

# Back from the Brink – Species summary

## Variable Chafer

BftB project: IP02 Ancients of the Future

Project lead organisation: Buglife

Contact: [info@buglife.org.uk](mailto:info@buglife.org.uk)

Species name – common & scientific	Variable Chafer ( <i>Gnorimus variabilis</i> )
Photograph	 <p>© Matt Smith / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Invertebrate-Coleoptera (Scarabaeidae)
Conservation status	Classified as Vulnerable (EU27) or Near Threatened (Europe) on the European Red List of Saproxyllic Beetles (2010). It is a Red Data Book species in Britain
UK distribution	Currently only known from Windsor Forest and Great Park (Berkshire) and Parham Park (West Sussex).
Habitat associations	Some of the habitat associations are known e.g. association of larvae with hard red-rotten wood at the interface with moist decayed interior red-rot in hollowing trunks of oak but also Beech. Adults have been found in the larval habitat, resting on trees, or in flight. However, although details of larval stages of life cycle are relatively known, there remain significant gaps in our understanding of their overall autoecology.
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	General beetle recording was undertaken at Windsor in 2018 when recent frass was observed at an old oak tree. An independent survey in 2019 recorded a single larva, one adult and lots of frass.

<b>Sites habitat management works</b>	Veteranising management techniques implemented at High Standing Hill and site management plans influenced to maintain existing ancient trees 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.
<b>Conservation 'interventions' incl. reintroductions &amp; translocations</b>	None specific to this species beyond the provision of management advice
<b>Technical advice provision</b>	Advice issued to Crown Estates at Windsor through the provision of the Cross taxa guidance document.
<b>Links made with other taxa / conservation work?</b>	Advice on habitat management links closely to that of other beetles requiring red rot in oaks.
<b>Wider engagement &amp; advocacy activities?</b>	None, bar promoting management for dead wood assemblages
<b>BftB results obtained:</b>	
<b>Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)</b>	Evidence of larvae, by way of frass, recorded from Windsor Great Park as part of this project. Larvae and an adult were also recorded by an independent surveyor.
<b>Recorded Abundance of species populations</b>	Evidence of larvae recorded
<b>Species Recovery Curve progress made</b>	The species <b>remains at 2</b> reflecting its rarity, the need to fully understand the species' autecology to effectively conserve them and the long-term nature of managing habitats for them before they come to maturity. 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 <b>Steps 5 and 6</b> 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.
<b>Recommendations for future work:-</b>	Long-term funded species monitoring to assess the success of veteranisation techniques in providing suitable habitat.