

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Royal Splinter Crane-fly

BftB project: IP02 Ancients of the Future

Project lead organisation: Buglife

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Species name – common & scientific	Royal splinter crane-fly (<i>Gnophomyia elsneri</i>)
Photograph	 <p>© A Sands / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Invertebrate – Diptera (Limoniidae)
Conservation status	Critically Endangered
UK distribution	Restricted to Windsor Forest (High Standing Hill)
Habitat associations	Associated with the wet porridge-like wood mould found in basal cavities of ancient Beech trees
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	No active searches were carried out for this species, but it was also not picked up on more general invertebrate searches in 2018 at High Standing Hill.
Sites habitat management works	Veteranising management techniques implemented at High Standing Hill and site management plans influenced to maintain existing ancient trees with basal cavities and plan for future recruitment of veteran trees. Some of this has been as a result of the project but with the deadwood assemblage in mind, not this particular species.
Conservation 'interventions' incl. reintroductions & translocations	None specific to this species beyond the provision of management advice

Technical advice provision	Advice issued to Crown Estates at Windsor through the provision of the Cross taxa guidance document.
Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	Advice on habitat management links closely to that of Violet click beetle as both require similar habitat in ancient beech trees.
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	None, bar promoting management for dead wood assemblages
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	None recorded
Species Recovery Curve progress made	Species has moved from 1 to 2 though this is probably due to it being wrongly assigned to step 1 initially and not due to project actions. We know aspects of its habitat associations and that there are problems with habitat continuity as a result of the age structure of trees on its sites. However, there is insufficient evidence to date that the works to bridge the age gap, retain existing trees or plan for future veteran trees will directly benefit the species, with very long timescales at play. The length of the BftB project is far shorter than those required to effectively confirm if the techniques can deliver for the species, with veteranisation techniques taking decades to deliver for wildlife and many of these techniques being newly introduced to project sites. Some elements of Steps 5 and 6 have been actioned by the project, with habitat works delivered on site, but they are very much works in progress and based on an incomplete picture of their autoecology. We remain confident that improving the resources of ancient trees and dead wood features on sites will help the species to recover, but a score beyond 2 would be based on significant assumptions.
Recommendations for future work:-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active survey for Royal Splinter Crane fly to determine its presence in known areas at Windsor Forest. • Improve understanding of the species autoecology. • Maintain the current ancient beech trees for as long as possible. • Review the success of veteranisation of beech trees in creating suitable habitat for the species.