Parish
Biodiversity
Audit 2022

Merton

Devon Wildlife Trust

DBRC

Devon County Council

Made possible with Heritage Fund

Index

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.

Merton parish is located in Torridge district and is 1,648 hectares. The village of Merton is located 4km west of Dolton. The parish is bordered along its eastern boundary by the River Torridge.

It was that a large proportion of the land use in Merton is arable land and improved grassland grazed by cattle along with conifer plantation, much of which was planted on ancient woodland sites. Furthermore Westbear and Courtmoor quarries occupy approximately 30 hectares of land within the parish.There was also noted some areas of species poor, semi-improved grassland, rush pasture and Culm grassland being grazed by sheep/cattle, and some traditional orchards within the parish.

Wildlife features that occured within the parish include the following: traditional orchards; unimproved grassland; lowland mixed deciduous woodland (some on ancient woodland sites); wet woodland; species-rich hedges with mature oaks (some veteran); species-rich hedgebanks; species rich road verges; semi-improved grasslands; buffer strips/margins around arable and improved fields; areas of rush pastures and Culm grassland.

Merton churchyard has some unimproved grassland. Old farm buildings and houses/barns throughout the parish provided habitat for barn owls and bats (recorded within the parish). The River Torridge along the eastern border of the parish provides habitat for otters and freshwater pearl mussels, both of which have been recorded in the River.

The Tarka trail walking and cycling trail acts as a 'wildlife corridor' crossing the north-west corner of the parish and there are several footpaths from Merton village into the surrounding countryside.

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.

Key species and habitats listed in the Devon and North Devon Biosphere Reserve Biodiversity Action Plans are indicated in bold italic text throughout the report

Designated / Non-designated sites

Designated statutory/non-statutory sites

There are two designated sites within the parish – both County Wildlife Sites (CWS)

Site Name	Habitat Description	BAP habitat	Status
Merton Moor	Culm grassland	Rhôs pasture Devon BAP, Culm grassland ND Biosphere BAP	CWS
Speccott Moor	Culm grassland and scattered scrub. Mosaic of M23/M24/M27	Rhôs pasture Devon BAP, Culm grassland ND Biosphere BAP	CWS

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.

Culm grassland: Some areas of potential Culm grassland have been identified during the aerial photo interpretation of this parish audit.

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 hawkmoth, as well as the barn owl and curlew.

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.

Unimproved grassland Flower-rich meadows and pastures (or unimproved grasslands) are a habitat of conservation concern in Devon and are listed on the Devon and UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
Unimproved neutral grassland habitat has undergone a huge decline in the 20th century, almost entirely due to changing agricultural practice. It is estimated that by 1984 in lowland England and Wales, semi-natural grassland had declined by 97% over the previous 50 years to approximately 0.2 million ha.

Unimproved grassland is often very flower-rich and as a result of this attracts an abundance of butterflies and other invertebrates. The rich insect life in turn attracts bats such as the greater horseshoe bat and birds such as the green woodpecker and skylark.

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland is on the North Devon Biosphere Biodiversity Action Plan and is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland includes woodland growing on the full range of soil conditions, from very acidic to base-rich, and takes in most seminatural 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.

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.

Hedgerows are often an essential corridor for the movement of wildlife and may support many animals and plants. Berries provide an important food source for birds, and flowers and are an important nectar source for butterflies. Hedgerows and hedgebanks represent continuity as features in the landscape and provide a significant wildlife resource at a time when the fields themselves are being more intensively used. Most of the hedges that occur in Merton parish were found to be a mixture of medieval and 18th and 19th century hedges. with oak (some veteran), blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel and ash being the main trees but also holly, field rose, birch, willow and beech were recorded. The location of the hedge within the landscape gives an indication of the age. A helpful explanation can be found here https://devonhedges.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Interactive-Distinctive-Hedge-Map-Devon.pdf

Nice hedge bank just outside Merton village on road to Merton Mill

Cemetery/churchyard

Merton churchyard

Merton churchyard had some nice unimproved grassland with black knapweed, birds foot trefoil, cocksfoot, Yorkshire fog, false oat grass, common sorrel, germander speedwell, barren strawberry, ribwort plantain, yarrow, bugle, orchid sp, sweet vernal grass, dock, meadow vetchling, common vetch, ox-eye daisy and cat's-ear. The grasses had been left long in places to allow them to flower and ant's nests are present.

