Pollard Restoration

There are about 450 ancient pollards at Burnham Beeches; some are over 500 years old.

Regular pollarding stopped around 200 years ago and the orginal trees have become top heavy. They are now easily damaged by storms.

Grazing stopped at about the same time. Scrub and younger woodland have since grown up, competing with the pollards for light and space.

We aim to restore the pollards through:

Crown Reduction - gradually thinning heavy top branches, often over several years.

Halo Release - clearing younger surrounding trees to allow more light to gradually reach the trees.

Reducing bark and branch damage through squirrel control and protection from grazing animals.

Creating New Pollards

We have created 800 new pollards in the last 30 years to ensure that this wonderful landscape is not lost. We aim to create 1,000 by 2012.

Creating Wildlife Trees

It could be many years before the new pollards have the wildlife of the old trees. To maintain continuity of habitat for the species that rely on old trees, any trees that have to be cut to give more light and space to the pollards may have rough cuts and holes created to simulate wind damage and accelerate decay.

You Can Help Too

- ✔ Please don't climb on the pollards or break bits off them.
- ✔ Leave deadwood and habitat piles in place.
- ✔ Respect any dead hedges or barriers.

Want to know more?

Our website has more information about the sites, copies of the management plans, details of volunteer tasks and events, trails and up to date news. You can also contact the Rangers at the Burnham Beeches Office (weekdays) on 01753 647358.

Finished with this fact sheet?

Please pass it on or put it back in the information point so someone else can use it.

Registered charity, no. 232987

CITY OF LONDON

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

POLLARDS & OLD TREES

This National Nature Reserve is internationally renowned for its beech and oak pollards. Most of these are hundreds of years old and, like all old trees, are very important for wildlife.

A pollard is a tree such as beech, oak or hornbeam that has been cut at head height, forcing the tree to send up new, multiple shoots.

The ancient pollards at Burnham Beeches were once cut like this every 10 - 15 years in order to produce evenly sized branches, used mainly for firewood.

Pollards are cut at head height so that livestock grazing among the trees cannot eat the tender, new shoots.

The constant regrowth encouraged by pollarding extends the lives of the trees so that they live for much longer than standard trees.

Burnham Beeches is a National Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest and European Special Area of Conservation; Stoke Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. They are owned and managed by the City of London.

