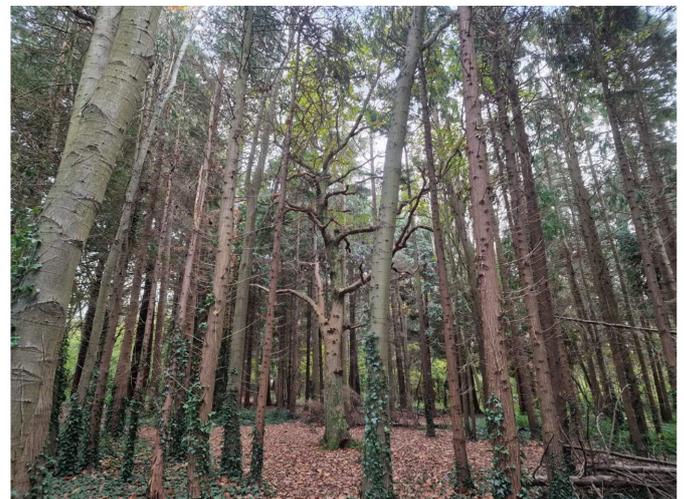


Description

- Mill Copse is an area of mixed woodland to the south of Yarmouth.
- The 5.8 ha site is considered an area of ancient woodland, believed to be over 400 years old ¹.
- It forms part of the Isle of Wight Biosphere reserve and is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site borders a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Period of decline

- In the 1960s there was a drive across the UK to increase timber production, largely for the building industry.
- This meant that large amounts of the broadleaf woodland, and especially oak and hazel trees were felled and coniferous trees such as coastal redwood and western red cedar were planted ¹.
- The change from broadleaf to coniferous trees changed the whole nature of the canopy. Less light was able to penetrate through to the forest floor as coniferous trees can be planted close together. Smaller broadleaf trees that naturally seeded did not survive.
- The canopy change also affected birds and wildlife. Numbers of red squirrels and dormice that live off the hazel trees decreased and there were also fewer nesting bats in the woodland.



Coniferous plantation in Mill Copse ²

References

¹ [Woodworks Wight :: About :: Mill Copse](#)

² [Mill Copse restoration begins in Yarmouth to support native plants and wildlife](#)

- The needles that are dropped by coniferous trees create a more acidic soil that is not suitable for all flora. Acidic soils prevent native bluebells and other woodland flowers from growing on the forest floor ².

First stage of restoration

- In 1990 the site was acquired by Wight Nature Fund, who still manage the site today.
- Initially the conifers were cleared in the north east corner of the behavioural and hazel trees were planted by teams of volunteers.
- This resulted in an increase in bird and mammal life and allowed greater habitat corridor links to the neighbouring wetland. At this stage 38% of the woodland was broadleaf and 62% coniferous ³.

Second stage of restoration

- In 2025, further works began taking place to restore the western side of the behavioural to a more native state ².
- Conifers that surround veteran oak trees will be targeted to open up the canopy further.
- Alongside the desire to restore woodland, the management plan for the behavioural wishes to make sure that visitors to the woodland are still able to enjoy it.
- Some conifer trees will still be used for timber production as they are felled and removed from the site.



Volunteers put in a framework for future hedge laying ⁴

References

³ [Mill Copse Management Plan](#)

⁴ [Isle of Wight beauty spot Mill Copse woodland given helping hand | Isle of Wight County Press](#)