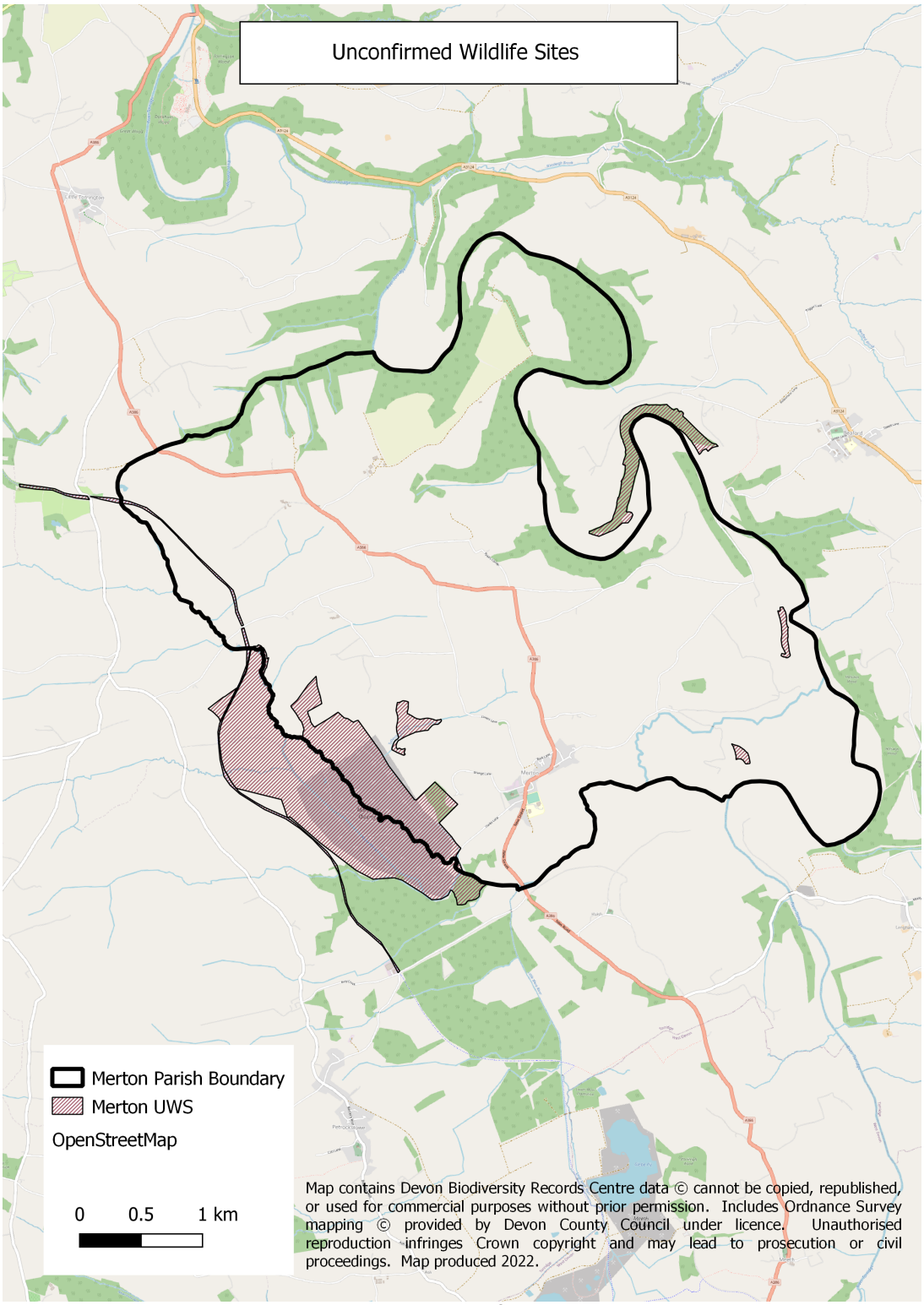
Tarka trail

The Tarka trail cycle route is a wildlife corridor. Semi-natural habitats buffer the trail and include grassland, scrub and broadleaved woodland habitats which then link into the wider countryside including Speccott Moor County Wildlife Site. The trail provides an excellent wildlife corridor for bats and birds.

Unconfirmed wildlife sites

There are five Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites in Merton parish. These are sites identified as having possible interest but not fully surveyed. Some of these sites will be areas of significant wildlife interest.

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

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

Site Name	Description	Status
KENNICKS WOODS	Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland Ancient Replanted Woodland	ASNW PAWS
BALLS COPSE	Ancient Replanted Woodland Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland	PAWS ASNW
HILLIES WOOD	Ancient Replanted Woodland	PAWS
CHELLY/HUISH WOODS	Ancient Replanted Woodland Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland	PAWS ASNW
YEORY WOOD	Ancient Replanted Woodland	PAWS
GOWMANS CLEAVE WOODS	Ancient Replanted Woodland	PAWS

Site Name	Description	Status
WESTDOWN COPSE	Ancient Replanted Woodland	PAWS
GROVES WOOD	Ancient Replanted Woodland	PAWS

Veteran Trees

Veteran oak trees were found in Merton parish in some fields and hedges.

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
1.5metres are valuable in terms of conservation
2.00metres 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.

Arable land: 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 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

