hedgerow on the site, the majority being incorporated into the woodland. The sections that are present are formed by Wild Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Butterfly-bush *Buddleja davidii* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* with larger trees of Wild Plum *Prunus domestica*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and the occasional Horse-chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*. Other species noted within the hedge include Traveller's-joy *Clematis vitalba* and Dog-rose *Rosa canina*. There was little understory vegetation, the hedge grading straight down into amenity grassland. Species recorded were Herb-Robert, Ivy, Common Nettle and Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*.

Broad-leaved woodland:

There is an abundance of broad-leaved woodland both surrounding and crossing the site. The largest area of woodland is situated on the east of the site and is predominately Ash woodland with Hawthorn under storey and occasional Holly. Other species noted both within the canopy and forming the understory both here and within the areas of woodland crossing the site were Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Blackthorn, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Butterfly-bush and Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. The ground flora was dominated by Ivy with occasional Herb-Robert. Other species recorded included Hogweed, Common Nettle, Bramble, Common Hemp-nettle and Male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*.



Figure 1: Typical view of the woodland on the east of the site



Habitat Evaluation

The amenity grassland is 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 hedgerows on the site are defined by having less than five woody species per 30 m section. The majority of the hedgerows were managed edges of woodland, leaving only limited stretches of true hedgerows. However, the lack of hedgerows,

particularly species-rich hedgerows, is compensated by the broad-leaf woodland, which has a variety of native woody species and in many places is only marginally too wide to be classified as a hedge.



Species Information

National BAP Species: Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*.

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

National BAP Species Potential: Various bat and bird species, possible amphibians (e.g. Great Crested Newt, *Triturus cristatus*).

Caravan Club BAP Species Potential: Swift *Apus apus*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*.

Other Noteworthy Species: None observed.

Avifauna:

The site had numerous species of birds, likely feeding on the supplies of invertebrates, fruit, seeds, and buds present. Species either seen or heard on site during the survey were Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blue Tit *Parus caerulea*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* and Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*.

The habitats present may well be used by other bird species not encountered on the day of the survey.

Invertebrates:

The site had an abundance of Butterfly-bush, which was being used by the following butterfly species identified on site; Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*, Peacock *Inachis io*, Green-veined White *Pieris napi* and Large White *Pieris brassicae*. A species of dragonfly was also observed on site. The woodland is likely to provide habitat for a range of invertebrate species, especially where deadwood has been allowed to accumulate.

Herpetofauna:

No evidence of reptiles or amphibians was observed on the day of the survey. The potential for reptiles is restricted by the lack of undisturbed basking areas. Some of the sunnier woodland edges may support some reptiles but perhaps the area with the highest potential is the gabion wall on the east of the site (see *Figure 2*). This provided basking opportunities as well as cover and hibernation potential.

No ponds are present on site. However the presence of a dragonfly on site would indicate that there is standing water somewhere nearby which may be suitable for breeding amphibians. The woodland has the potential to support amphibians in the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle.

Mammals:

Bats may be roosting within the permanent buildings on site, such as the office and toilet block, as well as within trees in the woodland. A large area of dense Ivy was present in the southwest of the site overhanging the former quarry face, which could be used by roosting bats. An old concrete shelter was present immediately off site to the east. This was open at the front and had a number of gaps and crevices that may be suitable for roosting bats. Bats almost certainly use the site for foraging and can probably be observed most evenings during the summer flying along the woodland edge.



Figure 2: View of Ivy covered quarry face. Possible use by roosting bats.



Figure 3: View of concrete shelter containing gaps which may be suitable for roosting bats

A small mammal was heard in the undergrowth but a visual identification of the species was not possible. The warden indicated that Badgers have been seen within the woodland on site although no evidence of their presence could be found on the day of the survey. Given the habitats present, species of mammals are likely to be restricted to common small species, Badgers and/or Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*. The woodland may support Dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* but its relative isolation from large areas of woodland in the surrounding landscape reduces this possibility.

Fungi:

No fungi were seen. The woodland may harbour some interesting fungi, but the grassland is unlikely to support the rarer species.



Species Evaluation

The woodland offers some botanical diversity, particularly along the edges. The site still provides opportunities for various animals, particularly birds a number of which have conservation designations, either for their rarity, declining populations or distribution. Invertebrates, particularly butterflies are well represented on the site.

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

The woodland and grassland areas provide invertebrates, fruit and seeds for smaller birds although the availability of these invertebrates could be greatly increased by reducing the management of some areas of grassland. This would be particularly beneficial to the Swallow and House Martin both of which are Caravan Club CBAP species.

The site also provides habitat for other invertebrates as well as small mammals. It is highly likely that bats frequent the site for foraging as the woodland edge provides cover and invertebrate prey. There are a small number of trees within the woodland, which contained crevices, holes or cracks. An activity 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

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; due to the practicalities of operating a caravan site not all of these may be possible.

- The woodland on site represents 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 best left rather than 'tidied up'. Consideration should be given to the removal of non-native species such as Sycamore and promoting the growth of native species. As the woodland is designated as a SSSI, any management of the woodland should only take place after discussion with Natural England to determine what would be appropriate.
- Areas of grassland around caravan pitches should not be overly managed or 'tidied up'. Borders could be left unmown, particularly adjacent to the woodland, to allow the diversity of plants to increase and promote the invertebrate populations on site.
- 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. Given time this will also benefit plant species, allowing them to set seed first, and hopefully a higher botanical diversity to develop.

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- The Caravan Club BAP states that herbicide and pesticide use on site 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 any new areas of unmanaged grassland 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 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 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 Bullfinch (UK and Caravan Club BAP) is typically associated with woodland edge where it feeds on seeds and buds as well as insects for its young; 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.
- The provision of additional bird boxes is likely to provide some additional nesting opportunities for a range of bird species.
- The site offers good foraging habitat for bats and the some of the buildings on site may be used for roosting, although there is currently no evidence of this. However, the woodland lacks suitable old trees meaning the number of bats on site is likely to be restricted by the lack of roosting opportunities. Bat boxes could therefore 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 which 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.

- Ideally only native plant species should be planted on site. Native tree and shrub species are most beneficial to invertebrates, and many also produce seeds, nuts and berries that are food for native mammals and birds. Planting of non-native plant species should be limited to those that are not invasive, and should prioritise those that provide a good source of nectar for invertebrates *e.g.* Butterfly-bush, Jasmine.

Species list

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

Mammals:

<u>Latin name</u>	<u>English name</u>
<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Rabbit

Birds:

<u>Latin name</u>	<u>English name</u>
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon
<i>Delichon urbica</i>	House Martin
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Swallow
<i>Parus caerulea</i>	Blue Tit
<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit
<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Bullfinch
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Collared Dove
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush

Invertebrates:

<u>Latin name</u>	<u>English name</u>
<i>Inachis io</i>	Peacock
<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Large White
<i>Pieris napi</i>	Green-veined White
<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Red Admiral

Plants:

<u>Latin</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Butterfly-bush
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Traveller's-joy
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male-fern
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horse-chestnut
<i>Galeopsis tetrahit</i>	Common Hemp-nettle
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Wild Privet
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass

<u>Latin</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal
<i>Prunus domestica</i>	Wild Plum
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog-rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle