

RSPB Lesser Spotted Woodpecker research Hampshire and New Forest

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RSPB Centre For Conservation Science

The Woodpecker Network



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Male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker feeding young © Julie Redford

Lesser spotted woodpeckers – information about the birds and our project

Each spring we want as many people as possible to find and record Lesser Spot and if possible find their nests and record the breeding outcome. The aim of the Woodpecker Network citizen science project is for us all to work together to collect as much data as possible about the birds each year. LesserSpotNet has four co-ordinators: Gus Robin in the South West, Stuart Keenor in Wales and the Welsh Marches and Ken and Linda Smith in the New Forest, Sussex and the rest of the country. Contact us by email, info@woodpecker-network.org.uk

The 2025 breeding season was favourable for Lesser Spots, see our [2025 Report here](#) Reports for previous years 2015 -2025 on the [news page right hand column](#)

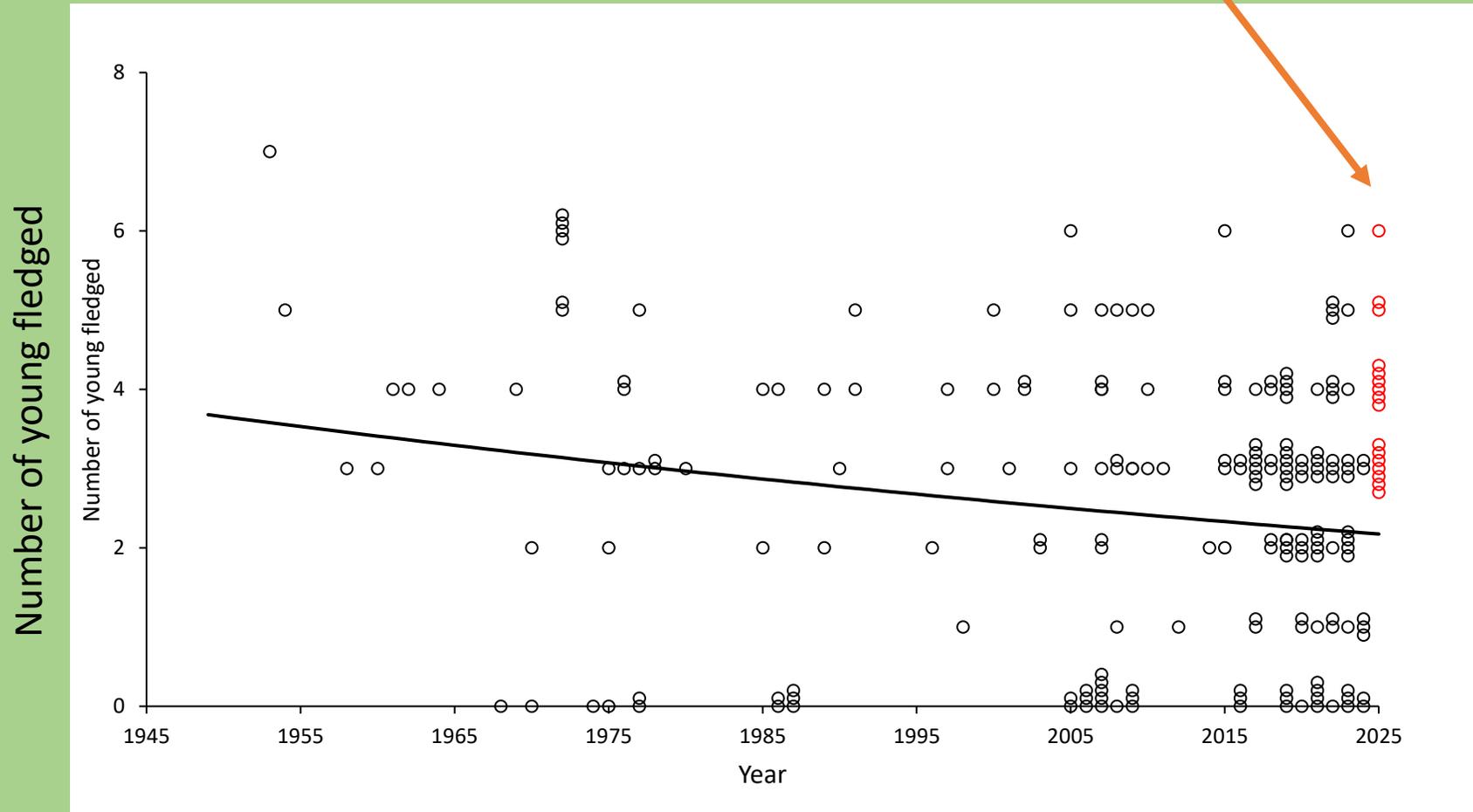
Acoustic monitoring: for the past two years we have been trialing a novel approach to detecting the species – passive acoustic monitoring. This has proved highly successful in detecting Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in trials at known sites in the New Forest, Hampshire. Subsequently, we have used the technique to successfully detect