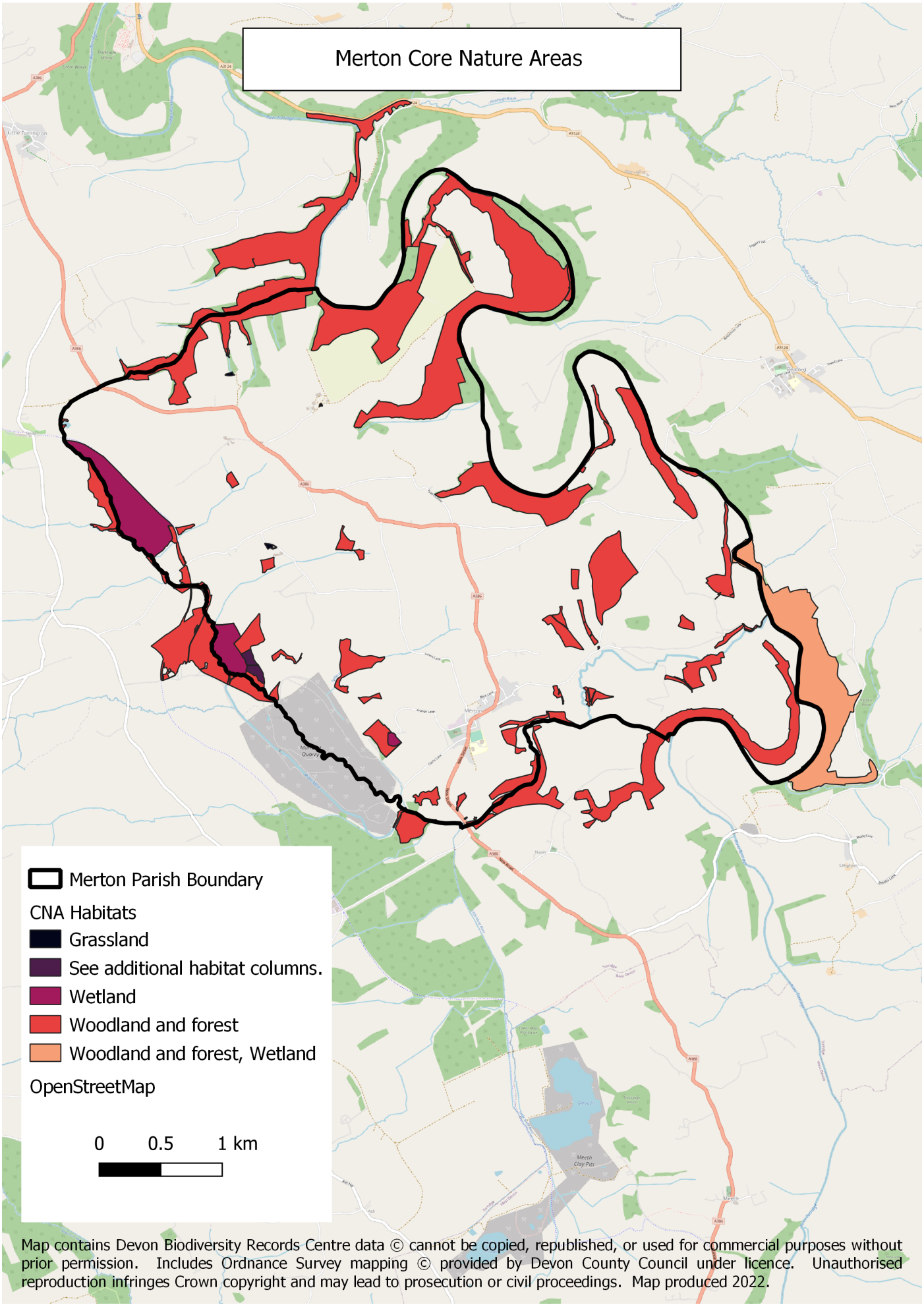
Nature recovery networks

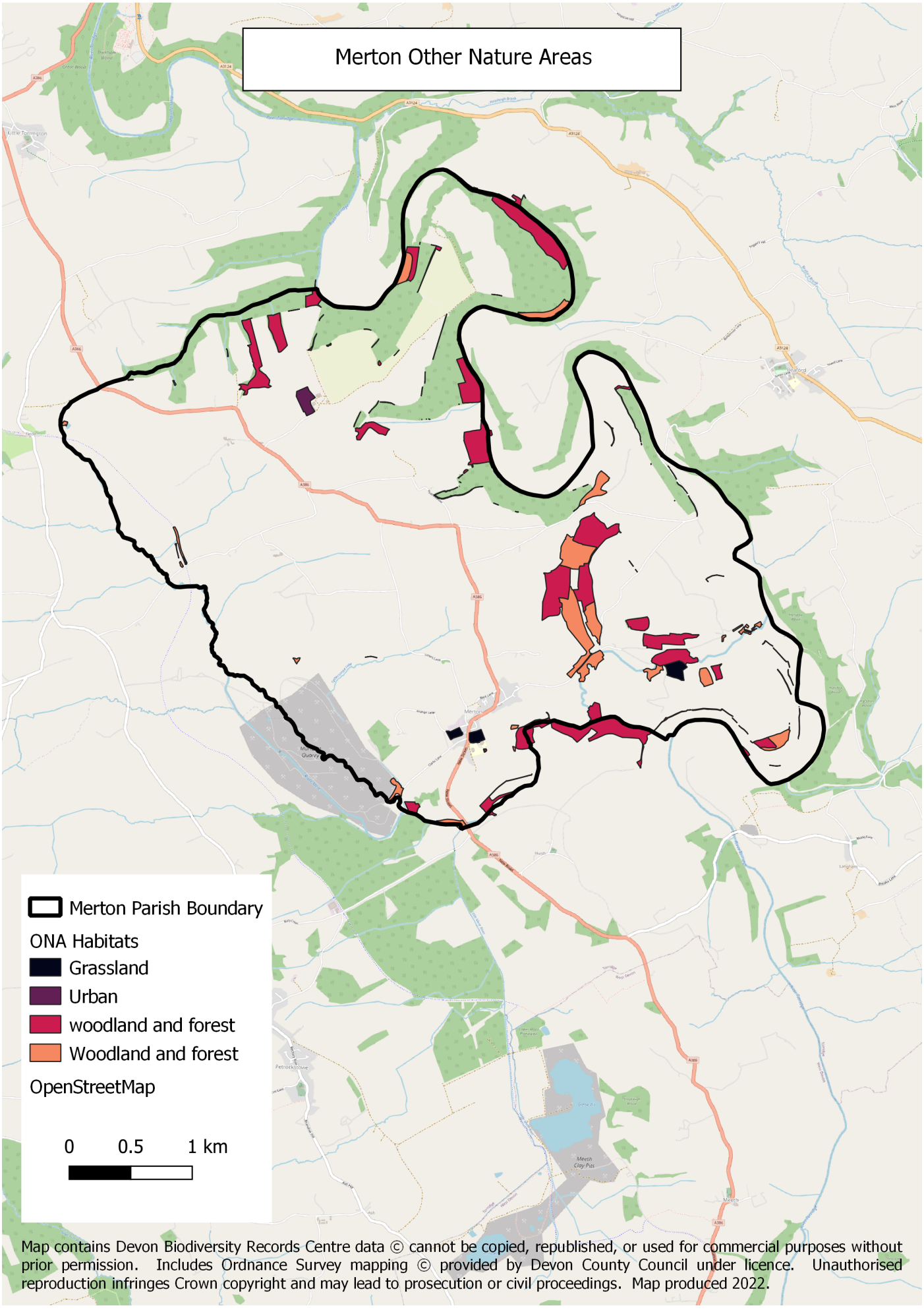
Details of the nature recovery networks can be found here - https://www.devonlnp.org.uk/our-work/nature-recovery-network/