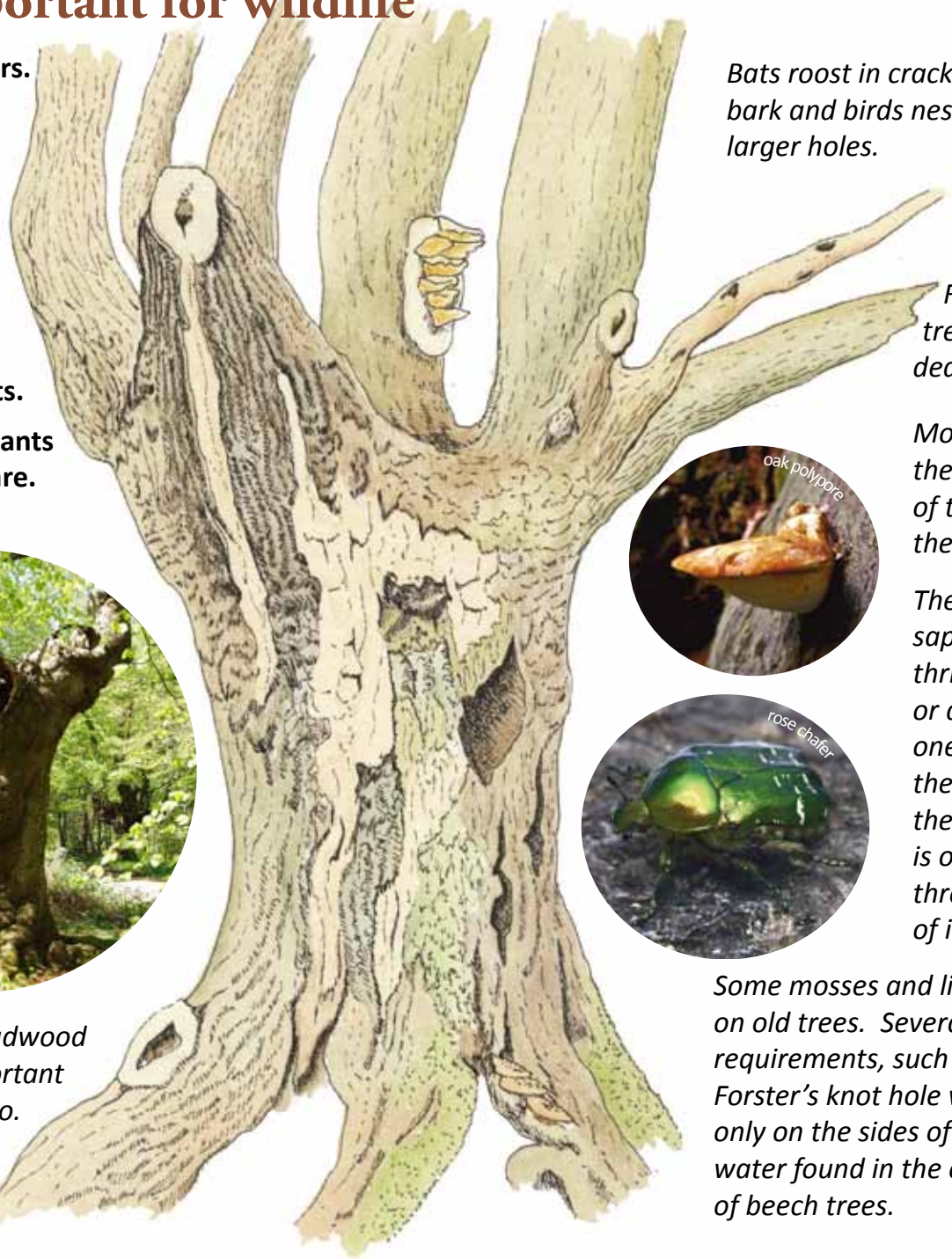
www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/burnhambeeches

All old trees are important for wildlife

Pollards can live for hundreds of years. Because they are so old they have features such as:

- **hollow, rotten stems;**
- **dead or decaying branches;**
- **loose bark;**
- **sap runs;**
- **depressions where water collects.**

These provide homes for animals, plants and fungi, some of which are very rare.



Bats roost in cracks in the bark and birds nest in the larger holes.

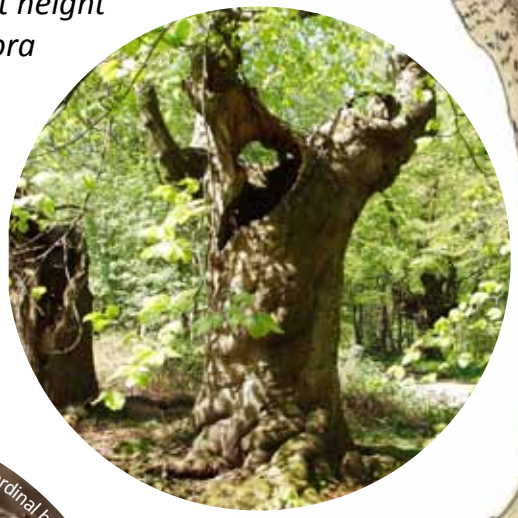
Fungi are an essential part of the tree's ecosystem, breaking down dead and decaying material.

Most fungi are a natural part of the system that hollows the trunk of the aging tree. Some, such as the oak polypore, are very rare.

The fungi create conditions where saproxylic invertebrates thrive. These need dead or decaying wood for one or more stages of their life cycles, often the larval stage. This is one of the most threatened communities of invertebrates in Europe.

Holes at different height have different flora and fauna.

Most old trees are hollow. The cylindrical shape helps them withstand wind and storms.



Fallen deadwood is an important habitat too.

Some mosses and lichens are only found on old trees. Several have very specific requirements, such as the tiny Forster's knot hole which grows only on the sides of small pools of water found in the exposed roots of beech trees.