Latest News

Setting up and using sound recorders for detecting Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers

Over the last two years we have successfully used passive acoustic monitors to detect the calling and drumming of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers (LSW). We have now written this [guidance note/protocol for Song Meters to detect LSW](#) to provide more of the practical details for using the method with the Song Meter Mini and

...but 2025 was the best year yet!



Why was 2025 so good?

1945

Year

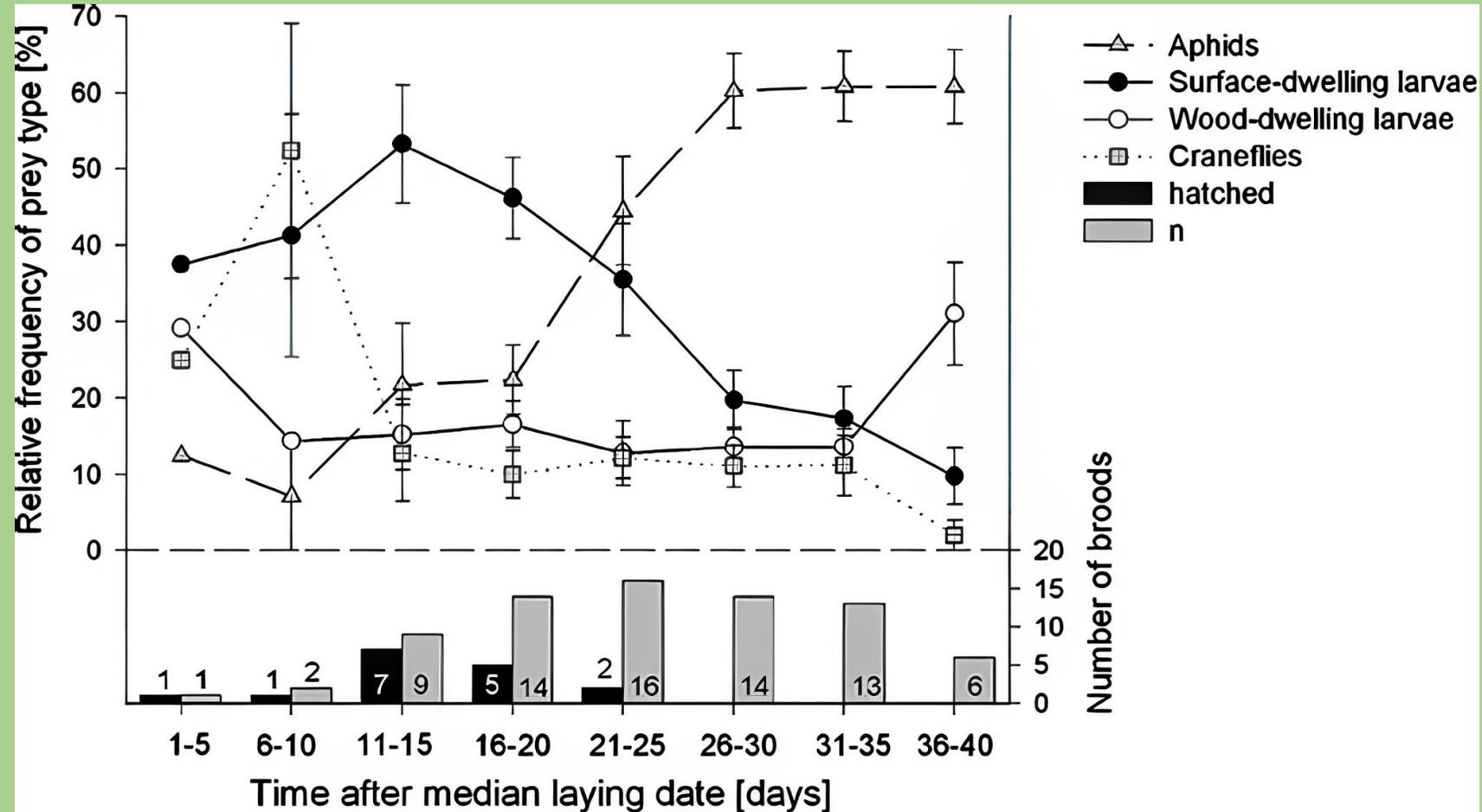
2025



Mike Read

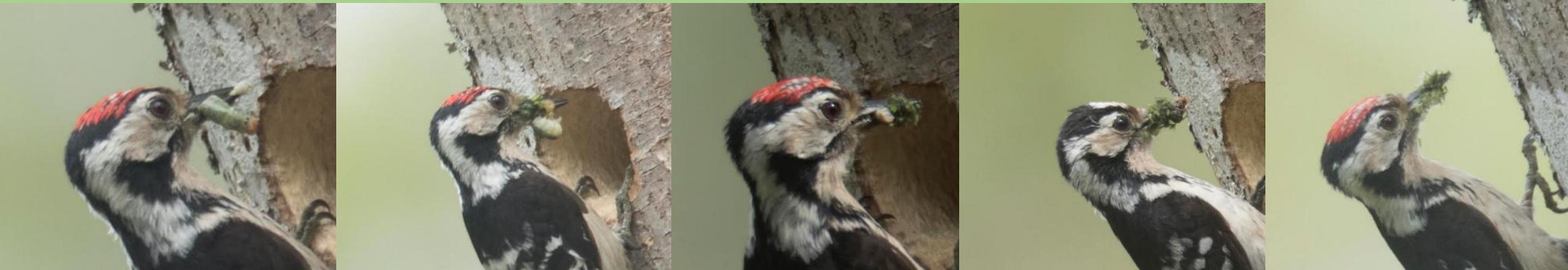
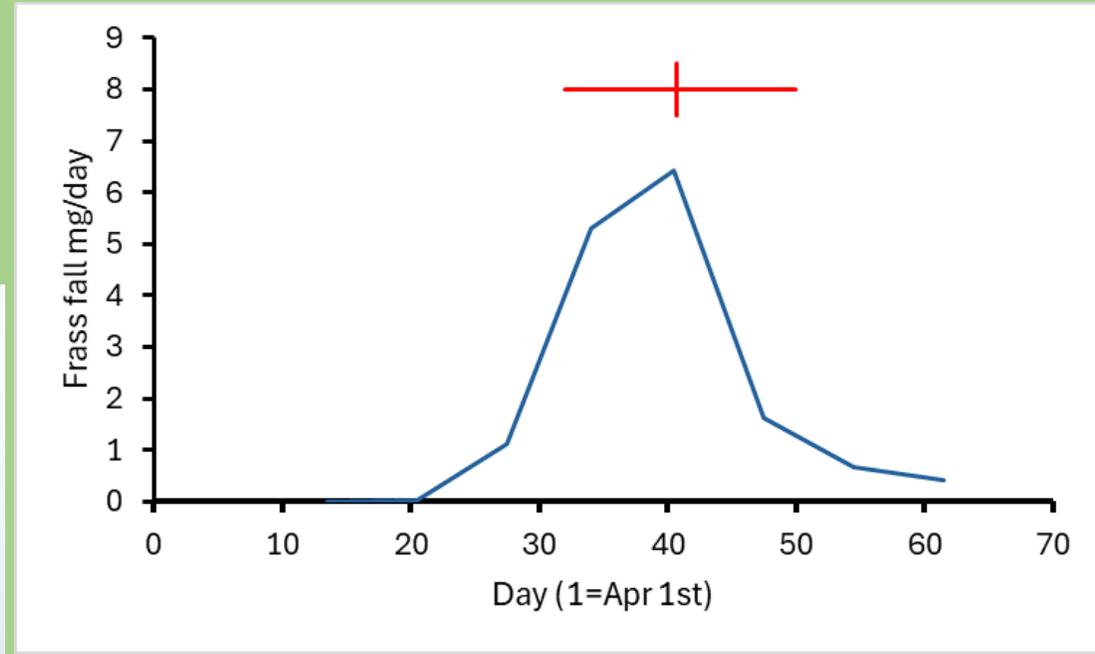
LSW nestling diet

