

NIGHTJAR *CAPRIMULGAS EUROPAEUS* SPECIES ACTION PLAN**1. INTRODUCTION**

The nightjar has been declining nationally in both numbers and range for a large part of the last century and consequently it has been classified as a priority species in the UKBAP³⁷. It is therefore of local biodiversity conservation importance.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	P
EC Birds Directive 1979	Annex I
Berne Convention 1982	App. I I
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CITES 1975	-
WCA 1981	Part I Section 1 Sch. 3
Birds of Conservation Concern List ³⁰	Red
Other Species Status	RDB Birds: RDB5



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2. CURRENT STATUS**2.1 UK and Wales**

The nightjar is a breeding summer visitor to the UK and is a characteristic nocturnal bird of heathland, wood pasture, woodland edges and clearings. It was once common, but has been declining in numbers and range throughout Europe due mainly to the loss of its habitats. The species is concentrated in southern England with smaller numbers extending into Wales and as far north as central Scotland. Between national surveys in 1968-72 and 1992 there was a decline in UK range of 52%. It is a well-camouflaged species, and therefore difficult to survey. The usual method is to count the numbers of singing males and use this to estimate the total number of birds. Numbers reached a low point of 2,100 males in 1981, but have now stabilised and are increasing in some areas, including in Wales where it has experienced a 230% increase since 1981. In 1992, a national survey resulted in an estimated UK population of 3,400 males of which 193 (5-6%) were found in Wales and 61 of these were recorded in Glamorgan and Gwent.

Nightjars are essentially heathland birds; they nest on bare or sparsely vegetated patches on the ground, mainly where free-draining sandy soils exist. The heath-like conditions that arise in conifer plantations shortly after being clear-felled and replanted provide ideal habitat. Nightjars usually rear two broods per season. Two eggs are normally laid from mid-May to mid-July; chicks hatch after about 19 days and fly after about 17 days. They are reliant on the parents for food for about four weeks, feeding on flying insects such as moths, beetles and flies at dusk and dawn across a wide range of habitats. Preferred habitats are heathland, deciduous or mixed woodland, orchards, riparian and freshwater habitats, and gardens. Forests are most used where there is age diversity within the forest. Birds will travel on average 3km from nest sites to locate suitable feeding areas.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

Nightjars are a scarce and local breeding summer visitor; rarely recorded on passage. The Caerphilly county borough nightjar population is concentrated into two main areas, Mynydd Rudry (the Warren, Wern Ddu, Coed Coesau-whips, Coed Craig Ruperra) and the Ebbw Forest (Nant Gwyddon and Nant Carn valleys) where the species is dependent on newly planted and/or

clear felled conifer plantations for breeding sites. There are thought to be about some 10 pairs overall (Rudry area with 3 to 4, and 6 in the Ebbw Forest). **Map 2.10** shows the current breeding distribution of the nightjar in Caerphilly county borough.

2.3 Links with Habitats

- **Planted Coniferous Woodlands** - the species should also be considered in this plan as nightjar breed on the heath-like conditions of newly felled and recently restocked forestry plantations.
- **Heathland** - the requirements of the nightjar should be considered in conjunction with this plan as important breeding habitat.
- *Deciduous Woodlands* (lowland wood pasture and parkland)
- *Common Land*
- *Coedcae/Ffridd*

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss and fragmentation of suitable breeding and foraging habitat.
- Unsympathetic commercial forestry – commercial forests provide good habitat for nightjars when managed appropriately, but changes in management may threaten local populations. Nightjars nest in the young stages of plantations, while there is still bare ground between the trees. If no other suitable habitat becomes available in other new or young stands, local population declines could occur as the recently planted blocks mature. Restocking forests through natural regeneration in order to meet other conservation objectives may be detrimental to nightjars.
- Decrease in large airborne insect prey as a result of intensive agriculture (indirect effects of pesticides) and/or climate change, may affect nightjar populations.
- Excessive cold and wet periods during breeding season can reduce breeding success.
- Disturbance by people and dogs during nesting. This reduces the amount of time a bird can spend incubating or feeding, and may therefore affect the likelihood of its chicks surviving. It also makes eggs and chicks more vulnerable to predators.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Detailed research into the ecology of nightjars nesting in Thetford Forest has been carried out by the RSPB with the Forestry Commission's help. Forest Enterprise forestry practice at Thetford is now aimed at maintaining a constant area of young plantation and edge habitats as good sites for breeding nightjars.
- 4.2 Regular breeding sites in Caerphilly county borough are monitored annually by local birdwatchers.
- 4.3 The Woodland Grant Scheme, run by the Forestry Commission, offers grants for woodland management that promotes biodiversity.

4.4 The Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme, run by CCW, aims to support the management and restoration of lowland heathland.

4.5 The Gwent Ornithological Society and Glamorgan Bird Club gathers information from its members on the distribution of nightjars and other birds and both bodies publish annual bird reports^{17, 18, 19}.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

5.1.1 Maintain a population of at least 3,400 churring males.

5.1.2 Halt the decline in range of nightjar (there were 268 occupied ten km squares in 1992).

5.1.3 Increase the numbers and range of nightjars to 4,000 churring males in at least 280 10km squares by the year 2003 (an 18% population increase and 5% range increase in 10 years).

5.1.4 In the long term (next 20 years), restore nightjar to parts of its former range in, for example, south-west England, west Midlands, north-west England, south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

5.2.1 Gain a full understanding of the location of the nightjar population, its numbers, trends and habitat usage (Target: 2003).

