

Post 15

HAZEL COPPICE

Around this post there are multi-stemmed hazel bushes. These trees have been 'coppiced', a term which comes from the French word



'couper', meaning 'to cut'. In winter the smaller trees, known as the 'understorey', are cut almost to ground level and send up healthy new shoots the following spring. Rather than harming the tree, coppicing rejuvenates it each time the stems are harvested. This method of managing British woodlands has been

carried out since the late Stone Age. The hazel was cut back every few years and produced small timber suitable for uses such as firewood, tool handles, hurdles, fences, barrels and gun powder. It is not surprising, therefore, that a local industry making wattle hurdles for sheep-rearing grew up in this area.

Coppicing also benefits wildlife. By letting more light reach the woodland floor, it allows woodland plants such as bluebells & anemones to flourish and creates sunny glades for butterflies and other insects. The various ages of regrowth also provide ideal habitat for birds, such as nightingales, and mammals such as the rare dormouse. By cutting small areas on a rotation, a great variety of habitats are created

in a small area of woodland.

In the larger trees to the right of this post, four birds that nest in holes have been recorded; two woodpeckers, the treecreeper and the nuthatch. You may be able to see their nesting holes if you look at the trees carefully.

Although the woodpecker has a tough bill, it chooses to nest in areas of soft wood, such as

where a branch once grew out from the main trunk. The green woodpecker can often be heard even if it is not seen.



Greater spotted woodpecker
© Stephen Slaughter

Its ringing laugh has given it the name 'yaffle' in some parts of the country.

The nuthatch and treecreeper are smaller birds and spend more time moving around the trunk of a tree. The nuthatch moves both up and down, head first, while the treecreeper can only move up the trunk using its tail as a support and has to fly down.

The nuthatch is so called because of its habit of placing nuts and cherry stones in the rough bark of oak and elm trees so that it can break the outer shell with its beak. Fragments of cherry stones may sometimes be found in the bark of the trees in this area.

Take the path to the left through the wood to post 16 (see map below).

NATURE TRAIL MAP

