

Parish
Biodiversity
Audit 2022

Dolton



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Introduction

As part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund project -Conservation Communities - the original parish audits completed in 2015 have been updated, recognising the new biodiversity information that has been generated by the individuals and groups that have participated since it began.

Dolton Parish is located in Torridge district and is 1,460ha in size.

The village of Dolton falls roughly in the centre of the parish and is approximately 10km south-east of Great Torrington. The river Torridge forms the western boundary of the parish and there are many other smaller tributaries and brooks crossing the parish.

Much of the land use within the parish was found to be agriculturally improved or species poor semi-improved grassland grazed by cattle, sheep or horses. There was also a small amount of arable land, particularly in the south-west of the parish in the Brightley area. Much of this may be managed on a rotation between different crops and grass or clover. Plantation broadleaved (including hazel coppice), coniferous and mixed woodland was present within the parish. There were also some rush-pastures grazed by cattle.

Biodiversity features within the parish included a large amount of semi-natural broadleaved woodland along river and stream valleys, some of which is on ancient woodland sites. Devon Wildlife Trust's Halsdon nature reserve is probably the largest area of semi-natural habitat in the parish. This reserve contains a large area of ancient woodland, along with riverside flood meadows, wet woodland and Culm grassland. There are also several areas of Culm grassland within County Wildlife Sites on the eastern side of the parish.

Dolton churchyard was found to contain semi-improved neutral grassland with two veteran rowan trees covered with lichens, and one veteran yew tree.

Species-rich hedges with old trees (some veteran) were a feature of the parish, and hedgebanks which had been left around woodlands hold a rich flora which is good for

butterflies.

Many footpaths and bridleways traverse the parish including the Tarka tail walking route, and Halsdon nature reserve has public access.

Dolton Parish falls within the North Devon Biosphere Reserve. Biosphere Reserves are places with world-class environments that are designated by the United Nations to promote and demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and nature. They are places where conservation and sustainable development go hand in hand. <https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/what-we-do.html>

Most of the information used to create this report and land use map was secured from aerial photograph interpretation together with historical data collected with access permission. Occasionally vantage points within the parish would have been used to help to map habitats and establish land use.

The fact that potential and confirmed wildlife-rich land is mapped does not imply any right of access and does not change any existing rights or use of the land.

Designated / Non-designated sites

Designated statutory/non-statutory sites

There are four designated sites within the parish – three County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These sites support habitats including Culm grassland, broadleaved woodland (on the Ancient Woodland Inventory) and wet woodland. These sites cover 99ha which is just under 7% of the total area of the parish.

Site Name	Habitat Description	BAP habitat	Status
Halsdon	Mixed deciduous river valley woodland, meadows and culm grassland	Wet woodland, oak woodland & Rhôs pasture – Devon BAP, broadleaved woodland & Culm grassland	SSSI/ DWT reserve/ AWI
Cudworthy Moor	Culm grassland with areas of dense scrub	Rhôs pasture – Devon BAP, Culm grassland - ND Biosphere BAP	CWS
Cherubeer, Dolton	Culm grassland with scattered scrub	Rhôs pasture – Devon BAP, Culm grassland - ND Biosphere BAP	CWS
Stafford Moor*	Culm grassland and scrub	Rhôs pasture – Devon BAP, Culm grassland - ND Biosphere BAPe	CWS

*Nb. Recent aerial photographs suggest that the Culm grassland may no longer be present. An up-to-date survey would confirm this.

Halsdon is a Devon Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve. Further information can be found on the Devon Wildlife Trust's website: <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/nature-reserves/halsdon>

County Wildlife Sites (CWS): these are sites of county importance for wildlife, designated on the basis of the habitat or the known presence of particular species. This is not a statutory designation like SSSIs, and does not have any legal status. The National Planning Policy framework requires local authorities to identify and map locally designated sites of biodiversity importance (such as County Wildlife Sites) as part of the Local Plan process and to draw up criteria based policies against which proposals for development affecting them will be judged. CWS recognition does not demand any particular actions on the part of the Landowner and does not give the public rights of access. However, it may increase eligibility for land management grants.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): these are notified by Natural England because of their plants, animals or geological features (the latter are geological SSSIs or gSSSI). Natural England needs to be consulted before any operations likely to damage the special interest are undertaken. SSSI is a statutory designation with legal implications.



Halsdon: Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Lowland mixed Deciduous Woodland: includes woodland growing on the full range of soil conditions, from very acidic to base-rich, and takes in most semi-natural woodland in southern and eastern England, and in parts of lowland Wales and Scotland. It occurs largely within enclosed landscapes, usually on sites with well-defined boundaries, at relatively low altitudes, although altitude is not a defining feature.

Many are ancient woods and they include the classic examples of ancient woodland studied by Rackham (1980) and Peterken (1981) in East Anglia and the East Midlands. The woods tend to be small, less than 20 ha. Often there is evidence of past coppicing, particularly on moderately acid to base-rich soils; on very acid sands the type may be represented by former wood-pastures of oak and birch.

There is great variety in the species composition

of the canopy layer and the ground flora. *Quercus robur* is generally the commoner oak (although *Quercus petraea* may be abundant locally) and may occur with virtually all combinations of other locally native tree species. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland may form a mosaic with other woodland types, including patches of beech woodlands and small wet areas. Rides and edges may grade into grassland and scrub types.

There are no precise data on the total extent of lowland mixed deciduous woodland in the UK, but in the late 1980s the Nature Conservancy Council estimated the total extent of this type to be about 250,000ha. There is however no doubt that the area of this priority type on ancient woodland sites has declined in area by clearance, overgrazing and replanting with non-native species, by about 30-40% over the last 50 years.

Wet woodland is a UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. Wet woodland occurs on poorly drained or seasonally wet soils, usually with alder, birch and willows as the predominant tree species, but sometimes including ash, oak, pine and beech on the drier riparian areas. It is found on floodplains, as successional habitat on fens, mires and bogs, along streams and hillside flushes, and in peaty hollows. These woodlands occur on a range of soil types including nutrient-rich mineral and acid, nutrient-poor organic ones.

Wet woodland supports a rich lichen flora as well as a rich invertebrate flora. Such an abundance of insect food attracts a rich assemblage of breeding birds including the uncommon willow tit. Wet woodland may also provide lying up areas for otters and suitable habitat for dormice.



Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI): Ancient Woodland is a term applied to woodlands which have existed from at least Medieval times to the present day without ever having been cleared for uses other than wood or timber production. A convenient date used to separate ancient and secondary woodland is about the year 1600. In special circumstances semi-natural woods of post-1600 but pre-1900 origin are also included. The Devon Ancient Woodland Inventory was prepared in 1986 by the Nature Conservancy Council. There are two types of ancient woodland, both of which should be treated equally in terms of the protection afforded to ancient woodland in Planning Policy Statement note nine (PPS9):

Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW): where the stands are composed predominantly of trees and shrubs native to the site that do not obviously originate from planting. The stands may have been managed by coppicing or pollarding in the past, or the tree and shrub layer may have grown up by natural regeneration.

Plantations on ancient woodland sites (or PAWS, also known as ancient replanted woodland): areas of ancient woodland where the former native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planted stock, most commonly of a species not native to the site. These will include conifers such as Norway spruce or Corsican pine, but also broadleaves such as sycamore or sweet chestnut.

DBRC is currently working on an update to the AWI which will be released in the new year.

The project page can be found here:

<https://www.dbrc.org.uk/projects-surveys/current-projects-and-surveys/#AWI>

Culm grassland is listed in the North Devon Biosphere Biodiversity Action Plan, Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (Rhôs pasture) and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (purple moor-grass and rush-pasture). Culm grassland is characterised by purple moor-grass, as well as sharp-flowered rush, and various flowering species such as devil's-bit scabious, meadow thistle, heath spotted orchid, water mint and round-leaved sundew. Culm grassland may support the rare marsh fritillary butterfly and narrow-bordered bee hawk moth, as well as the barn owl and curlew.



Other habitats

Species-rich hedges

Species rich hedges are listed on the North Devon Biosphere Reserve Biodiversity Action Plan, Devon Biodiversity Action Plan and UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Species rich hedges were a wildlife feature of Dolton parish. During the parish visit we recorded a 'species-rich' hedge as being one that has eight or more woody species in a 30 metre length.

Species-rich hedgerows were found to the north of Chapple Cross (south-west of the village). Oak, hawthorn, dog rose, hazel, ash, blackthorn and holly were the main woody species present, along with bank flora including honeysuckle, wood sage, male fern, polypody, meadow vetchling and bramble.

Many of the hedges have large standard trees (possibly veteran) present. Hedges to the north of the village near East and West Iddlecott are of particular interest.

<https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/uploads/1/5/4/4/15448192/devons-distinctive-hedges.pdf>

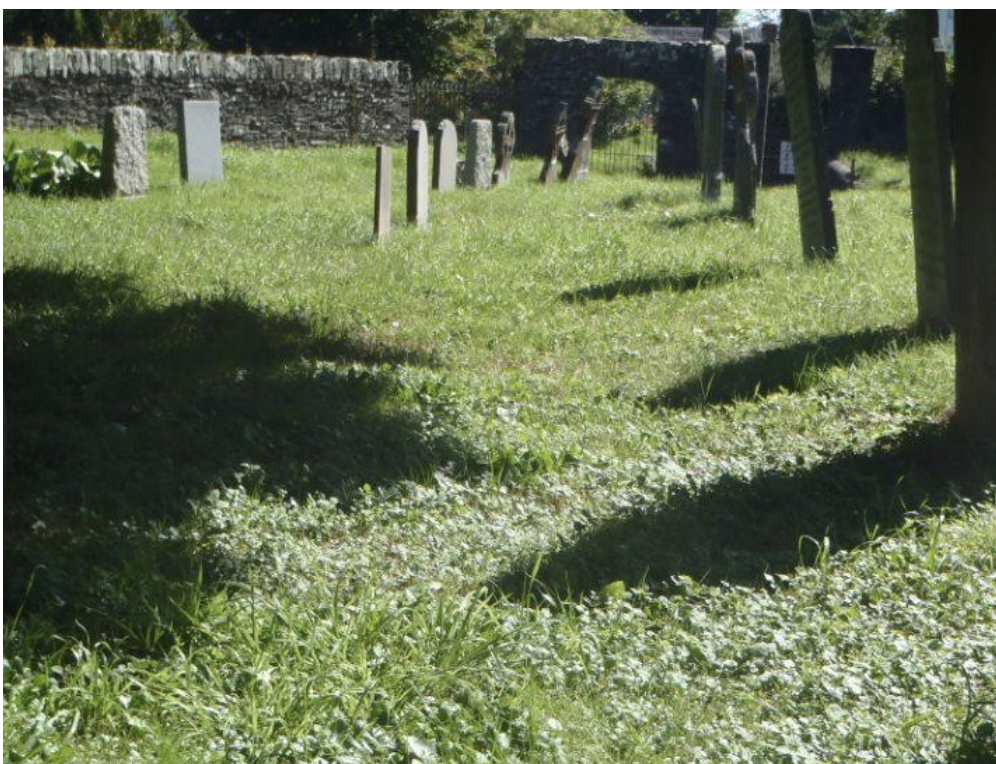


Veteran trees in hedgerow



Hedges near Northbrook

Cemetery/churchyard



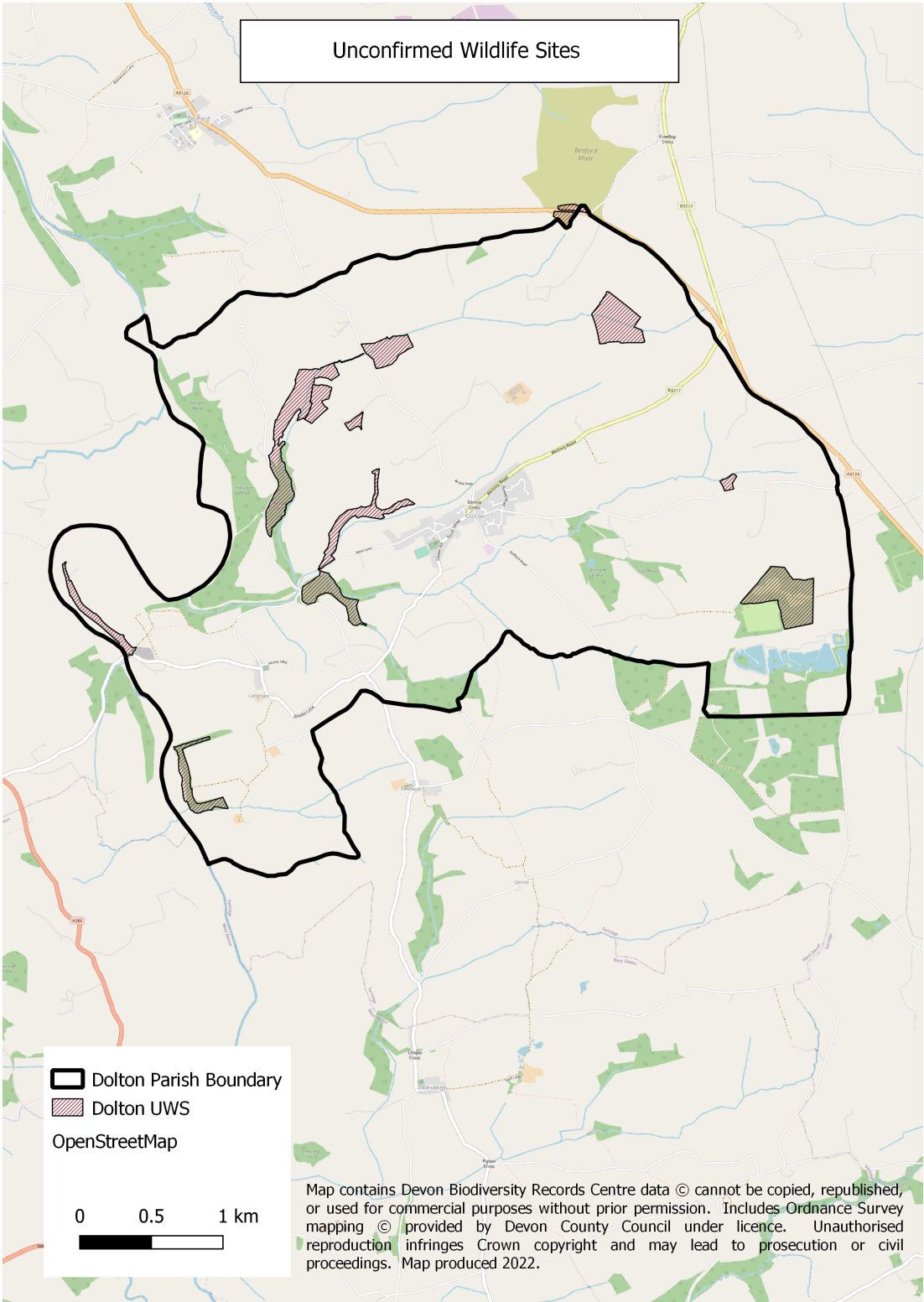
The churchyard in Dolton village was found to support semi-improved neutral grassland with species including cock's-foot, common bent, red fescue, daisy, ribwort plantain, cuckooflower, germander speedwell, dock, dandelion, common sorrel, mosses, common knapweed, common mouse ear, barren strawberry and primrose.

Churchyard grassland

Unconfirmed wildlife sites

There are also a number of Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites in the parish.

Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWS): these are sites identified as having possible interest but not fully surveyed. Some of these sites will be areas of significant wildlife interest. The UWS dataset may also contain Proposed County Wildlife Sites (pCWS): these are usually sites that have been surveyed but are awaiting consideration from the CWS Designation Panel, or sites that have been surveyed at an unfavourable time of year and are awaiting a re-survey.



Types of habitat found in the parish

Wet Woodland: Wet woodland occurs on poorly drained or seasonally wet soils, usually with alder, birch and willows as the predominant tree species, but sometimes including ash, oak, pine and beech on the drier riparian areas.

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland: Lowland mixed deciduous woodland includes woodland growing on the full range of soil conditions, from very acidic to base-rich, and takes in most semi-natural woodland in southern and eastern England, and in parts of lowland Wales and Scotland. It thus complements the ranges of upland oak and upland ash types. It occurs largely within enclosed landscapes, usually on sites with well-defined boundaries, at relatively low altitudes, although altitude is not a defining feature.

Lowland Meadow: Lowland meadows are taken to include most forms of unimproved neutral grassland across the enclosed lowland landscapes of the UK. The habitat comprises not only grasslands cut for hay, but also unimproved neutral pastures where livestock grazing is the main land use. Additional examples may be found in recreational sites, churchyards, roadside verges and a variety of other localities.

Traditional Orchards: Are structurally and ecologically similar to wood-pasture and parkland, with open-grown trees set in herbaceous vegetation.

Arable Land: There was some arable land in the parish, particularly in the south-west close to Westlake and Brightley. Much of this may be managed on rotation between arable crops and grass or clover leys. Many of the fields are very large and probably intensively managed, with thin flailed hedges. Some of the fields are under Entry or Higher Level Stewardship or the old Countryside Stewardship to create grass margins or wide buffer strips. There are a number of rare arable weeds associated with spring cereals and winter stubble including cornflower, corn marigold, shepherd's-needle and weasel's-snout. Arable land in Britain has lost most of its arable plants over the last 50 years; several species have become extinct and there are many more that are now rare.

Changes in arable farming practice are thought to be responsible for the losses. Technology that allowed more effective seed-cleaning caused an initial decline, but herbicide development was catastrophic for many plants.

Nowadays, arable plants are generally confined to the strip along the field edge, which provides a home to many animals, invertebrates and plants.



Veteran Trees

In the churchyard there were two veteran rowan trees with abundant lichens and one veteran yew tree.

English Nature (now Natural England) have defined veteran trees as: “trees that are of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of their age, size or condition”. In relation to oak it has been taken that trees with a diameter of more than:

- 1.0metre are potentially interesting
- 1.5metre are valuable in terms of conservation
- 2.00metre are truly ancient.

Veteran trees will be at least as big as these measurements:

- 1 metre - Hawthorn, blackthorn
- 2.5 metres - Field maple, rowan, yew, birch, holly
- 3 metres - Oak, ash, scot's pine, alder
- 4.5 metres - Sycamore, limes, chestnuts, elms, poplars, beech, willows, pines, non-native trees.

It has been estimated that Britain may be home to around 80% of Europe's ancient trees. Veteran trees are large old trees found in wood-pasture and parkland, but also in a number of other locations: ancient yews in churchyards; mature oaks in hedgerows; black poplars along stream-sides; and many noble trees in ancient woodlands. Ancient trees support particularly rich assemblages of invertebrates, fungi, mosses and lichens. Several species of bat may use hollow trees as roosting sites and birds such as tree creepers and woodpeckers feed on the insects living in the bark. Insects such as stag beetles and hornets are associated with old trees.



Veteran rowan tree



Veteran yew tree

Nature recovery networks

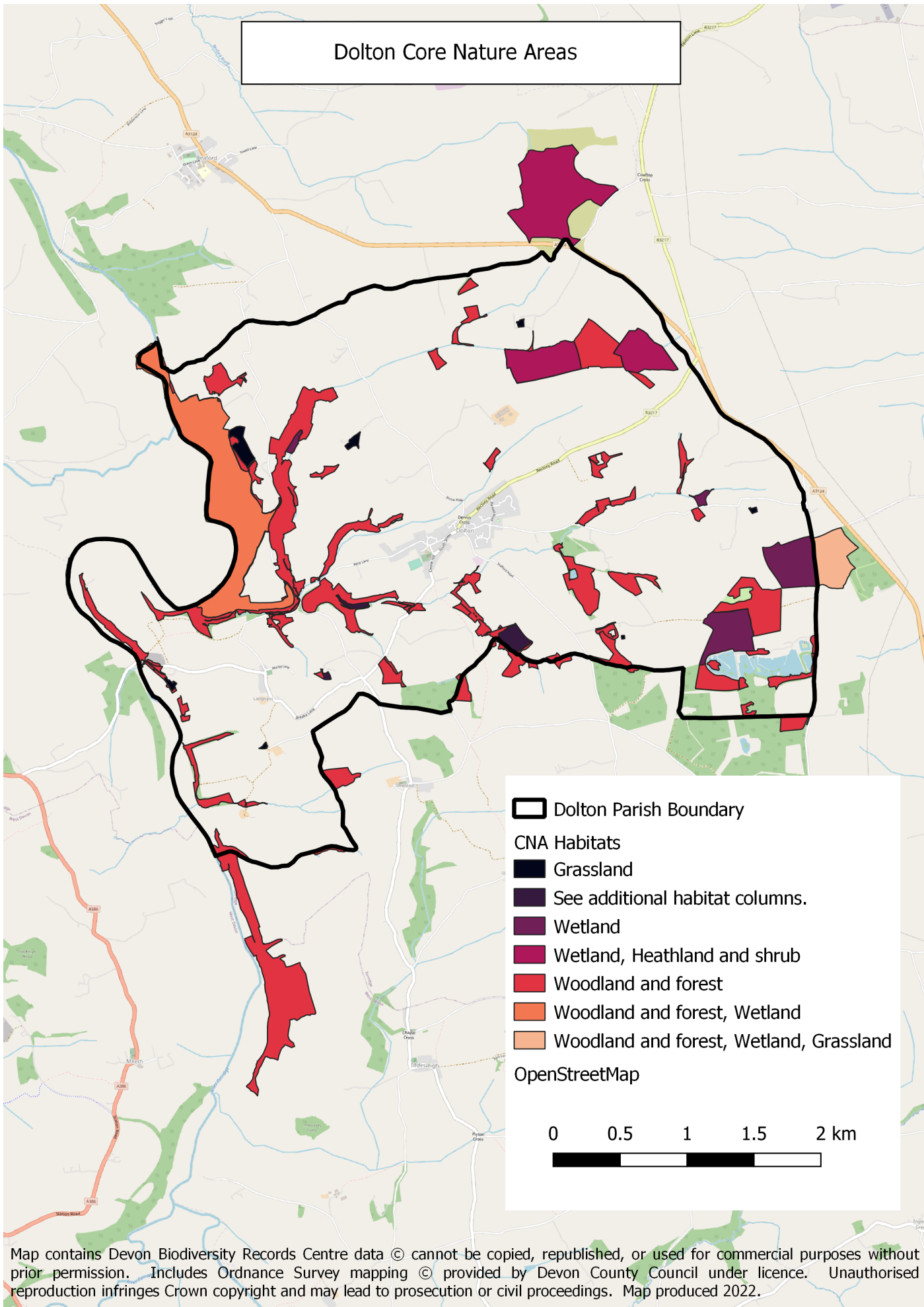
Details of the nature recovery networks can be found here - <https://www.devonlnp.org.uk/our-work/nature-recovery-network/>

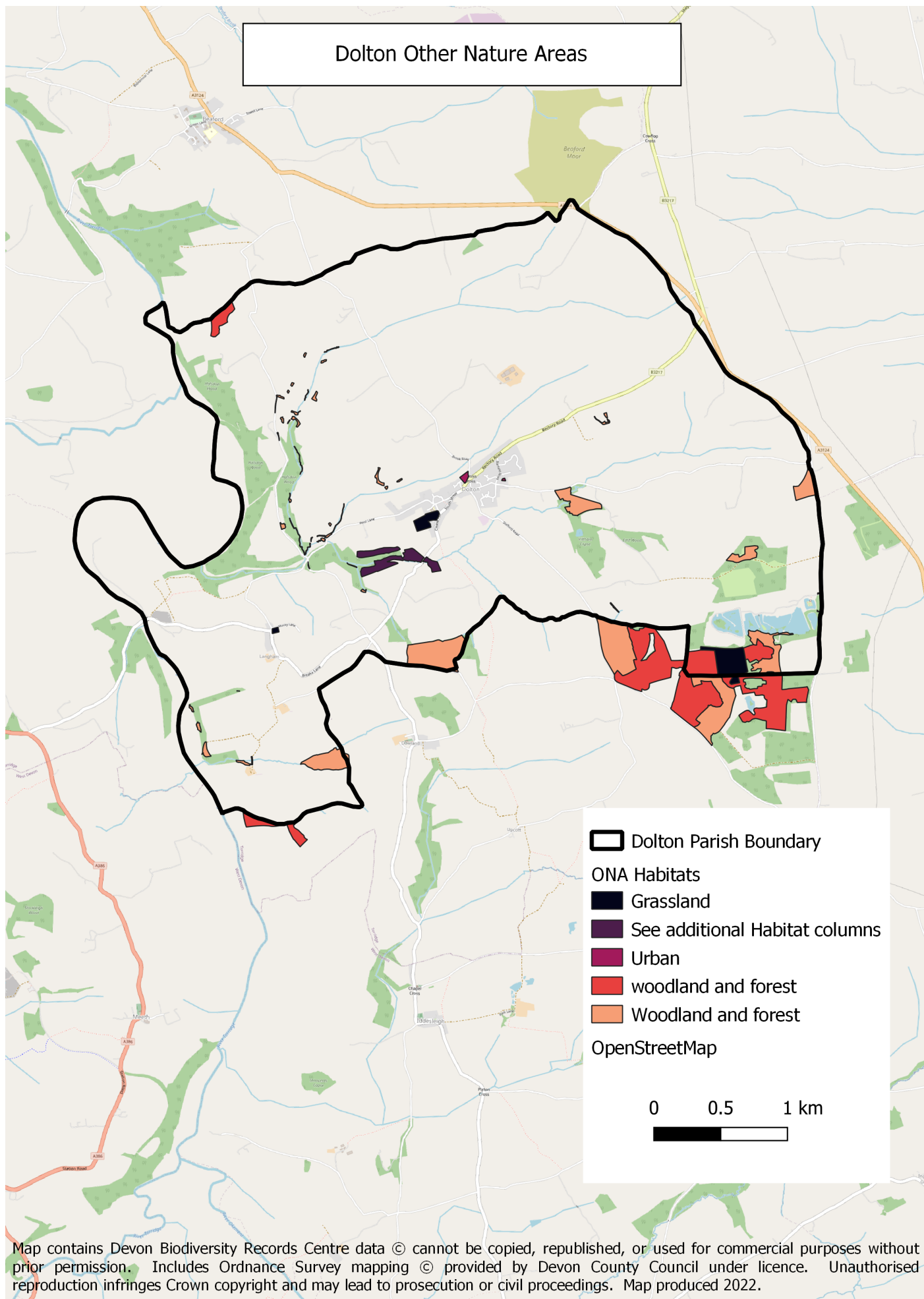
The following two maps show Core Nature Areas as well as Other Nature Areas along with their associated habitats.

Core Nature Areas are our richest wildlife habitats. They include Priority Habitats (excluding hedges and arable margins) and statutory and non-statutory designated sites such as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves and Ancient semi-natural woodlands.

Habitats are grouped together and mapped as Broad Habitats (grasslands, woodlands, wetlands etc).

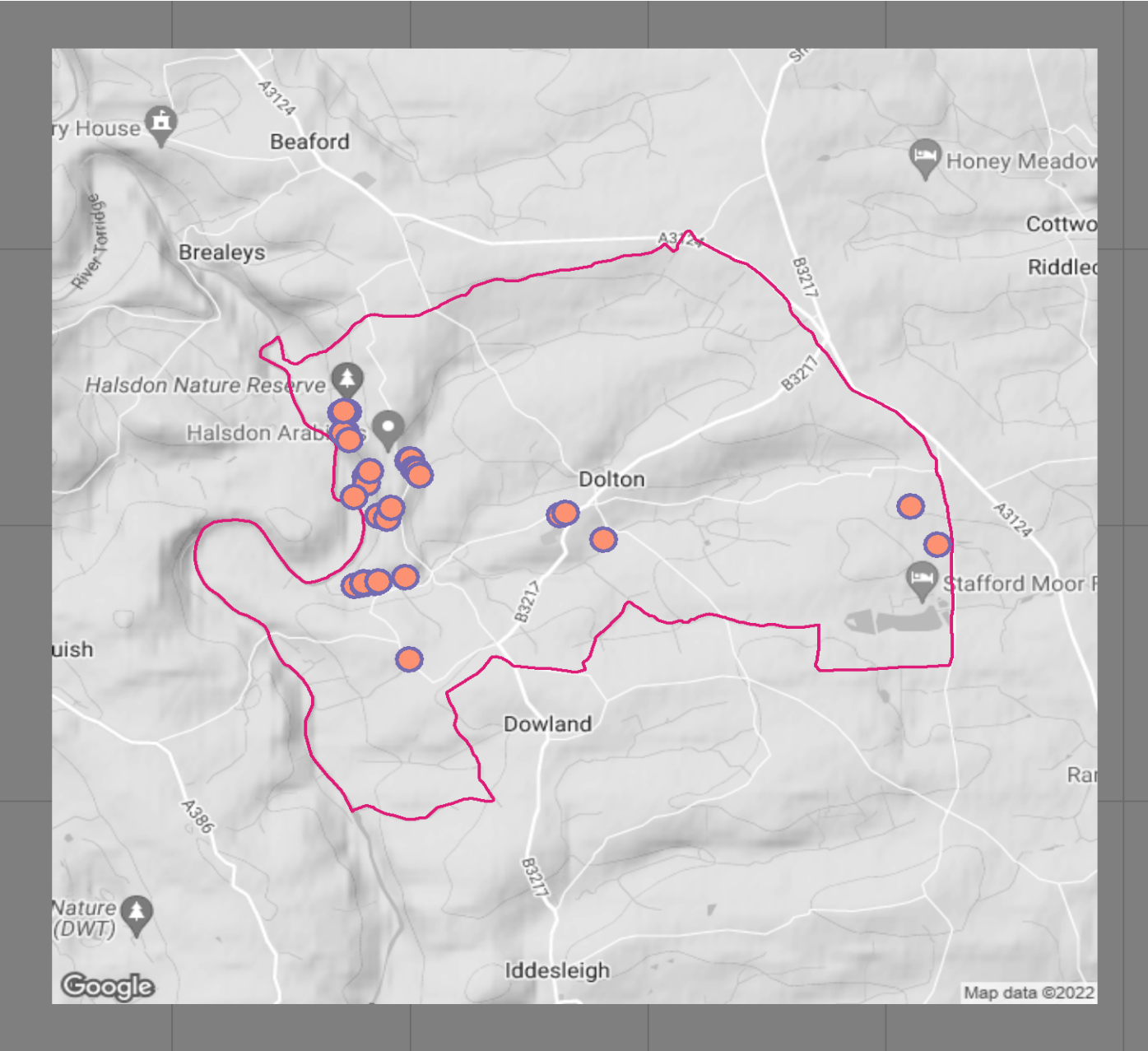
Other Nature Areas are existing habitats which have wildlife value (or potential value) but which are not Priority Habitats or designated sites. These currently include: Other Sites of Wildlife Importance, parks, urban greenspaces, some churchyards, National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves and non-Priority Habitats on the National Forest Inventory. Other habitats will be included in future iterations when data is available.





Species found in the parish

The map below shows the location of recording within the parish boundary over the lifetime of the Conservation Communities project.



Map contains Devon Biodiversity Records Centre data © cannot be copied, republished, or used for commercial purposes without prior permission. Includes Ordnance Survey mapping © provided by Devon CountyCouncil under licence. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Map produced 2022

Species records

Listed below are the species records held by DBRC for the parish of Dolton. The list is broken into three tables. The first table holds Section 41 species, the second Priority species, and the third common species. The table shows the number of records we hold per species in our database (1968 - 2022). As well as the number of records per species collected over the period of this project (2020 - 2022).

Species of principle importance found in the parish.

These are the species that normally are the most likely to affect development and are taken into account when planning.

Taxon Group	Records added during project
0 New priority species records for Dolton	

Summary of section 41 species recorded during project.

- Records added during Conservation Communities
- New records added during Conservation Communities

Taxon Group	Common name	Scientific	Other Status	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
bird	Spotted Flycatcher	Muscicapa striata	Bern II, UKBAP (P); Red		1	1
insect - moth	Buff Ermine	Spilosoma lutea	UKBAP (P)		2	2
insect - moth	Lackey	Malacosoma neustria	UKBAP (P)		2	2
insect - moth	Rustic	Hoplodrina blanda	UKBAP (P)		1	1

Priority species found in the parish.

These are the species that have been identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)

Taxon Group	Records added during project
terrestrial mammal	73
57 New priority species records for Dolton	

Summary of priority species recorded during project.

- Records added during Conservation Communities
- New records added during Conservation Communities

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	Status	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
terrestrial mammal	a Bat	Myotis	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	1	4	5
terrestrial mammal	a Long-eared Bat	Plecotus	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	1	1	2
terrestrial mammal	a Pipistrelle Bat	Pipistrellus	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern III, Bonn II	1		1
terrestrial mammal	Brown Long-eared Bat	Plecotus auritus	WCA 5, 6; NERC 41, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II, UKBAP (P)	20		20
terrestrial mammal	Common Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pipistrellus	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern III, Bonn II	6	1	7
terrestrial mammal	Daubenton's Bat	Myotis daubentonii	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	2		2
terrestrial mammal	Eurasian Otter	Lutra lutra	WCA 5; NERC 41, EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II, UKBAP (P); DBAP		1	1
terrestrial mammal	Lesser Horseshoe Bat	Rhinolophus hipposideros	WCA 5, 6; NERC 41, EC IIa, IVa; Bern II; Bonn II, UKBAP (P)		2	2
terrestrial mammal	Natterer's Bat	Myotis nattereri	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	10		10

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	Status	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
terrestrial mammal	Noctule Bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	WCA 5, 6; NERC 41, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II, UKBAP (P)	5	1	6
terrestrial mammal	Polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>	WCA 6; NERC 41, EC Va; Bern III		1	1
terrestrial mammal	Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II, Vul	2		2
terrestrial mammal	Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	WCA 5, 6; NERC 41, EC IVa; Bern III, Bonn II, UKBAP (P)	17		17
terrestrial mammal	Western Barbastelle	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	WCA 5, 6; NERC 41, EC IIa, IVa; Bern II; Bonn II, UKBAP (P); Vul	3	3	6
terrestrial mammal	Whiskered Bat	<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	5		5

Common species

All other species found in the parish.

Taxon Group	Records added during project
bird	1
insect - moth	2
terrestrial mammal	4
7 New species records for Dolton	

Summary of common species recorded during project.

