



Black Poplar

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Species English Name (Scientific name)

NATIVE BLACK POPLAR (POPULUS NIGRA SUBSP. BETULIFOLIA)

Associated Habitat Action Plans:

Coastal and Floodplain grazing Marsh



Ecology

Current status

The black poplar, which is considered to be native in Britain, is a segregate population of the Atlantic race of *Populus nigra* subsp. *betulifolia*, and is thought to be the most endangered native timber tree in Britain (White, 1993). In Cheshire the black poplar survives at the north western limit of its range, however the old, scattered trees are no longer regenerating naturally.

Due to increased recording of the species, it is now thought that the black poplar population in Britain comprises 6 - 7,000 trees, of which over 300 occur in the Cheshire region. The population in Cheshire consists of approximately 50% female trees; a significantly higher percentage than most other parts of the country. They are found principally along the floodplains of the Rivers Gowy and Weaver, mostly adjacent to rivers and brooks, with a few next to marl pits, ditches and in hedgerows. Many of the surviving black poplars in the county are remnants of the floodplain 'wildwood' (Guest, 1994).



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Threats

- * Loss of suitable habitat
- * Hybridisation with non-native poplars. The population is composed of predominantly old trees growing in isolation from each other so no natural regeneration is occurring.
- * Felling of trees due to road building and development schemes.
- * Indiscriminate felling of trees considered 'unsafe', rather than reducing risk through careful management and tree surgery (for example: pollarding old trees rather than felling them).

How are we helping to conserve Black Poplars in the Cheshire region?

- * Co-ordination of the Black Poplar project of the Cheshire region by CWT and Chester Zoo.
- * Development of new funding bids for Phase 2 (planting and genetic research).
- * Ongoing programme of taking cuttings (over 5,000 to date) from known (Guest 1996) and newly recorded trees for planting at tree nurseries.
- * Continuing maintenance of tree nurseries.
- * Monitoring and recording of trees: mapping, tagging and photographing black poplars. Updating the database with current data, including newly planted trees.
- * Raising awareness about black poplars through publications and radio interviews, producing a slide pack and giving talks to a variety of groups.
- * Collating new planting sites and confirming their suitability.
- * Planting of black poplars by CLT Tree Wardens, CCC Countryside Management Services, FWAG, EA, CWT, contractors and landowners.
- * Attendance at National Black Poplar BAP Action Group meetings and ongoing contact with other Black Poplar projects' around the country.
- * Responding to planning applications that have implications for black poplars.
- * Producing updated GIS data and maps with the co-operation of Cheshire County Council.
- * Liason with other individuals and organisations to promote the project, and to arrange for new planting sites.
- * Providing advice and information to landowners and members of the public who express an interest in native black poplars.

Objectives, targets and actions

The objectives, targets and actions to help conserve black poplars in the Cheshire region can be found on the [Biodiversity Action Reporting System \(BARS\)](#) along with full details of our progress so far.



How to find out more about Black Poplars

Vale Royal Borough Council Black Poplar Species Recording card

[Black Poplar Identification card](#)

The Royal Forestry Society - <http://rfs.org.uk/thirdlevel.asp?ThirdLevel=167&SecondLevel=33>

Contact details

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References and Glossary

Guest, J. (1994): 'Ramblings of a Cheshire Naturalist' in The Grebe (Newsletter of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust).

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Spencer, J. (1994): The Native Black Poplar in Britain - An Action Plan for its conservation, English Nature, Newbury, Berks.

White, J. (1993): Black Poplar: The Most Endangered Native Timber Tree in Britain (Forestry Authority Research Information Note 239).

