

**Name:** **Southern wood-ant**

*Formica rufa*

**UK status:** [UK BAP Priority](#). Local (Shirt, 1987); declining.

**London status:** Rare (3 sites). Historic decline

**Protected status:** None

**Relevant London HAPs:** Woodland

**Citation:**

This impressive ant is one of the UK's largest, building conspicuous nests up to a metre in diameter. Unfortunately this leaves them vulnerable both to vandalism and more incidental disturbance. Nests are usually constructed along woodland edges and rides with a southern aspect, as heat from the sun is an important factor in the ants' life-cycle. The species is still widespread across the south of the country, but is declining due to inappropriate woodland management and habitat loss. In Greater London wood-ants are now known in only three sites although there are likely to be others in privately-owned woods, especially in the North Downs. The best known site is



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Pear Wood in LB Harrow, where the ants have actually declined but more recently colonised the grounds of the adjacent Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. In south London wood-ants are found in LB Bexley at both Chalk and Joyden's Woods. All colonies are within Sites of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation. Managing authorities; Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust; Harrow Borough Council; Woodland Trust; Bexley Borough Council

**Conservation priorities:**

- Monitor all populations at known sites
- Maintain populations through balanced sympathetic habitat management and creation
- Protect any new populations emerging from further survey

**References:**

Shirt, D B (ed.). (1987). *British Red Data Books: 2. Insects*. JNCC  
Skinner, G (1998). British wood-ants, in *British Wildlife* vol. 10, pages 1-8