 New records added during Conservation Communities

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
bird	Blackbird	Turdus merula		1	1
bird	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla		1	1
bird	Blue Tit	Cyanistes caeruleus		1	1
bird	Buzzard	Buteo buteo		1	1
bird	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone		1	1
bird	Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo		1	1
bird	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus		1	1
bird	Great Tit	Parus major		1	1
bird	House Martin	Delichon urbicum		1	1
bird	Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus		1	1
bird	Magpie	Pica pica		1	1
bird	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos		1	1
bird	Nuthatch	Sitta europaea		1	1
bird	Pheasant	Phasianus colchicus		1	1
bird	Raven	Corvus corax		1	1
bird	Robin	Erithacus rubecula		1	1
bird	Swift	Apus apus	1		1
bird	Woodpigeon	Columba palumbus		1	1
bird	Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes		1	1
insect - moth	Barred Straw	Gandaritis pyraliata		2	2
insect - moth	Beautiful Carpet	Mesoleuca albicillata		1	1
insect - moth	Beautiful Hook-tip	Laspeyria flexula		2	2
insect - moth	Bramble Shoot Moth	Notocelia uddmanniana		2	2

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
insect - moth	Brimstone Moth	Opisthograptis luteolata		1	1
insect - moth	Brussels Lace	Cleorodes lichenaria		2	2
insect - moth	Buff-tip	Phalera bucephala		2	2
insect - moth	Clouded Border	Lomaspilis marginata		1	1
insect - moth	Clouded Silver	Lomographa temerata		1	1
insect - moth	Common Emerald	Hemithea aestivaria		2	2
insect - moth	Common Footman	Eilema lurideola		1	1
insect - moth	Common Wave	Cabera exanthemata		1	1
insect - moth	Common Yellow				
insect - moth	Conch	Agapeta hamana		1	1
insect - moth	Coxcomb Prominent	Ptilodon capucina		1	1
insect - moth	Dark Arches	Apamea monoglypha		1	1
insect - moth	Dingy Footman	Eilema griseola		1	1
insect - moth	Double Line	Mythimna turca		2	2
insect - moth	Double Square-spot	Xestia triangulum		1	1
insect - moth	Drinker	Euthrix potatoria		1	1
insect - moth	Early Thorn	Selenia dentaria		1	1
insect - moth	Engrailed	Ectropis crepuscularia		1	1
insect - moth	Fan-foot	Herminia tarsipennalis		1	1
insect - moth	Flame	Axylia putris		2	2
insect - moth	Gold Triangle	Hypsopygia costalis		1	1
insect - moth	Grey Arches	Polia nebulosa		1	1
insect - moth	Heart and Dart	Agrotis exclamationis		1	1
insect - moth	Humming-bird Hawk-moth	Macroglossum stellatarum	1		1
insect - moth	July Highflyer	Hydriomena furcata		1	1
insect - moth	Large Emerald	Geometra papilionaria		1	1
insect - moth	Large Yellow				
insect - moth	Underwing	Noctua pronuba		2	2
insect - moth	Light Emerald	Campaea margaritaria		1	1
insect - moth	Lobster Moth	Stauropus fagi		1	1
insect - moth	Long-winged Pearl	Anania lancealis		1	1
insect - moth	Marbled White Spot	Deltote pygarga		2	2
insect - moth	Mother of Pearl	Patania ruralis		1	1
insect - moth	Mottled Beauty	Alcis repandata		2	2
insect - moth	Orange Moth	Angerona prunaria		1	1
insect - moth	Pale Tussock	Calliteara pudibunda	1		1
insect - moth	Peach Blossom	Thyatira batis		1	1
insect - moth	Peppered Moth	Biston betularia		2	2
insect - moth	Pied Grey	Eudonia delunella		1	1
insect - moth	Poplar Hawk-moth	Laothoe populi		1	1
insect - moth	Riband Wave	Idaea aversata		2	2
insect - moth	Rosy Footman	Miltochrista miniata		2	2
insect - moth	Sandy Carpet	Perizoma flavofasciata		1	1
insect - moth	Scalloped Oak	Crocallis elinguarua		2	2
insect - moth	Scorched Carpet	Ligdia adustata		2	2
insect - moth	Scorched Wing	Plagodis dolabraria		1	1
insect - moth	Small Fan-foot	Herminia grisealis		1	1
insect - moth	Small Fan-footed				
insect - moth	Wave	Idaea biselata		1	1
insect - moth	Small Magpie	Anania hortulata		1	1

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
insect - moth	Smoky Wainscot	Mythimna impura		1	1
insect - moth	Snout	Hypena proboscidalis		2	2
insect - moth	Spectacle	Abrostola tripartita		1	1
insect - moth	Straw Dot	Rivula sericealis		1	1
insect - moth	Swallow-tailed Moth	Ourapteryx sambucaria		1	1
insect - moth	Tawny-barred Angle	Macaria liturata		1	1
insect - moth	Uncertain	Hoplodrina octogenaria		2	2
insect - moth	V-Pug	Chloroclystis v-ata		1	1
insect - moth	Willow Beauty	Peribatodes rhomboidaria		2	2
terrestrial mammal	Whiskered/Brandt's Bat	Myotis mystacinus/brandtii	4		4

Some ideas for local action

This section of the report is provided by Devon County Council (contact: nature@devon.gov.uk).

A major step to knowing what you can do for your local wildlife and geology is to know what you have already got. This report will help you in this, but it is just a start. Ultimately, the protection and enhancement of the local natural environment requires the interest and enthusiasm of the local community.

There follows some initial ideas for local nature conservation action. Many of them will directly help to achieve the objectives of the habitat and species action plans contained in the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan. It is by no means an exhaustive list. As a community, you may have many more ideas for action that you would like to take forward in the coming years.

1 Further survey:

This report is just a beginning. Carrying out further survey within your area will help build a better picture of the wildlife present, and of the opportunities for enhancement. Gaining a better understanding of the resource is usually a key objective of the Devon BAP's habitat and species action plans.

Specific features to survey in Dolton might include species-rich hedgerows and flower-rich road verges. The last two actions would directly contribute to the Species-rich hedgerow Action Plan and the Flower-rich meadows and pastures Action Plan.

One example of survey work that might usefully be undertaken would be to produce a hedgerow appraisal for your local area. Comparing the current distribution of hedges against boundary lines shown on old maps will give a clue as to how this important resource has changed over recent years. It may also highlight opportunities for restoring hedges in your area. It might also be possible to assess the condition of hedges and this may, in turn, give some ideas about improving their future management to benefit wildlife.

