

Creating Deadwood Habitat

Ecology and biodiversity – an environmental case study



The project

This series of photographs shows work that was undertaken to a dead tree that had been identified as posing a risk to train operations. To remove the risks presented by the tree, a decision was made to remove the upper branches rather than fell the tree; this created 'standing deadwood' habitat but leaving no material that could fall on to important railway assets, such as boundary fences.

The key benefits delivered

The benefits of standing deadwood are that it is a vitally important feature of a healthy treescape. Standing deadwood provides important habitat for small vertebrates including bats, invertebrates such as stag beetles, cavity nesting birds such as tawny owls, and a host of lichens, bryophytes and fungi. It is good ecological practice (whenever tree risk assessments allow) to retain dead branches and standing dead stems due to their vital importance for biodiversity.

Lessons learned

- Attached deadwood rarely needs to be removed to protect a tree from structural failure;
- If the wood needs to be removed for safety reasons, the amount removed should be kept to the minimum required, only shortening the stems or branches concerned as opposed to their removal;
- Although the resulting dead tree may look a bit 'odd' (see right hand picture), the biodiversity potential is greatly boosted
- Whilst retention may be desirable, it may not be practicable and so agreement with relevant geotechnical and lineside engineers must be reached.

Who to contact for more information

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