



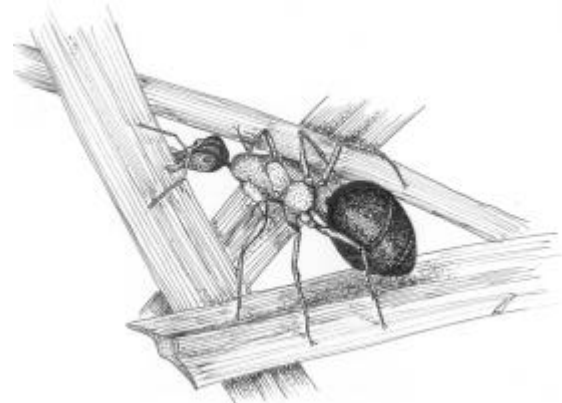


## RED WOOD ANT *FORMICA RUFA* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The red wood ant has been identified in the UKBAP as a priority species<sup>37</sup>. A national SAP will be prepared for this species, but at the time of writing it had not been published. Targets and actions for this plan may therefore require amending following publication of the national plan.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority (P) or species of conservation concern (S) (1998)	P
EC Habitats Directive	-
Conservation Regs 1994	-
Berne Convention 1982	-
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CI TES 1975	-
WCA 1981	-
IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals 1994	lower risk - near threatened



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### 2. CURRENT STATUS

#### 2.1 UK and Wales

The red wood ant is a characteristic species of open woodlands and is particularly common in southern England<sup>16</sup>. The abundance of nests in certain locations in England (often containing many hundreds of nests) has masked a general trend of decline in its distribution. This species is thinly scattered in lowland woods across Wales, and was once probably more common in Welsh woodlands that were coppiced to provide fuel for iron and lead furnaces<sup>16</sup>. The status of the red wood ant in Wales is poorly known and from available records in 1994 it appeared that this species had been recorded from only 28 sites in Wales since 1980. Of these sites a third had less than 5 nests and only two sites are known to support colonies with more than 20 nests<sup>16</sup>. Further surveys since this time (pers. com. CCW) have identified a total of 950 nests in Wales. Gwent appears to be the stronghold for this species in Wales with 550 nests recorded.

#### 2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

Records for Caerphilly county borough are scarce and appear to be confined to the east and south of the county. Two sites in the east are known to support red wood ant nests, one in broadleaved woodland (Coed Poeth) and the other in conifer plantation (Coed Sara), recorded in 1998 and 1999 and supporting 3 and 5 nests respectively. Both sites lie within SINC's designated by CCBC<sup>8</sup>. Colonies were historically recorded in the south of the county borough but there is only one recent record (1995) in Draethen Woods. The red wood ant is generally found below 200m in Wales, however in Caerphilly county borough they are recorded between 200 and 300m. They could therefore be associated with any dry coniferous or broadleaved woodland habitat which lie below 300m.

#### 2.3 Links with Habitats

Red wood ants require a good food supply, particularly from aphid honeydew and a relatively warm nest temperature. They therefore site their nests in, or within easy reach of, woodland, often on the woodland edge or in sunny clearings or rides. This is particularly true of dense coniferous and broadleaved woodlands, and the species can be found in young plantations before the increase in shade leads to their decline. Wet woodland is not suitable for this species.

- **Deciduous Woodlands** (lowland beech and yew woodland)
- **Planted Coniferous Woodland**

### 3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Neglect of woodland management: the red wood ant appears to be very poor at colonising adjacent habitats once its nest site has become over-shaded. This appears to be the major future threat to the red wood ant in the future.
- Neglect of coppice: The cessation of coppicing as a form of woodland management has historically led to a decline in red wood ants in the county borough. Very few woodlands in Caerphilly now actively carry out coppicing as a form of management.
- Invasion of woodland by bracken: Where bracken invades clearings, the fronds create shade reducing the suitability of woodland clearings for red wood ants.
- Use of insecticides near nests: Not thought to be a particular problem in Caerphilly county borough.
- The collection of cocoons as fish or bird food: This may have been a factor in their decline in the past, however because the species is now so rare in the county borough and therefore difficult to find, this is no longer likely to be a current problem.
- Fire: Woodlands and bracken on the valley sides in South Wales are often subjected to burning by children, particularly during the Easter holidays or on sunny weekends in early spring. Red wood ants nests are often inadvertently destroyed.
- Disturbance by grazing stock: Many types of woodland in Caerphilly county borough are open to grazing and this may have led to the decline of this species in some parts of the county.
- Vandalism: Destruction of nests by children may have contributed to their decline.

### 4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Two sites known to have red wood ant colonies have been designated as SINCS<sup>8</sup>.
- 4.2 Woodland owners are encouraged to revive traditional management such as coppicing, where appropriate, by Coed Cymru.