Survey work could be undertaken as a community group or in liaison with conservation groups active in the area.

Help to build up a picture of the state of Devon's environment by sending your wildlife records to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre <https://www.dbr.org.uk/wildlife-sightings/> where they can be properly collated.

2 Influence the management of Public Open Space:

Creating areas of more species-rich grassland will help to reduce the isolation of the remaining fragments of traditionally managed agricultural land, contributing to the Flower-rich Meadows and Pastures Action Plan.

Churchyards have often received less intensive management than the surrounding land and can provide good opportunities for wildlife.

Planting up areas that are currently of little wildlife interest with new copses of native trees and shrubs will also help to attract wildlife. Suitable sites might include unused areas of playing fields, for example.

3 Build relationships with local landowners:

Encourage the adoption of more wildlife-friendly land management. For example, hedges which are cut only every other year will provide an autumn and winter source of nuts and berries for birds and small mammals (and can save the landowner money in management costs). The improved management of hedgerows is a key objective of the Species-rich Hedges Action Plan. If the owner is willing, why not get involved with practical management, such as traditional hedge laying or pond restoration? Devon County Council's website has some very good resources for hedge management and ideas for community involvement <https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/wildlife/habitats-and-species/hedges>

4 Adopt a road verge:

Many verges can have a significant value for wildlife because they have escaped the intensive management of the surrounding farmland. Ensuring such verges are managed for their wildlife is a very positive step, again contributing to the Flower-rich Meadows and Pastures Action Plan.

There are, of course, obvious health and safety implications to roadside management. It is an action that would need to be undertaken in close liaison with the relevant highways authority (generally, this is the Highways Agency for motorways and trunk roads, and Devon County Council for all other roads).

5 Wildlife gardening:

Green up your garden! Collectively the gardens of Dolton represent a significant area that could be used to benefit wildlife. Large or small, you can turn your garden (or a part of it!) into a haven for wildlife. A very good source of information on wildlife gardening is the Devon Wildlife Trust web site: <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/take-action/garden-wildlife>

6 Contact the North Devon Biosphere Reserve:

The North Devon Biosphere reserve has a number of initiatives running to enable communities within the North Devon Biosphere Reserve to improve wildlife. On their website <https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/> you can get ideas of how to improve nature in your area including tips on wildlife gardening and details of community initiatives in your area.

7 Japanese Knotweed:

Not something to cherish, but it can't be ignored! Unfortunately Japanese Knotweed is present in several locations in Dolton. Introduced into Britain by the Victorians, Japanese Knotweed is a native of Japan, north China, Korea and Taiwan. It flourishes in Britain's mild and fertile environment and has no natural biological enemies here. Consequently, it is very invasive and can overrun large areas, replacing our native flora. It is a serious pest which can be so vigorous as to cause significant damage to buildings and roads. It is also a difficult plant to eradicate.

For these reasons Japanese Knotweed is listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as a plant that is not to be planted or otherwise introduced into the wild. In addition, all parts of the plant are considered as controlled waste under the Waste Regulations.

Fortunately, a great deal of advice (including an Environment Agency Code of Practice) is available on the Devon Knotweed Forum's web pages. You are recommended to view these at: <https://www.devonlnp.org.uk/knowledge-hub/invasive-species/japanese-knotweed/>

8 Himalayan Balsam:

Himalayan or Indian balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is another very invasive plant. A relative of the busy Lizzie, it is known by a wide variety of common names, including Indian balsam, jumping jack

and policeman's helmet. It was introduced to Britain in 1839, but escaped from gardens and rapidly colonised riverbanks and areas of damp ground.

Himalayan balsam grows in dense stands that suppress the growth of native grasses and other flora. In the autumn, the plants die back, leaving the banks bare of vegetation and vulnerable to erosion. It is sometimes seen in gardens, either uninvited or grown deliberately, but care must be taken to ensure that it does not escape into the wild.

It is a tall, robust, annual producing clusters of purplish pink (or rarely white) helmet-shaped flowers. These are followed by seed pods that open explosively when ripe, shooting their seeds up to 7m (22ft) away. Each plant can produce up to 800 seeds.

Although Devon Biodiversity Records Centre does not hold any official records of Himalayan Balsam in Dolton, it is known to be widespread along rivers and water courses.

A useful leaflet on Himalayan Balsam can be viewed by following this link: <https://www.devonlnp.org.uk/knowledge-hub/invasive-species/>



Japanese Knotweed

Useful sources of further information

Northern Devon Nature Improvement Team www.devonwildlifetrust.org
(Tel: 01392 279244)

Devon Biodiversity Records Centre www.dbrc.org.uk/ (Tel: 01392
274128)

Devon Wildlife Trust: www.devonwildlifetrust.org

Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society: www.devonbirds.org

Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk

Plantlife: www.plantlife.org.uk

RSPB: www.rspb.org.uk

The Woodland Trust: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

Butterfly Conservation <https://butterfly-conservation.org/>

Environment Agency <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>

Devon Hedge Group <https://devonhedges.org/>

Forestry Commission <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission>

Guidance

<https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/>

<https://www.dbrc.org.uk/information/sites-and-habitats/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions#ancient-and-veteran-trees>

UKBAP-BAPHabitats-65-WoodPastureParkland-2011

UKBAP-BAPHabitats-29-Lowland-Meadows

UKBAP-BAPHabitats-56-TraditionalOrchards

UKBAP-BAPHabitats-64-WetWoodland

UKBAP-BAPHabitats-30-LowlandMixedDecWood

UKBAP-BAPHabitats-02-ArableFieldMargins

UKBAP-BAPHabitats-07-CoastFloodGrazingMar

<https://www.devonlnp.org.uk/our-work/nature-recovery-network/nature-recovery-network-map/>

<https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-species/>

<https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/2829ce47-1ca5-41e7-bc1a-871c1cc0b3ae>