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).

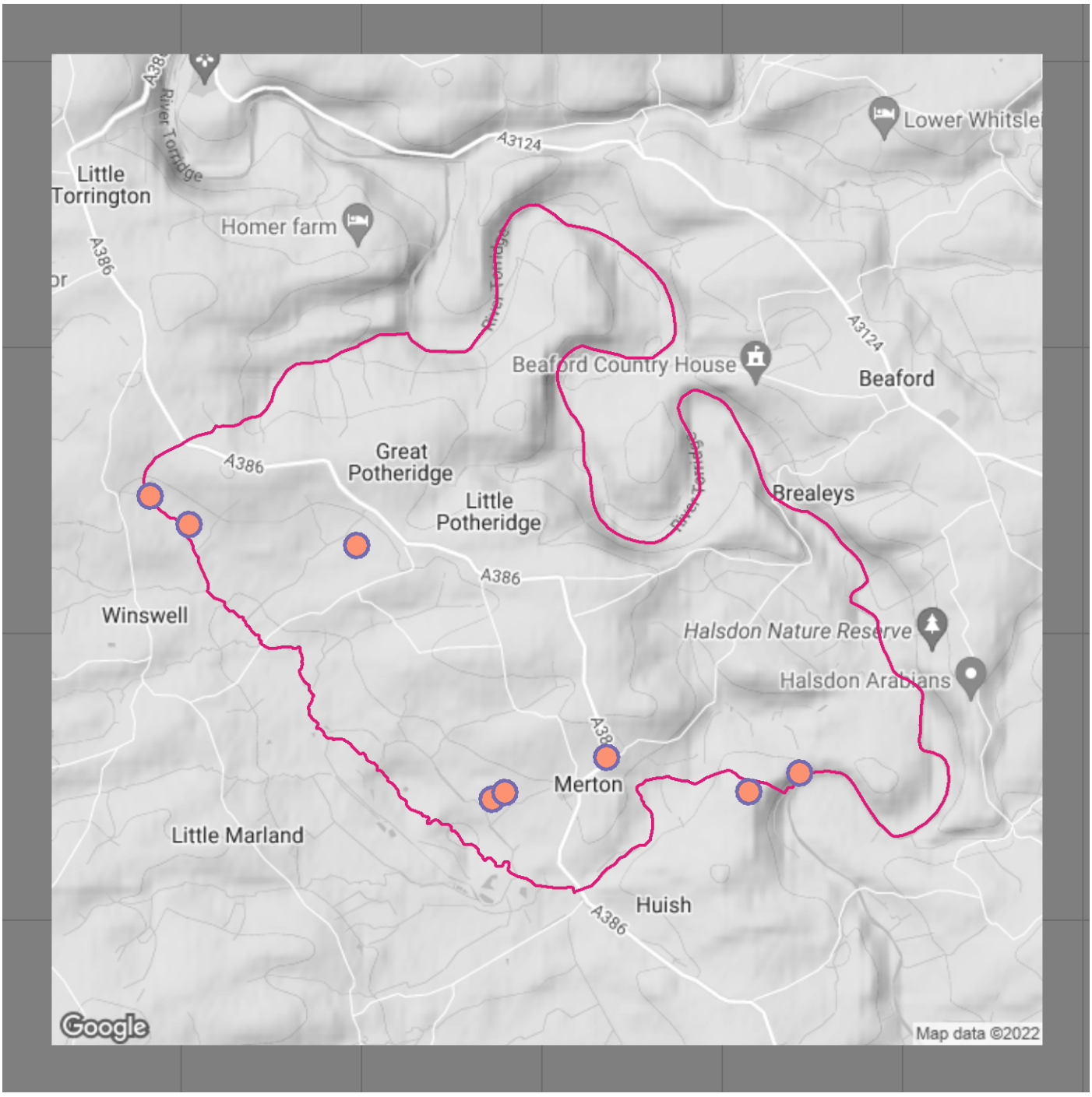
Other Nature Areas are existing habitats which have wildlife value (or potential value) but which are not Priority Habitats or designated sites. These currently include: Other Sites of Wildlife Importance, parks, urban greenspaces, some churchyards, National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves and 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 th 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 Merton. 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
bird	1
terrestrial mammal	2
3 New priority species records for Merton	

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	Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula	UKBAP (P); Amber	1		1
bird	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	UKBAP (P); Red		1	1
bird	Marsh Tit	Poecile palustris	Bern II, UKBAP (P); Red		2	2
terrestrial mammal	Brown Long-eared Bat	Plecotus auritus	WCA 5, 6; EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II, UKBAP (P)	1		1
terrestrial mammal	Lesser Horseshoe Bat	Rhinolophus hipposideros	WCA 5, 6; EC IIa, IVa; Bern II; Bonn II, UKBAP (P)	1		1
