

Bluebell Action Plan

Hyacinthoides non-scripta

UK List of Priority Species:
Scottish Biodiversity List:

No
Yes

Summary

It is estimated that the UK has 25% to 49% of the world's Bluebell population. The plant is common throughout Britain, occurring widely, except in Orkney and Shetland. Bluebells are found scattered throughout western Europe, mainly in France, the Netherlands and Belgium and they have become naturalised in central Europe. This species of bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) should not be confused with the non-native Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*). The latter is frequently planted in gardens. The two species can hybridise with each other.

The Bluebell is widespread within North Lanarkshire. Since the decline of heavy industry there have been few large scale losses of this species, though many populations have become fragmented and limited in size. Recent years have brought increased awareness of Bluebells and new initiatives have taken place to help expand existing woodlands in order to link up isolated populations, and establish new colonies in appropriate woodlands across the area.

Legal Status

Native bluebells are protected under Schedule 8⁴ of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Species Profile

Bluebells typically occur in well drained, deciduous woodland, especially coppice, where they may dominate the ground flora. They can be common in other shady places such as hedgerow banks and under bracken, preferring dappled shade to closed canopy or open sunshine, though they can be found in more open habitats on occasion. Humidity and continuity of habitat are key requirements for this species. Their distribution is tied very closely to that of ancient and long established woodland, with Bluebells used as an indicator species of ancient woodland, and remnants of ancient woodland, such as hedgerows.

Current Status

In North Lanarkshire bluebells form characteristic 'carpets' in the more mature, semi-natural woodlands. The plants appear to grow best on brown forest soil types overlying clay.

Surveys involving observations from the public in 1997 and 2004 revealed Bluebells to be most common in the Clyde Valley, around Motherwell, Wishaw and Overtown, also in relict woodlands in the Gartcosh / Coatbridge / Airdrie area (such as Gartsherrie Wood), in Cumbernauld Glen and in the Kelvin valley. The plant appears to be absent from the eastern part of the Central and Southern Divisions, where soils are wetter and more acidic.



In 2008, Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT) embarked in a programme of works called Alarm for Bluebells throughout central Scotland. The projects key goals were to:

1. Engage with and inform Forest residents on the issues
2. Train people in spotting different types of bluebell
3. Gather information as to the existing bluebell coverage within our area
4. Train people in planning bluebells
5. Source and physically plant lots of bluebells

The project was deemed a success and can be considered to have made a marked contribution in the task of ensuring native bluebells survive in the Central Scotland area for future generations to enjoy.

In North Lanarkshire 7 planting events took place within 4 different sites. These sites are scheduled to be resurveyed over the next 2 years to determine wither the planting has been a success.

Sites were: Brownsburn Community Woodland, Greenfaulds orchard, Shotts Nature Park and Cumbernauld Community Park. Donation also made to the Craighalbert Centre.

Future status

There are many Bluebell woodlands in North Lanarkshire such as such as Coltness and Cambusnethan Woods, Strathclyde Country Park and Colzium Estate. Forestry grants and the drive from within the Council to bring these woodlands into active management means that the populations of Bluebells found there currently have a secure future. With the design and establishment of forest networks, Bluebells will have the potential to naturally colonise new areas of woodland. The hundreds of hectares of new woodland that have been created locally are mainly on derelict farmland with no woodland flora, once these woodlands have become relatively established there is scope to introducing native woodland plants such as Bluebells. If these woodlands are connected with existing Bluebell woodlands, colonisation will take place naturally over time.

Current Factors Affecting This Species

- The major cause of the loss of this species is historical, as woodland cover gradually made way for agriculture. Grazing and trampling by livestock still affects this plant in unfenced woodlands.
- More significant, in some locations, has been the clearance of land containing small woods to make way for developments (e.g. Strathclyde Business Park) and new roads.
- Competition and hybridisation with its close relative the Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*)

Current Action

- Presumption against development of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) in the various NLC local plans; most large areas of Bluebells are designated as SINCS.



- Mitigation measures through the planning process on sites with bluebell (areas not designated as SINC's)
- Ongoing programme of woodland management in NLC owned woodlands (WIAT works).
- Site Stewardship programme within Greenspace Services Department monitoring NLC owned SINCS; approximately 11 have substantial areas of Bluebell ground flora.
- SINC review and survey is ongoing on sites that we know to be threatened or where there is opportunity to take forward positive action. NatureScot have produced Habitat Network and Opportunities mapping highlighting key areas for connecting native habitats. This is linked to the Glasgow Clyde Valley Habitat Blueprint, which aims to create a shortlist of opportunity sites for linking high quality habitats, including native woodland.

Proposed Objectives, Targets and Actions.

Objectives

1. To maintain and enhance the population and distribution of native Bluebells in North Lanarkshire.
2. Extend associated habitats to improve the status and widen distribution.
3. Improve public and employee knowledge of Bluebells

Actions	Meets objective number	Action by	Target
Species and habitat management and protection			
1.1 Monitor known bluebell populations, report and uproot Spanish Bluebells with land owner's permission	1	NLC, GATrust,	Survey to be integrated in to existing woodland surveys. Positive and negative records to be collated.
1.2 Ensure action for bluebell management is considered in all management plans. Undertake management to minimise trampling where this is a problem (e.g. deterrence with brushwood, defining desire lines with branches)	1	NLC, GATrust,SWT	Undertaken in all new management plans.
1.3 Following volunteer survey, identify suitable Ancient and Semi-natural Woodland sites for planting with local schools	1,2	NLC, GATrust	Plant 4 new woodland sites with bluebells with help from local schools by 2026.
1.4 Training for council staff and volunteers on species differentiation, for example Grounds Maintenance.	1, 3	NLC	Training for staff and volunteers that work within woodlands by 2026.
Monitoring and research			
2.1 Survey all areas planted during the Alarm for Bluebells campaign	1,	GATrust, NLC	To determine if the project has been a success and future actions to take forward. Survey undertaken by volunteers in 2027
2.2 Organise a volunteer survey of all Ancient Woodland sites in North Lanarkshire for both Spanish and Native Bluebells	1,3	NLC, GATrust	Organise a volunteer training day and survey sheets with maps of Ancient and Semi-natural woodland in North Lanarkshire.by 2027.



Communication and publicity			
3.1 Encourage the public to choose native bluebells from a supplier who grows from cultivated stock instead of Spanish Bluebells.	1	GATrust, NLC	Contact gardening clubs within schools and garden centres-give them leaflets and information on Native Bluebells by 2027

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