

Natura 2000 habitat 9120 : Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer (Quercinion roburi-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion)



Acidophilous beech forests can be recognised by several acid-tolerant species like lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*) and false lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum bifolium*). Also wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) can be present. Often and for sure under beech the soil can be without vegetation. Forests with wood millet (*Milium effusum*) and wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) are part of this habitat too. Not only European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), but also sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and common hazel (*Corylus avellana*) can be numerous. Oak (*Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*) may dominate in some of these forests due to the coppice-with-standards regime of the past centuries. Without management or if the intensity of the management decreases beech and also European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) often regenerate spontaneously.

Where to find it?

This habitat consists of beech forests with holly, growing on acid soils, of the plain to montane levels under humid Atlantic climate. The acid substrate corresponds to alterations of acid rocks, to silt with flints more or less degraded or to old alluvial deposits. The soils are of acid brown type, leaching or with an evolution towards podzol type. The humus is of moder to dysmoder type.

We can find this habitat in Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain and the United kingdom.

Typical species

Next to beech typical plants mentioned in the European habitat description are :

- European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- European yew (*Taxus baccata*)
- butcher's broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*, not in Belgium)

- wavy hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*)
- New England hawkweed (*Hieracium sabaudum*)
- Canadian hawkweed (*Hieracium umbellatum*)



- bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) (photo Kris Vandekerkhove)
- European blueberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*)
- honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)



- common cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*)
- woodland germander (*Teucrium scorodonia*)
- creeping soft grass (*Holcus mollis*)

Typical animals :

- white admiral (*Limenitis Camilla*)



- silver-washed fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*) (photo Kris Decler)
- middle spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocoptes medius*)



- black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) (photo Yves Adams/Vildaphoto)
- European honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*)
- wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)
- European pied flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)
- Eurasian nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)
- tawny owl (*Strix aluco*)
- European pine marten (*Martes martes*)
- common noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) and other bats of forest habitats
- European stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*)
- wood cricket (*Nemobius sylvestris*)

### Management and threats

A classical woodland management can be compatible with the conservation and development of this habitat if it meets the conditions of a sustainable and multifunctional management and if it takes into consideration the natural characteristics and needs of this type of forest. Cutting trees can be done on an individual base or in small groups. Specific management actions are amongst others : taking care of woodland edges and open spaces, eliminating exotic species, giving light to species suppressed by a thick cover of beech and maximalising dead wood and big trees (circumference >3m).





In specific situations (places rich in biodiversity, sensitive zones, important potentials) an adapted management is preferable or necessary which concentrates entirely on the nature values to conserve and develop them in a sustainable and qualitative way. In such cases the absence of management can be the choice or a management with specific goals like eliminating an exotic species or in some cases coppicing. But because of the coppice-management beech can vanish.

This habitat is extremely sensitive to :

- eutrophication from atmospheric deposits and to flush of nutrients from higher located plateaux and nearby fields. Because of these and other disturbances brambles (*Rubus* spp.) can grow dominant.
- soil erosion and/or soil compaction from intensive recreation or exploitation with heavy machinery. On such places soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) has tendency to dominate and soil recovery is very difficult.
- Planting of exotic conifers, American oak species or monotonous young beech stands.
- intensive tree cutting on a large scale with soil cultivation, replanting and over-exploitation lead to habitat-degradation with a weak structural development, little old trees and dead wood
- fragmentation into small pieces of forest in the landscape
- a too high density of game, for example roe deer, complicates natural regeneration of the populations of tree species.

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