terrestrial mammal	West European Hedgehog	Erinaceus europaeus	WCA 6; Bern III, UKBAP (P); Vul		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
bird	20
insect - moth	2
Reptile	1
terrestrial mammal	3
19 New priority species records for Merton	

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
bird	Blue Tit	Cyanistes caeruleus	Bern II		2	2
bird	Coal Tit	Periparus ater	Bern II	1		1
bird	Common Redpoll	Acanthis flammea	Bern II, Amber	1		1
bird	Dunnock	Prunella modularis	Bern II, Amber	1	1	2
bird	Fieldfare	Turdus pilaris	WCA 1, Red	1		1
bird	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus	Bern II		1	1
bird	Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	Bern II	1		1
bird	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major	Bern II	1	1	2
bird	Great Tit	Parus major	Bern II	1	1	2
bird	Green Woodpecker	Picus viridis	Bern II	1	1	2
bird	Greenfinch	Chloris chloris	Bern II, Red	1		1
bird	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea	Bern II, Amber	1		1
bird	House Martin	Delichon urbicum	Bern II, Red		1	1
bird	Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	Bern II, Amber		2	2
bird	Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis	WCA 1, Amber		1	1
bird	Linnet	Linaria cannabina	Bern II, UKBAP (P); Red	1		1
bird	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	Amber		1	1

