



# Heathland highlights



Find out more about the New Forest's lowland heaths and the species that depend on them as their home.

## What can we do to help?

We can all do simple things to help these rare birds survive. Organisations across the Forest work together to protect our endangered species by creating quiet zones around very sensitive nesting locations.

Forestry England closes just a few car parks each year and erects signs along routes close to where the birds nest on the ground and feed. Its staff along with National Park rangers also spend extra time in these areas, helping visitors learn more about these endangered birds, and keeping nesting birds free from disturbance.

- Please respect car park closures, and don't just park in the gateway or on the verge instead.
- In the bird nesting season (March to August) keep to the main tracks, and if you have a dog with you, keep them on the tracks too - use a lead if necessary.
- Look out for the signs and find an alternative route to walk during the nesting season – download the *New Forest National Park Walks App* for free.

Download for iPhone



Download for Android



## Contact us

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look for: newforestnpa



Forestry England



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## A heathland home for some of our rarest birds

The New Forest is designated a National Park because of the incredibly rare species it supports. Lost from many other parts of the UK, it is still a stronghold for rare birds. The ability of these birds to breed successfully here plays a critical part in slowing the decline of these species.

From March until August, several rare and endangered species of birds including the nightjar, curlew, woodlark and Dartford warbler, breed in the open heathlands.

In this open environment, with no trees, these birds have evolved to nest on or very near to the ground. Disturbing them can highlight the nests and cause the parents to flee, exposing their eggs and chicks to predators.



Dartford  
warbler

## The New Forest is about more than just trees!

The term Forest actually refers to the fact the area was once a royal hunting ground. The New Forest has wonderful areas of wildlife rich semi-natural ancient woodland - but it also has the most extensive area of lowland heath remaining in Europe.

The term heathland is used to describe a number of different habitats such as heather dominated heaths, grasslands and waterlogged bogs or mires.

Each of these elements of heathland has its own special wildlife. In the Forest the heathland is maintained by the grazing animals, which help keep the vegetation in check. In addition, every year Forestry England carries out management to maintain this open space, from controlled burning to mechanised cutting of bracken, gorse and heather. This ensures a wide range of habitats for all these rare species.

The New Forest is of particular importance for some of the UK's rarest birds, invertebrates and reptiles and supports the largest breeding population of Dartford warblers in the UK.

**Find out more about our rare  
heathland wildlife.**



Nightjar



# Who and what lives here?



**Dartford warbler**  
This little bird is very vulnerable in cold winters. They protect their eggs by nesting deep in thorny gorse bushes or dense heather.

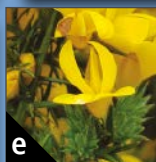
## In the New Forest:

### Heather

Three types of heather: (a) Ling, (b) Bell, and (c) Cross-leaved

### Gorse

Two species are common: (d) Dwarf and (e) Common



### Lapwing

The name lapwing is derived from an old English term 'leap with a flicker in it'. The lapwing is also known as a peewit because of its distinctive call. Once very common, it's noisy aerial display is a herald of spring.

## Wet heathland

### Snipe

Snipe lay four eggs - when hatched the first two chicks are taken by the male snipe and two stay with their mother.



### Heath bumblebee

These bees make their nests in a variety of places including old birds nests, in moss, leaf litter and even in the underground burrows of small mammals.



## Open grassland

### Meadow pipit

These small streaky birds are quite common throughout the year in the Forest. They eat insects and spiders.



The National Park contains rare and internationally important wetlands - 75% of the lowland mires found in north-western Europe. These wet valleys are essential for wading birds. Here they probe for worms and other invertebrates beneath the surface.

### Stonechat

Males are easy to spot with a deep orange chest and black head. Often seen perched on heather with a call like two stones being knocked together.



### Smooth snake

These are Britain's rarest reptile, and occur in only three counties in the UK. They feed on lizards, slow-worms and small mammals.



## Dry heathland

### Nightjar

Nightjars are nocturnal birds, relying on camouflage during the day.



### Woodlark

Unlike the skylark, these birds often sing from an isolated tree or woodland edge. They start nesting earlier in the year than many other species.



### Adder

The UK's only venomous snake. Females retain their eggs inside them and give birth to live young.



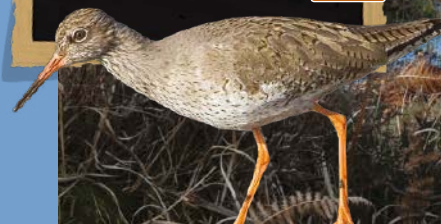
### Curlew

Our largest wader with a distinctive, fluty 'cour-lii' call, bubbling song and long curved bill. They probe through dense vegetation or soft mud to look for invertebrates.



### Redshank

Are known as wardens of the marsh as they are the first to alert others to potential threats of danger. They build their nests out of grass.



'Birds of Conservation Concern 5'  
(list of birds at risk)

Be Forest  
Friendly!

## Follow the New Forest code

The New Forest is a unique place with rare wildlife and free-roaming livestock. Thank you for helping us care for this special place by following the simple New Forest code:



Keep your distance from the animals – don't feed or touch them



Keep dogs under control. Don't let dogs approach or chase any animals



Help wildlife by keeping to the main tracks



Take home litter and dog waste



Park only in car parks



Drive with care – animals on the road!



No fires or barbecues



No wild camping



Stick to the permitted cycle tracks