– from caterpillars to aphids



Rossmannith et al J Ornithol 2007

Hatch date and defoliating caterpillar peak New Forest 2025



Images: Steve Laycock, Matt Livesey

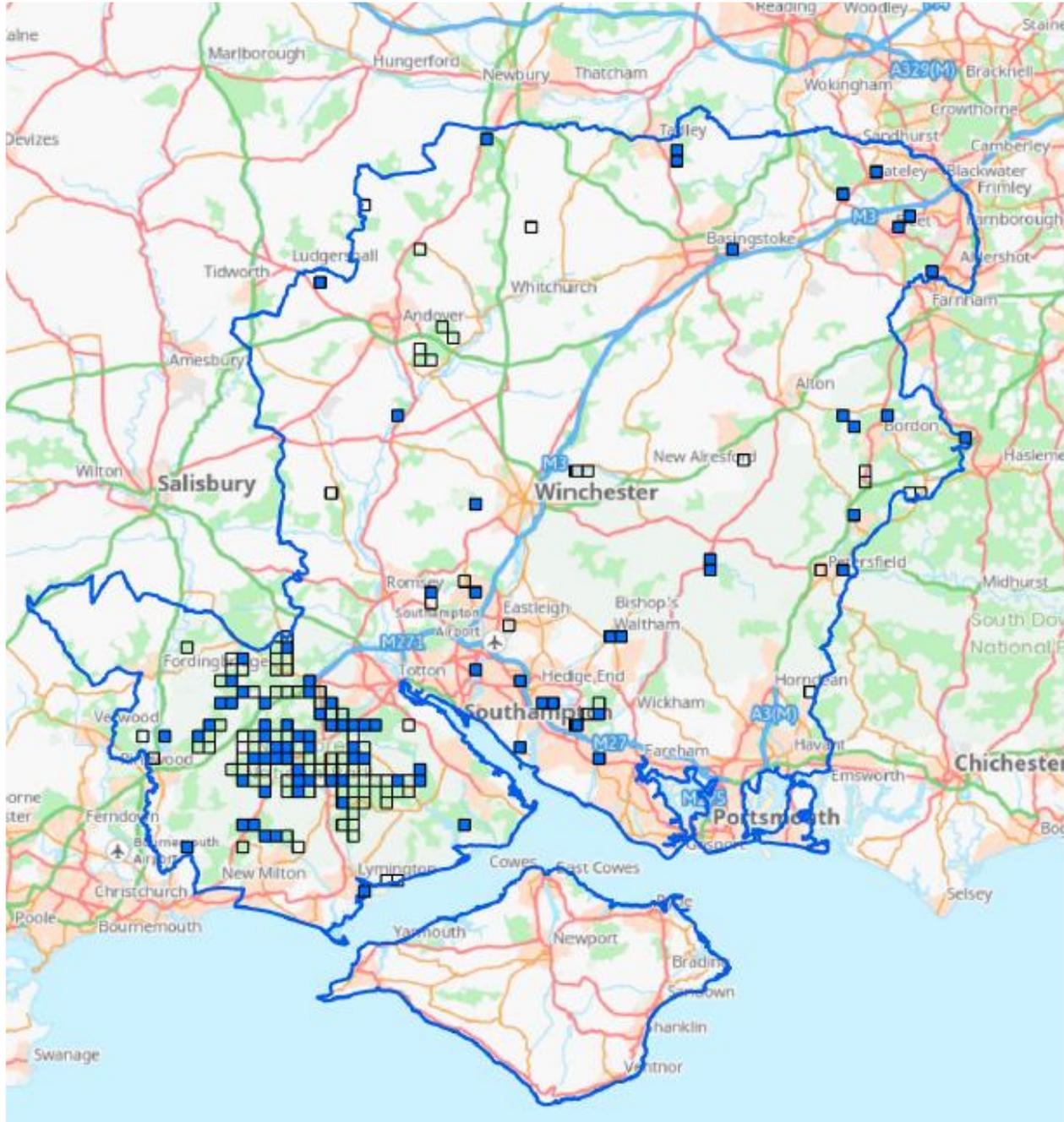
Hampshire habitat quality 2025-26



Using results of Hampshire county survey to investigate relationship between features of occupied and unoccupied squares

Use large scale data on soil wetness, woodland structure, landscape composition, combined with a sample of squares surveyed in the field to provide information on woodland composition and structure and resources used by LS.

Compare habitat and resources between occupied and unoccupied squares to investigate whether wetness, woodland structure, woodland edges or food resources could be limiting.



