



DRAFT REVISED PLAN - AUGUST 2015

A LEAF-ROLLING WEEVIL

Byctiscus populi

1. INTRODUCTION

Byctiscus populi is a 4-5mm long weevil with brilliant metallic green coloration. It feeds predominantly on aspen (*Populus tremulus*) in woodland and scrub habitats. It gets its common name from the fact that the female lays eggs in a specially created leaf-roll that is brown and hangs vertically. The developing larva lives inside this shelter feeding on the leaf tissue. Regeneration of the host tree is important because research suggests that the suckering and sapling stages of tree growth are preferred by the weevil.



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In the UK this species was formerly found at a number of localities in southern England but it has since declined and is currently known from just five counties. In the sub-region the weevil has only been recorded from one locality, [Oversley Wood](#), though several further potentially suitable sites exist in Warwickshire.

Since it feeds on aspen in open woodland and scrub habitats, it has become very susceptible to the cessation of coppicing; in the past this management provided continuity of provision of young aspen growth.

2.	OBJECTIVES	TARGETS
The associated Action Plan is: 'Woodland'		
PLEASE CONSULT THE ' GENERIC SPECIES ' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR OBJECTIVES COMMON TO ALL SPECIES PLANS		
A.	To increase the size and range of the known population of <i>Byctiscus populi</i> through sympathetic habitat management.	ongoing

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

This species of leaf rolling weevil is classified as Nationally Rare (RDB3) and is on the current UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species list published in 2007 ([Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#)). The targets and objectives for the *Byctiscus populi* BAP, updated in 2010, may be seen online. It is one of eight insects feeding on aspen that are UK Priority Species (Stubbs, 2014).

4. CURRENT STATUS

Historically, this weevil was recorded in sixteen counties in the south of England, but it has declined considerably with confirmed post-1990 records from only Hertfordshire,

Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Middlesex, Essex and East Kent. It is currently believed to be present at less than fifteen sites in England and is vulnerable and declining at a minimum of three sites. Reasons cited for its decline are conversion of woodland for alternative land-use, selective removal of aspen in wooded areas and the cessation of coppicing. Similar declines have been noted in several other aspen-associated insects, most notably *Chrysomela tremula* which is probably now extinct in Britain.

In Warwickshire, the species has only been recorded from Oversley Wood where it was first discovered in June 1987. Adults have since been found in May, June and September 1996, May 1999 and May, September and October 2002, July 2003 and September 2008. Additionally, leaf rolls have been observed in May 2002 and in July 2003. The population, which is very localised and vulnerable, exists primarily in one small area in the south-eastern sector of the site where woodland merges into scrub and grassland; 132 larvae and 17 adults were recorded in 2011.

Whilst ideally the population size and range in Warwickshire should be increased by further reintroductions to historic and appropriately managed sites, the current population at Oversley Wood is not strong enough at present to source reintroductions. Several other potentially suitable sites exist and would require detailed surveys.

The Oversley population is vulnerable whereas the Worcestershire populations are the strongest nationally. Interestingly, the three sites in the Midlands region; Oversley Wood, [Trench Wood](#) and [Monkwood](#) all lie in an East-West alignment.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

A wide range of species and habitats are protected under international and domestic laws, including the [Wild Birds Directive](#) (1979), the [Wildlife and Countryside Act](#) (1981), the [Conservation Regulations](#) (1994) and [EC Habitats Directive](#) (1992). Protection of sites is afforded nationally through [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSI) designation, [Special Areas of Conservation](#) (SAC) and [Local Nature Reserve](#) (LNR) statutory status. Other sites are offered recognition of their value through Local Wildlife Site status (LWS), Local Character Areas and identified Landscape Scale Areas. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2012) chapter/section 11 states conditions with regard to any development negatively affecting biodiversity, including protected sites, ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats (paragraph 118). The Wildlife & Countryside Act and schedule 2 of the [Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations](#) (2010) make it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take, possess, sell, buy or transport a range of species.

No legal protection exists for this species but national [Red Data Book](#) status and corresponding Regionally Scarce status in Warwickshire should aid the future preservation of Oversley Wood which is a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

4.2 Current Factors Affecting the Species

- **Natural succession of scrub into woodland** – the species appears to prefer suckering and sapling re-growth and sheltered, warm pockets of woodland edge habitat.
- **Clearance of aspens during woodland management** – clearance of aspens could potentially wipe-out the weevil population.

