

European Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)

Areas and status: Nightjars are most numerous in southern England with largest populations in the New Forest, Dorset heathlands, Thames Basin Heaths, Thetford Forest and various sites in Devon. They are also found patchily across Wales, the rest of England and in southern Scotland. Their population and range suffered major declines in the 1970s and 80s but has since partially recovered, in part in response to a programme of heathland restoration and management and forestry clearfells. BoCC Amber list.

Woodland type: Open habitats with scattered trees and shrubs, nightjars are found around the woodland edge, in open woodland with clearings and in recently felled conifer plantations. Sweet chestnut coppice, particularly in SE England (at least formerly).

Preferred habitat niches: Dry open habitats, woodland edge zone; open woodland clearings; clearfells and recent conifer restocks.

- Nest on the ground in open, sparsely vegetated habitats with scattered trees.
- Perch on open branches, from which they make their distinctive sustained churring trill.
- Forage extensively over semi-natural habitats, including woodland and farmland edge.

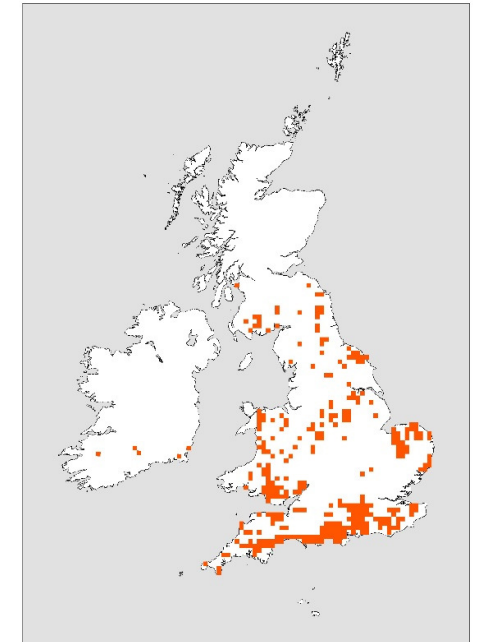
Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Maturation of young plantation
- Shift to continuous cover forestry from rotational clearfell
- Lack of/insufficient suitable grazing and other management causing open habitats, particularly heathland, to scrub over and succeed to secondary woodland
- Disturbance of nests, particularly by dogs (influenced by vegetation management around access routes)
- Availability of foraging areas in close proximity to breeding areas

Potential habitat management solutions (e.g.):	
<i>Prescription</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Maintain rotational clearfell in plantations where nightjar breed	Resist shift to continuous cover forestry, which is unlikely to provide favourable conditions for nightjar. Ensure succession of 0-15 year stage.
Restore open habitats with scattered trees and scrub	Particularly lowland heathland historically stocked with conifer plantation. Ideally, graze with suitable hardy stock to promote varied habitat structure and encourage invertebrate populations.
Create large open areas within woodlands where nightjars are locally present	Connecting these via broad rides to areas of nearby open habitats
Ride enhancement	Wide 3 zone rides with good scrub cover at edges; manage on rotation to retain balance of structure (cut sections of scrub, mow areas of rank field layer)
Develop scrubby woodland edge where nightjars are locally present	Provide broad, sparse scrubby buffers to woodlands with a varied edge structure.
New woodland creation	Avoid open habitats where nightjar breed



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