### 5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

#### 5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not available at the time of writing.

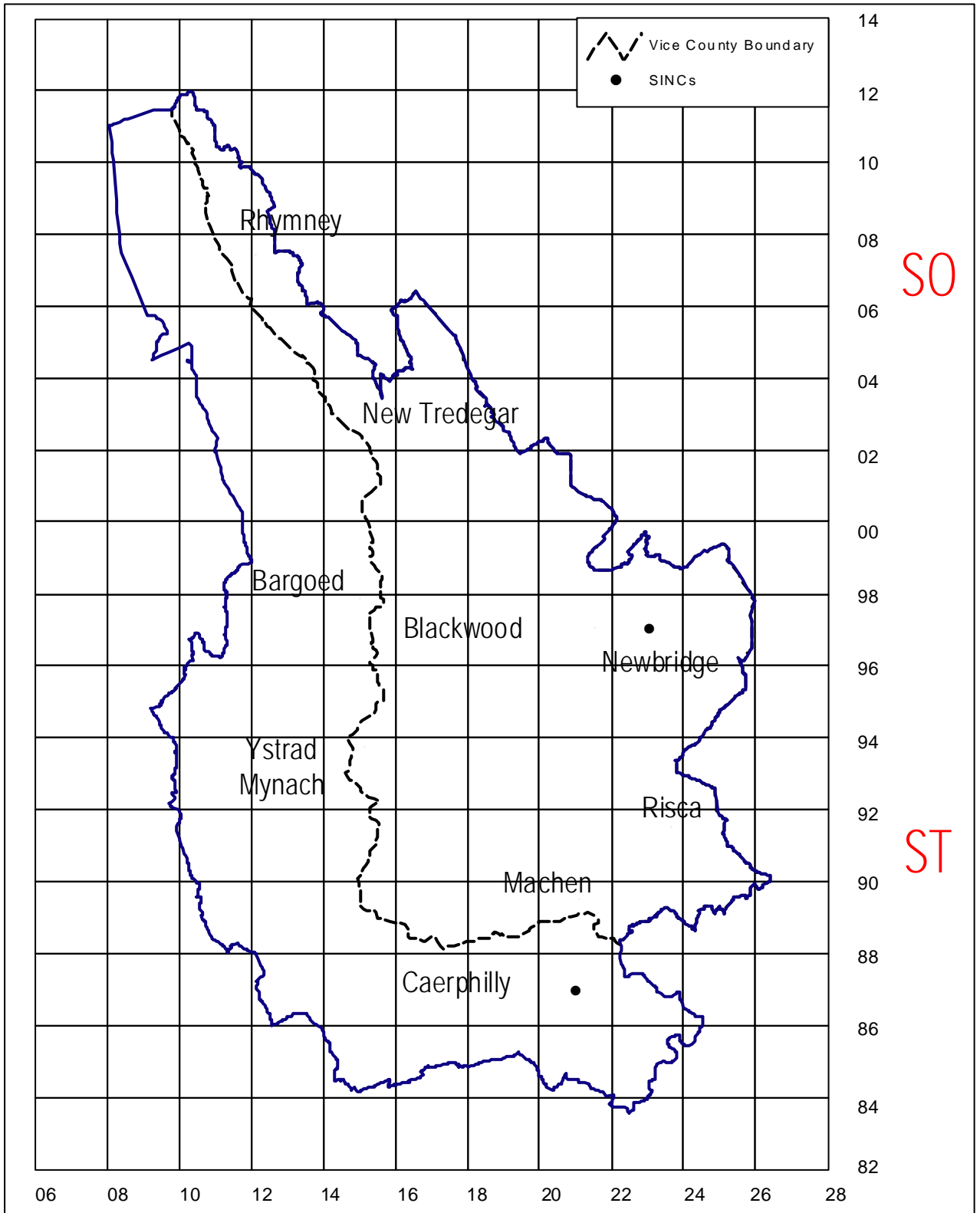
#### 5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Ensure existing colonies are safeguarded in Caerphilly county borough. (Target: ongoing)
- 5.2.2 Increase habitat suitable to support the red wood ant. (Target: ongoing)

## 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
<b>6.1 Policy and Legislation</b>											
6.1.1 Ensure Policies and Strategies do not adversely effect existing populations.	CCBC	Coed Cymru FC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.2 Consider the requirements of the red wood ant when reviewing woodland management schemes.	FC	Coed Cymru	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.3 Ensure any newly discovered sites supporting the red wood ant are designated as SINc, LNR or other nature reserves.	CCBC	GWT GLWT CCW	✓								✓
<b>6.2 Site Safeguard and Management</b>											
6.2.1 Manage existing sites sympathetically to benefit the red wood ant.	FE	Coed Cymru landowners	✓								
6.2.3 Encourage the maintenance of rides and glades in woodlands close to known populations.	FE	Coed Cymru	✓								
6.2.4 Ensure nests are not damaged during woodland management activities.	FE	Landowners	✓								
<b>6.3 Species Management and Protection</b>											
6.3.1 Determine the location of favoured honeydew producing trees at existing nest sites and ensure they are retained during woodland management activities.	FE	Coed Cymru landowners CCW			✓						
<b>6.4 Advisory</b>											
6.4.1 Raise the awareness of landowners of the red wood ant's requirements in order to promote appropriate management.	CCBC	Coed Cymru FE	✓								
<b>6.5 Future Research and Monitoring</b>											
6.5.1 Search for new sites supporting red wood ant colonies and encourage landowners and members of the public to report sightings of red wood ant nests to the CCBC Ecologist.	CCBC	(CBP)	✓	✓	✓						
6.5.2 Monitor existing populations annually to monitor trends	CCBC	FE landowners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5.3 Create a database for information and support the setting up of an LRC.	CCBC	(CBP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>6.6 Communications and Publicity</b>											
6.6.1 Raise awareness of this species in schools near existing sites to discourage vandalism.	CCBC	CCW GWT GLWT Gwk	✓	✓	✓	✓					

MAP 6.1 - RED WOOD ANT



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