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	Status	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
bird	Nuthatch	Sitta europaea	Bern II	1	1	2
bird	Pied Wagtail	Motacilla alba	Bern II	1		1
bird	Redwing	Turdus iliacus	WCA 1, Amber	1		1
bird	Robin	Erithacus rubecula	Bern II		2	2
bird	Siskin	Spinus spinus	Bern II		1	1
bird	Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos	UKBAP (P); Amber		1	1
bird	Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus	Amber	1		1
bird	Starling	Sturnus vulgaris	Red	1		1
bird	Stock Dove	Columba oenas	Amber		1	1
bird	Swallow	Hirundo rustica	Bern II	1	2	3
bird	Swift	Apus apus	Red	1		1
bird	Tawny Owl	Strix aluco	Bern II, Amber	1		1
bird	Treecreeper	Certhia familiaris	Bern II		1	1
bird	Willow Warbler	Phylloscopus trochilus	Amber		1	1
bird	Woodpigeon	Columba palumbus	Amber		1	1
bird	Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	Bern II, Amber	1	1	2
insect - moth	Humming-bird Hawk-moth	Macroglossum stellatarum	Migrant	2		2
reptile	Slow-worm	Anguis fragilis	WCA 5 (KIS); NERC 41, Bern III, UKBAP (P)	1		1
terrestrial mammal	a Bat	Myotis	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	1		1
terrestrial mammal	a Bat	Chiroptera	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bonn II		1	1
terrestrial mammal	a Long-eared Bat	Plecotus	WCA 5, 6, EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	1		1
terrestrial mammal	Stoat	Mustela erminea	Bern III	1		1

Common species

All other species found in the parish.

Taxon Group	Records added during project
bird	6
insect - butterfly	3
insect - moth	5
terrestrial mammal	2
11 New species records for Merton	

Summary of common species recorded during project.

Records added during Conservation Communities

New records added during Conservation Communities

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
bird	Blackbird	Turdus merula		2	2
bird	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla		1	1
bird	Buzzard	Buteo buteo	1	2	3
bird	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone	1	1	2
bird	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	1	1	2
bird	Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita		1	1
bird	Garden Warbler	Sylvia borin		1	1
bird	Goosander	Mergus merganser		1	1
bird	Jackdaw	Corvus monedula		1	1
bird	Jay	Garrulus glandarius	1		1
bird	Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus	1	1	2
bird	Pheasant	Phasianus colchicus	1	1	2
bird	Pied Wagtail	Motacilla alba yarrellii		1	1
insect - butterfly	Comma	Polygonia c-album		1	1
insect - butterfly	Gatekeeper	Pyronia tithonus		1	1
insect - butterfly	Holly Blue	Celastrina argiolus		1	1
insect - butterfly	Painted Lady	Vanessa cardui	1		1
insect - butterfly	Peacock	Aglais io		1	1
insect - butterfly	Red Admiral	Vanessa atalanta		1	1

Taxon group	Common name	Scientific	2020 to 2022	1968 to 2019	1968 to 2022
insect - butterfly	Small Tortoiseshell	Aglais urticae	1		1
insect - butterfly	Speckled Wood	Pararge aegeria	1		1
insect - moth	Drinker	Euthrix potatoria	1		1
insect - moth	Elephant Hawk-moth	Deilephila elpenor	2		2
insect - moth	Poplar Hawk-moth	Laothoe populi	2		2
terrestrial mammal	a Shrew	Sorex	1		1
terrestrial mammal	Bank Vole	Clethrionomys glareolus		1	1
terrestrial mammal	European Mole	Talpa europaea	1		1
terrestrial mammal	Wood Mouse	Apodemus sylvaticus		1	1

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 Merton 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.dbrc.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 Merton 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 includingtips 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 Merton 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 andCountryside 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 invasiveplant. 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 Merton 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