- **Conversion of broad-leaved woodland to coniferous woodland** – Oversley Wood is owned by the [Forestry Commission](#), so any land-use conversion for commercial reasons could adversely affect the population.
- **Cessation of coppicing** – the traditional practise of coppicing promoted re-growth which is preferred by this species.
- **Over-collecting by entomologists** – this is a striking and rare species that is known from only a handful of sites in the UK. If the Warwickshire site is widely and indiscriminately disclosed, there is a possibility that entomologists will target the locality for this species.

5. LOCAL ACTION

- Occasional visits to Oversley Wood by entomologists provide regular feedback to the Warwickshire Biological Record Centre regarding the continuing presence of the weevil population.
- A full research survey was carried out in 2003 by J. Mellings. The survey places the Oversley Wood population in a National context and provides important information about the species' requirements at its known UK sites.
- Oversley Wood was designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) in September 2009.
- [SITA Trust](#) funding was obtained in 2011 to carry out a research programme on the Oversley Wood population in 2011 and 2012.
- The species' habitat needs are accounted for in the current Forest Design Plan (2011-2021) with two areas managed on a 6 year rotation to ensure that there is always young aspen available for the weevil.
- There has been planting of aspen at [Ragley Hall](#) and by the [Heart of England Forest Project](#) based at Studley.

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By
PLEASE CONSULT THE ' GENERIC SPECIES ' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL SPECIES PLANS			
Policy, Legislation & Protection			
PL1. Ensure that Forestry Design Plans continue to account for the needs of this and other scarce species.	FC	WWT	ongoing

Site / Species Safeguard & Management			
SM1. Continue to account for the species' habitat needs in the current Forest Design Plan for Oversley Wood with two areas managed on a 6-year rotation to ensure that there is always young aspen available for the weevil.	FC	CRec	ongoing
Research & Monitoring			
RM1. Monitor the weevil population at Oversley Wood, by counting leaf rolls and adults between May and October. Record results and responses of the population to any management changes in the wood.	FC	LEs CRec FoOW	ongoing
RM2. Carry out searches for <i>Byctiscus populi</i> at other potentially suitable sites where aspen is present, raising the profile of the species' needs with the landowners.	WBRC	WWT WCC HBA BC CRec LOs	Ongoing

Abbreviations: BC – Butterfly Conservation, CRec – County Recorder, FC – Forestry Commission, FoOW – Friends of Oversley Wood, HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit partnership, , LEs – Local Entomologists, LOs - Landowners, WBRC – Warwickshire Biological Record Centre, WCC - Warwickshire County Council, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. PROGRESS WITH ACTIONS

From 2015–2020 there will be a rolling programme of reporting on progress, of 10 action plans per year with an annual summary of results. Results will be entered onto the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System [BARS](https://bars.gov.uk/). Progress with this plan up to 2008 can be seen at www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/LBAP.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Mellings, Jon and Compton, Steve, (2001) *Byctiscus populi*, a leaf rolling weevil dependent on Aspen. The Biodiversity and Management of Aspen woodlands: Proceedings of a one-day conference held in Kingussie, Scotland, on 25th May (transcript).

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Lane, Steve. (2011). The Aspen Leaf-rolling Weevil *Byctiscus populi*. An Update on its status with particular reference to the Worcestershire population. Worcestershire Record 31, pp.22-26.

Defra (2011) [Biodiversity 2020](#): A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services.

Forestry Commission (2012) Warwickshire Forest Design Plan 2011-2021

RSPB (2013) State of Nature – a stocktake of all our native wildlife by 25 wildlife organisations.

Stubbs, A. (2014) Aspen: the disappearances. British Wildlife vol 26, no.2, pp.87 – 95.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) for Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull – mapping data set and associated information. Phase 1 ([JNCC](#)) 1996-2002 and Phase 2 (Local Wildlife Sites) ongoing.

Kirby, P. (1992). [Habitat management for Invertebrates](#): a Practical Handbook. RSPB

Butterfly Conservation (2012) Fact sheet 'Aspen – a key host plant for moths and other insects.

[Buglife](#) - the Invertebrate Conservation Trust

10. CONTACT

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