

Nightjar Action Plan

Introduction and Vision Statement

A summer migrant (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) the nightjar is essentially a heathland bird, nesting on bare or sparsely vegetated patches on the ground, mainly where free-draining sandy soils exist. Nightjars migrate to Britain from Africa and return there after rearing their chicks. The heath-like conditions that arise in conifer plantations shortly after being cleared felled and replanted also provide an ideal habitat.



They feed on flying insects such as moths, beetles and flies at dusk and dawn across a wide range of habitats such as heathland, deciduous or mixed woodland, riparian and freshwater habitats and gardens. Forests are most used where there is age diversity within the forest. Birds will travel on average 3 km from nest sites to locate suitable feeding areas.

Nightjars are nocturnal birds, rarely seen during daylight, relying on their camouflage to avoid detection. At night the males' distinctive 'churring' call, makes them easily identifiable, along with a slapping or hand-clapping sound caused as the birds 'clap' their wings in flight. Males have prominent white markings on the wings and tail, which stand out even at night.

The number of nightjar in Britain was in major decline after the Second World War. But now that our public forests are managed to protect wildlife, numbers appear to be increasing again. More than 50% of Britain's nightjar population now nest in woods where mature trees have been cut down and young trees planted. Nightjars are rarely seen during daylight, but at night when they are 'churring' on the branch of a prominent tree they can be picked out against the night sky.

In Carmarthenshire nightjars are a very localised summer visitor with up to 50+ singing males recorded from Pembrey, Glasfynydd, Brechfa and Crychan Forests. Records are increasing but this may be due to increased recording effort as FCW have undertaken a number of surveys in recent years.

Habitat loss of both nesting and foraging habitat and a decline in the availability of food may be factors that contributed to the decline of the species. In addition the change to continuous cover forest management will reduce the availability of open habitat for nesting.

Our vision for nightjars is to maintain and increase the population of this attractive summer migrant, ensuring the availability of suitable nesting and feeding habitat within the county.

Action Plan Objectives

- NJ1SP** To maintain and increase the population and range of nightjar in Carmarthenshire
- NJ2DCM** To continue to survey and monitor the distribution and status of nightjars in Carmarthenshire
- NJ3RA** To raise awareness of the importance of the nightjar population in Carmarthenshire and provide advice on habitat management
- NJ4POL** To ensure that surveys are undertaken to inform the decision making/planning of any application/project that has the potential to affect nightjars

Actions

CODE	TEXT	START/END DATE	CONTACTS (lead in bold)	Action goal	Key partners	Funding	Priority L,M,H	Report Jan–Dec 2010	Report Jan–Dec 2011	
NJ3RA1	Organise an event for public in Brechfa/Crychan during nightjar display season	2010–2012	FCW	1 event organised				Not started		
NJ3RA2	Promote the presence of NJs in the county through a targeted PR/newsletter article	2010–2011	CCC	PR	FCW			Not started - 2011 action		
NJ4POL1	For all windfarm applications affecting forestry/adjacent habitat ensure full survey/mitigation plans submitted	2010–ongoing	CCC	100% relevant applications	FCW			Info to be added		