5.2.2 Maintain the current distribution and abundance of nightjar in Caerphilly county borough (Target: ongoing).

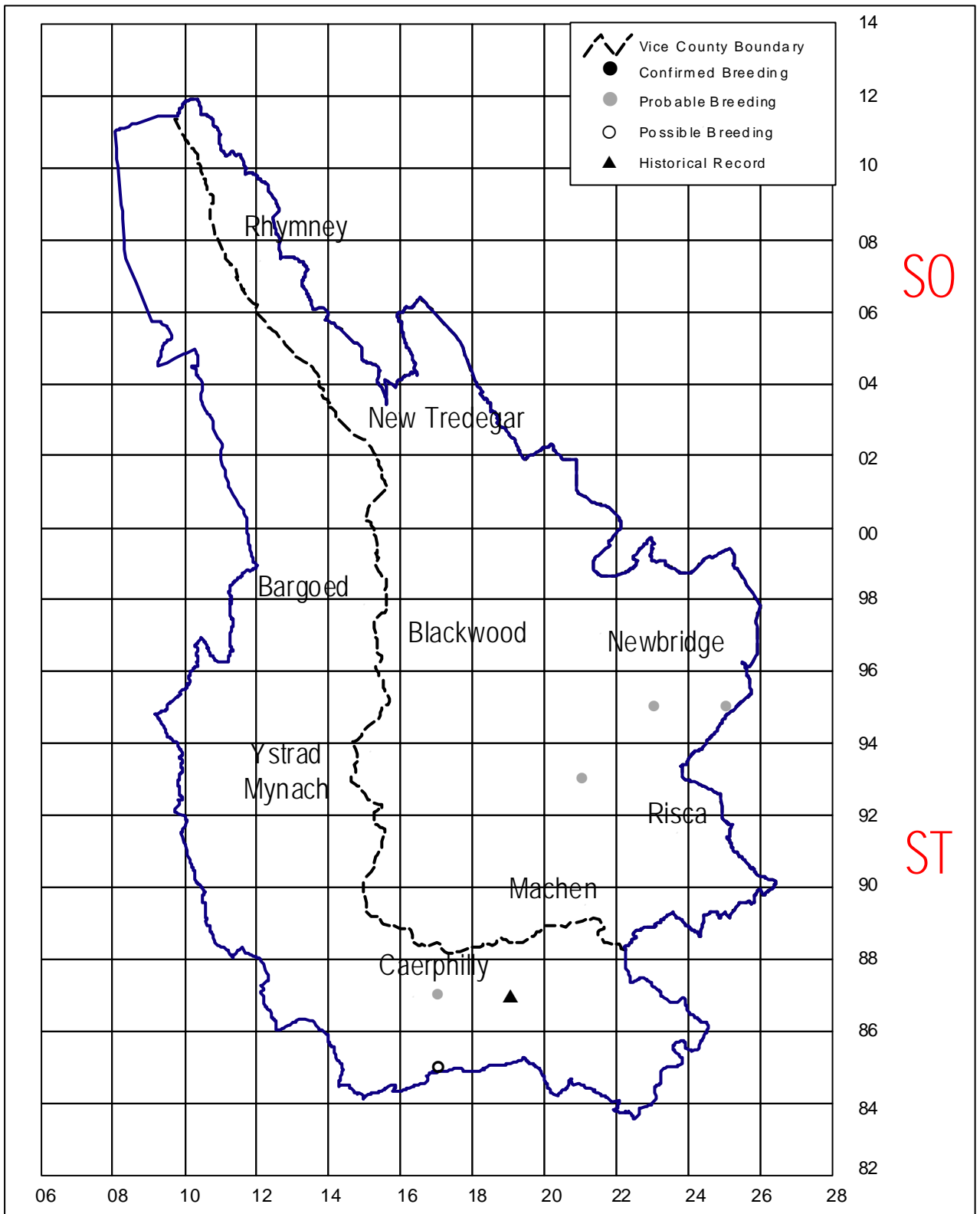
5.2.3 Increase the number of breeding pairs to 12 (a 20% increase) (Target: 2006).

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.1 Ensure specific targets and management for the nightjar are included where applicable in all development and management plans, especially Forest Design Plans.	FC	FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.2 Take full account of the requirements of the nightjar when considering felling and restocking proposals.	FC	FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.3 Ensure all regularly used nesting sites are designated as SIN C.	CCBC	-									✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Resist development (housing, road, industrial) on or adjacent to nightjar nesting habitat.	CCBC	CCW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management (continued)											
6.2.2 Seek to defer management operations (clearing, spraying etc.) within restock areas of plantations that hold or have the potential to hold nesting nightjars to not before mid August, in order to avoid disturbance of eggs or young.	FC	FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2.3 Seek to provide suitable feeding habitat within 5km of nightjar nest sites, especially by targeting Tir Gofal.	CCW	CCBC		✓					✓		
6.2.4 Incorporate habitat management prescriptions for nightjars (diversify age class structure) in FC forests.	FC	FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2.5 Maintain a constant area of clear fell (age class 1 - 10 years) through Forest Design Plans.	FC	FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-									
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Advise relevant parties (including private forestry companies) of the presence, legal status, and management requirements of the nightjar.	CCW	FC GWT GLWT RSPB Coed Cymru	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Gain a complete knowledge of the numbers, distribution and habitat usage of nightjar populations in the area. Contribute to the national nightjar surveys (2003 and every 10 years thereafter).	GBC GOS	BTO RSPB	✓								
6.5.2 Establish and maintain a 5-yearly nightjar monitoring programme on FC sites, which appear to support suitable habitat.	FE	GBC GOS	✓					✓			
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Improve co-ordination and information sharing between all groups and individuals with knowledge of nightjars and their distribution.	CBP	FE GBC GOS GWT GLWT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

MAP 2.10 - NIGHTJAR



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