

Please
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Essex Biodiversity project
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Essex Biodiversity Project

Essex Biodiversity Project, a group of more than 40 nature conservation organisations, statutory agencies, voluntary interest groups, businesses, community groups and local authorities working together for the biodiversity of Essex.

Funding members:



Supporting members: Braintree District Council • Brentwood Borough Council • British Trust for Conservation Volunteers • Butterfly Conservation • Castle Point Borough Council • Colchester Borough Council • Conservators of Epping Forest • Dedham Vale & Stour Valley Project • Epping Forest District Council • Essex Amphibian and Reptile Group • Essex Bat Group • Essex Birdwatching Society • Essex Estuaries Initiative • Essex Field Club • Essex Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group • Forestry Commission • Game Conservancy Trust • Havering Borough Council • Lee Valley Regional Park • Peoples Trust for Endangered Species • Royal Horticultural Society • Royal Society for the Protection of Birds • Southend Borough Council • Tendring District Council • Thames Chase Community Forest • Thames Estuary Partnership • The National Trust • The Suffolk Coasts & Heaths Unit • Thurrock Council • Writtle College.

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Essex
Biodiversity
PROJECT
...working for a better quality of life

*Old Orchards
in Essex*

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Old Orchards in Essex

Essex was once a major producer of apples and other fruit with extensive orchards growing local varieties. Some Essex varieties are well known like Discovery or George Cave but others are less familiar. Have you ever enjoyed a Chelmsford Wonder, a D'Arcy Spice or a Braintree Seedling?

Old orchards are important for several reasons, they provide habitat for birds, invertebrates and small mammals, for example Essex Biodiversity Action Plan species Grey partridge, Song thrush, Pipistrelle bat and Stag beetle are associated with old orchards. Old orchards hold the main genetic resource of old local fruit varieties that have otherwise disappeared from commercial production. In addition, old Essex orchards make an important contribution to the local landscape and our cultural heritage.

Many traditional tall standard orchards were grubbed up and lost between 1961 and 1995. The few remaining modern commercial orchards tend to be intensively managed with dwarf varieties and chemicals which limits their wildlife potential.



There was a 45 per cent decline in non-commercial orchards between 1970 and 1996 with only 65 hectares remaining in Essex in 1996*.

At present the level of protection for old orchards is low. No old orchards exist within SSSIs and only two orchard Wildlife Sites are identified in Essex. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) rarely cover fruit trees and orchards.

Old Orchards are an Essex Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. The plan identifies a need to create an orchard register to include locations, owners and varieties, and seeks to restore and sympathetically manage existing old orchards.

* MAFF (1996) June Agricultural and Horticultural Census

How you can help

There are still a number of old orchards left in the county. There are probably also fragments of old orchards and individual old trees which are unrecorded. They are important areas of habitat which need to be recognised and valued.

Help us to locate these neglected old orchards and individual old fruit trees. Please complete and return the survey card, don't worry if you can't answer all the questions simply give as much information as you can. We are looking especially for orchards containing old Essex fruit varieties.

We will contact landowners and visit as many sites as possible to assess them for wildlife and identify fruit varieties. Where interesting old varieties are located, material will be collected (with permission) and propagated to keep the varieties safe for the future in Essex.



In association with
EAST OF ENGLAND
Apples & Orchards Project

Biological diversity – or 'biodiversity' – is the variety of life on earth and includes all plants and animals, together with the soils, rocks and water on which they depend.

Survey card

Please record as much information as possible

Exact location – name of the site

OS map grid reference

What size is the orchard or site? how many trees?

Approximately how old is the orchard or trees

Do you know which fruit varieties are present?

Are there: apples pears plums cherries quince other

Are there old unidentified varieties? yes no

How is the land under the tree managed?

Do you know who owns the site? yes no

If yes, what are the contact details for the owner?

If you are the owner would you give permission for a surveyor to visit?

Your contact details

Name Address

..... Postcode

Telephone email

Please tick here if you do not want us to store your contact details on our database

We may wish to send you information about Essex Wildlife Trust. Please tick if you would prefer not to receive this