

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Woodlark

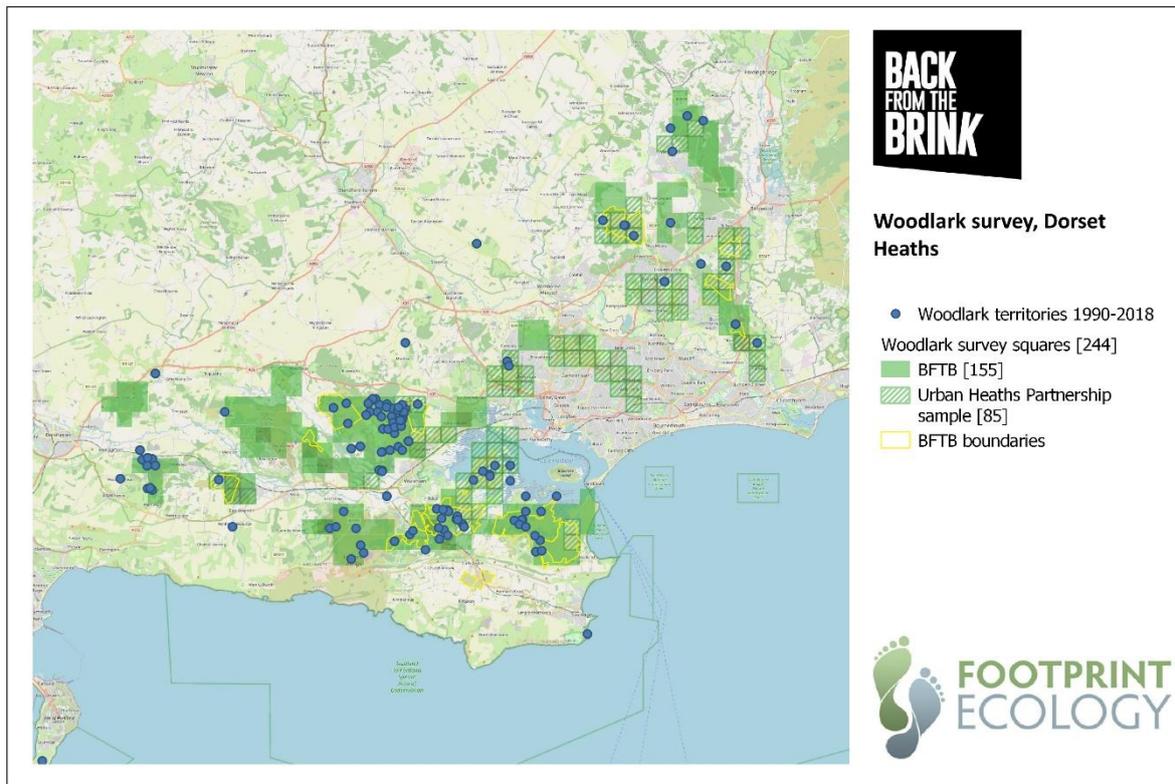
BftB project: IP01 Dorset's Heathland Heart

Project lead organisation: Plantlife

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Species name – common & scientific	Woodlark – <i>Lullula arborea</i>
Photograph	 <p>© James Lowen / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Bird - passerine
Conservation status	NERC S41, Birds Directive Annex I
UK distribution	Woodlark is recorded as breeding in the New Forest, the Thames Basin, Dorset and Wealden Heaths, Breckland, the Suffolk coastal heaths and the East Midlands heaths. Overwintering birds are found in Hampshire, west Surrey, Devon and more recently in East Anglia.
Habitat associations	Generally associated with early successional habitat in heathland landscapes, including clear-felled forestry, short grassland and open heath with bare ground. Also found in open farmland.
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	Following a trial in 2018, a Dorset-wide survey was carried out by volunteers in 2021 to cover sites where surveys are not already carried out as part of the Dorset Urban Heaths Mitigation Partnership annual sample (see Map 1).
Sites habitat management works	Habitat creation was not specifically targeted at this species, which is the beneficiary of wider, landscape-scale initiatives in Dorset. However, bare ground created for invertebrates and scrub clearance carried out as part of the project will potentially benefit Woodlark (which requires early successional habitat for foraging).

Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	See habitat management above.
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	Awareness was raised about Woodlark through two guided walks run in partnership with RSPB.
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	Data from BFTB volunteer surveys are currently being combined with Urban Heaths Partnership data to provide a Dorset-wide dataset. As part of the project, previous data (including BFTB trial data) were compiled and are shown in Map 1.
Recorded Abundance of species populations	See above.
Other results documented?	A new territory was found in one regularly monitored area where gorse and trees had been cleared for BFTB on Stoborough Heath, and two further territories were identified around scrapes created by project partners on Creech and Norden Heaths, indicating that scrapes may benefit this species.
Species Recovery Curve progress made	6 – 7 Best approach adopted (<i>partially</i>). Partners are aware of the need for early successional heathland/forestry clearings and include this within routine management. The sensitivity of the species to recreational disturbance is addressed on some sites, but not all. Note that although the best approach has been partially adopted, this is not due to the BFTB project.
Recommendations for future work:-	Woodlark will require the ongoing creation of early successional habitat within the Dorset Heaths, preferably in areas where recreational pressure is lower. The Dorset-wide survey results should be used by BFTB partners to examine the distribution and abundance of birds across site boundaries (there is currently uncertainty as to the extent to which populations are moving between sites).



Map 1: Woodlark survey area and records compiled as part of BFTB.