Population in New forest 2022

296 territories (95% range 276-315)



Field survey of habitat 2025



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Habitat 2025

1km Square					
Point grid ref					
Point type (random/nest)					
Observer					
Date					
Point based					
Distance to nearest woodland edge (m)					
Distance to nearest stream (m)					
Distance to nearest Oak (m)					
Size of nearest Oak (small/medium/large)					
Basal area (relascope count)					
25m radius					
% cover shrubs 0.5-4m (visual estimate to 5%)					
% cover canopy >10m (visual estimate to 5%)					
% cover open <0.5m (visual estimate to 5%)					
10m radius					
standing dead trees (count)					
fallen dead trees (count)					
tree 1 species					



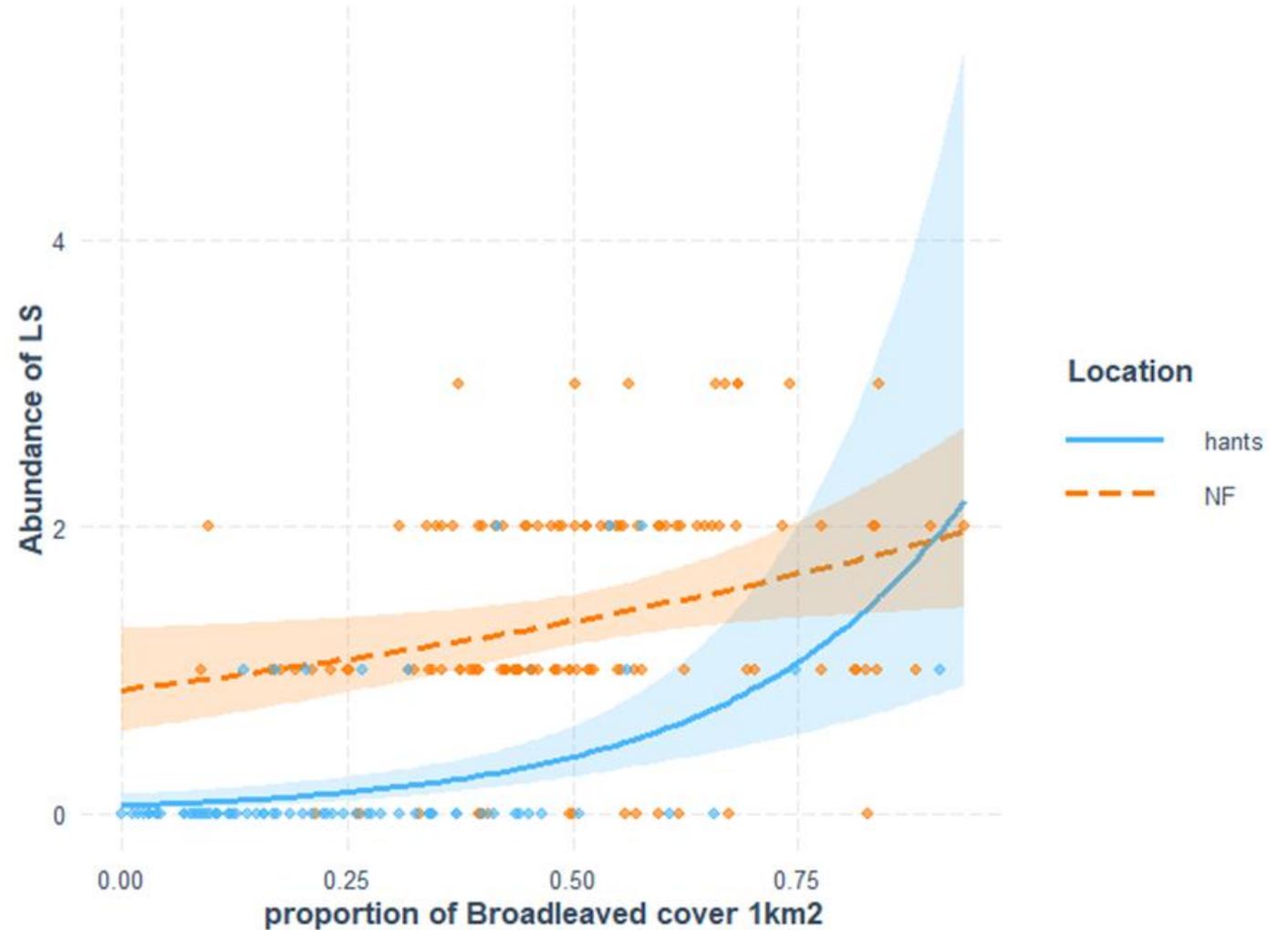
Results



No Effect on of habitat structure on number of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

And no difference in structure between nest sites and random points in New Forest

Only amount of woodland in the square affected number of territories.



Resources surveys 2025/26



- Late winter 2026 record variation in birch and alder catkin abundance important for micromoths in pre-breeding season.
- Late winter 2026 record detailed deadwood resources available for nesting.



National Survey?



Major funding proposal submitted to Species Recovery Programme in Feb 2026

- This covers pilot survey in 2027 to test survey methodology
- Full National survey in 2028
- Field data collection on invertebrate and dead wood resources provided by hydrological restoration

