



Traditional woodland management – coppicing at Park Wood



What is coppicing?

Coppicing is the oldest form of woodland management and dates back to 5,000BC.

Coppicing means cutting the stems of trees (often hazel) down to the ground promoting re-growth from the base, which is multi-stemmed and called a 'stool'. In ancient coppices the stools will have been cut many times over the centuries making the tree almost immortal.

It is a clean, quiet and environmentally friendly form of forestry. Coppiced areas are called 'coupes' or compartments. The multi-stemmed nature of the hazel shows where it has been coppiced in the past in the traditional way. This is an ancient tradition that will have been practiced in Park Wood for hundreds of years. The lime kilns are a testament to how the wood has been managed in the past and it is this management that has led to the wildlife we now have in the wood.

The Malvern Hills Trust licenses the coppice to Malvern Coppicing who undertake the annual coppicing and care of this part of the Park Wood.

Why do we coppice?

Malvern Hills Trust started this coppicing project mainly for the benefit of the wildlife, habitats and species in the wood. The hazel trees (one of the most important food sources for Dormice) were dying out.

Since the coppicing project started, in the winter of 2008/09 the MHT have planted over 1500 hazel trees in the wood and nearly 50 oak trees along with some other local species.

The MHT and local coppicers have also coppiced those hazels still standing which have brought them back to life, and now all the hazels in this section of woodland have been coppiced once and some compartments are onto their second cut. Hazel can put on a huge amount of new growth in the year following coppicing, up to 3-4 metres in exceptional cases.

What are the benefits of coppicing?

The traditional practice of coppicing provides many benefits for woodland flora and fauna including:

- allowing light to penetrate to the ground encouraging ancient woodland indicator wildflower species such as bluebells, dog's mercury and wood anemone to flower;
- providing space for wildflowers which are pollen and nectar sources for invertebrates;
- ensuring a diverse age structure within the woodland, vital for creatures including the dormouse;
- maximizing the amount of 'woodland edge habitat', the most important area for many species.

What about the value of older trees?

More than a third of the wood has no active woodland management, and the high canopy trees, mainly Oak and Ash, grow as they wish in the woodland.

Numerous shade-loving plants live in this habitat including notable species such as Wood Barley, Wood Spurge, Herb Paris, Spurge Laurel and two species of orchids, the Birds Nest Orchid and the Violet Helleborine. Their locations are plotted and carefully monitored by our own Conservation Officers and local volunteers.

Further information:

Malvern Coppicing www.malverncoppicing.co.uk

[Managing small woodlands for dormice](#), People's Trust for Endangered Species

[How to manage a woodland for wildlife](#), Wildlife Trust