



Wood White (*Leptidea sinapis*)



The Wood White is the smallest and rarest of the British white butterflies. It is locally distributed in scattered colonies in the Midlands and Southern England with three colonies occurring in South Shropshire where it currently seems to be expanding its range. In Britain, the Wood White commonly inhabits woodland rides and glades, disused railway lines and occasionally sheltered areas of scrub and tall grassland where it breeds on various legumes such as Bitter Vetch and Yellow Meadow Vetchling.

1 Objectives and Targets

1.1 Objectives

- A. Protect, enhance and monitor the existing populations of Wood White in south Shropshire.
- B. Encourage Wood White to naturally colonise more sites by encouraging more sympathetic management for this species.
- C. Keep abreast of the new research into the ecological requirements of this species try to relate this to the situation in south Shropshire.
- D. Increase awareness of the status and needs of Wood White in south Shropshire through communication and education.

1.2 Targets

- Maintain the existing Wood White populations at Bury Ditches, Radnor Wood and Purslow Wood and monitor them annually.
- Double the number of sites being sympathetically managed for Wood White from 3 sites to 6 by 2010.

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

2. Current Status

2.1 Importance

The Wood White is widespread in Europe north as far as Scandinavia and eastwards to the Caucasus Mountains and Siberia. It has declined severely in Denmark (>75% decrease in 25 years) and to a lesser extent in other countries such as Luxembourg, Germany and Latvia. In England and Wales the Wood White is now very localised and the substantial declines during the twentieth century may be the result of changes in woodland management practices.

2.2 Trends

The decline of the Wood White is estimated to be >50% in the UK over the last 25 years (hence its inclusion as a UK BAP Priority Species Candidate in 2005) as a result in the reduction in range of monitored populations. The south Shropshire and north Herefordshire area currently appears to be one of the few parts of the country where the Wood White is increasing its range (with four new 1km records for Wood White in Shropshire in 2005).

2.3 Population and Distribution

The Wood White has a very localised distribution in Southern England and Wales. In contrast, it is still widespread and locally abundant in Ireland. It is now not a common butterfly in the West Midlands region although it does occur, (sometimes in very good numbers), on sites in Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

2 Current Factors Affecting the Species

Locally it is currently not known what factors affect this species - it is currently expanding into sites in Shropshire and Herefordshire.

Nationally this species has suffered losses due to:

- The even-aged nature of many existing woodland sites, the majority of which were extensively re-planted in the 1950s and 1960s, and increasing shade levels in woodland rides.
- Isolation of existing suitable woods, combined with the Wood White's limited colonising ability.
- Continuing decline in the market for coppice product (although this may have recently been reversed in some areas).
- Continuing loss of unimproved grassland through drainage and agricultural improvement.
- Lack of knowledge of methods of managing woodland rides to maintain suitable breeding habitats in the long term.

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4 Current Action

○ Policy and Protection

- The Wood White is currently listed on Schedule 5 of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (for sale only).
- It is also listed under the following categories:
 - UKBAP Priority Species List Candidate (2005)
 - Species of Conservation Concern List (1998)
 - A species action plan for the Wood White butterfly was prepared in 1998 by Butterfly Conservation
- Bury Ditches, Radnor Wood and Purslow Wood are all Forestry Commission sites which fall within the Shropshire Hills AONB.
- The Shropshire Hills, and Clee Hills to Severn Valley are both Biodiversity Enhancement Areas

○ Management, Research and Survey

- Bury Ditches, Radnor Wood and Purslow Wood are all managed sympathetically by the Forestry Commission.
- Bury Ditches and Radnor Wood have been regularly surveyed by BC since agreed mowing regimes were established in 2001. A new mowing regime for Purslow Wood was agreed in 2005 after regular survey revealed good numbers of Wood White to already be present here.
- The one site for Wood White in the Wyre Forest is being managed sympathetically by the Forestry Commission who have recently opened up the area.

5 Key Habitats

- Woodland glades and clearings
- Hedgerows and grass/scrub mosaics

6 Complementary Plans

Shropshire Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland HAP

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

7 Action Plan

Habitat / Species	Action code	Action text	Location of action	Start date	End date	Lead	Assisting
Wood White	SHR WWH CA 01	Ensure that any advances in understanding regarding appropriate management for Wood White is communicated to the Forestry Commission for implementation.	Bury Ditches, Radnor Wood, Purslow Wood and the Kinlet area of the Wyre Forest	2006	-	BC	
Wood White	SHR WWH CP 02	Produce at least two press releases on the unusual status of the Wood White in south Shropshire and how to record and conserve it by 2010.	South Shropshire	2006	2010	BC	FC, SWT, AONB
Wood White	SHR WWH FR 01	Recruit at least five more volunteers to survey for Wood White by 2010.	South Shropshire	2006	2010	BC	FC, AONB
Wood White	SHR WWH HS 01	Ensure management for Wood White is identified in the Forest Design Plans for the three key sites as well as any others that are appropriate by 2010.	Bury Ditches, Radnor Wood and Purslow Wood	2006	2010	FC	BC
Wood White	SHR WWH SM 01	Achieve favourable management for the Wood White on three more sites by 2015.	Shropshire Hills AONB, South Shropshire, Wyre Forest	2006	2015	BC	FC, NT, AONB, SWT
Wood White	SHR WWH SU 01	Encourage annual monitoring for Wood White of the key three sites (and any others which are managed for Wood White in the future) by 2010.	Bury Ditches, Radnor Wood, Purslow Wood and South Shropshire	2006	2010	BC	FC, NT, SWT, AONB

Key to organisations

AONB	Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership
BC	Butterfly Conservation
FC	Forestry Commission
NE	Natural England
NT	National Trust
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust

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Plan last revised: May 2008 by Fran Lancaster, Biodiversity Support Officer, Shropshire Council.

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