



What is the Woodland Star Rating?

The Woodland Star Rating is a self-assessment scheme based on the UK Forestry Standard ¹ (UKFS). Through this scheme we hope to make more people aware of the UKFS, encourage sustainable forest management in all woodlands, and promote greater understanding of good woodland stewardship among the general public.

The scheme is self assessment only and is not an assurance scheme in its own right as there is no independent verification in place.

The scheme has been developed by the Sylva Foundation as part of the B&Q *Good Woods* project, with the support of BioRegional, Lantern and others in the forestry sector.

Why has the scheme been created?

Attaining the best standard of management, measured against the UKFS, can seem a daunting prospect for many woodland owners. The Woodland Star Rating scheme is a light-touch approach that enables woodland owners to get a feel for what the UKFS involves and encourages them to identify areas of management that they should focus on in order to move in incremental steps towards a UKFS-compliant management plan.

The Woodland Star Rating scheme also provides, for the first time, a measurable indicator of the standard of woodland management being practiced. Not only does this encourage woodland owners to improve their own standards, but allows others to understand the level of management being undertaken in a woodland.

How the Woodland Star Rating works

The Woodland Star Rating scheme comprises thirty questions that a woodland owner should answer, available online at www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/wsr

The questions, developed following a review of scientific evidence, are based directly upon the UK Forestry Standard, and these are matched to the ecosystem services (e.g. carbon storage, habitat provision, flood alleviation, products and other public benefits) that each of the specified management actions are deemed to enhance. A complex scoring system was developed that took all these factors into account, which was then simplified and is now presented in a user-friendly interface on the myForest Service website.

¹ The UK Forestry Standard sets out requirements and guidelines for good woodland stewardship: www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs

Essential principles:

- *The assessment will be carried out on an area that would be considered a woodland 'property'². A property is taken to be the largest unit of land management. This will be the area that a woodland management plan should cover.*
- *The questions that have been taken from the UKFS have been selected to be applicable to all woodlands and generally give a good overview of what the UKFS covers.*
- *Each action has been assessed for the level of Ecosystem Service it delivers and a score attributed.*
- *Woodland owners are asked simply to indicate whether an action is implemented fully, planned, or not addressed.*
- *A simplified layout of the system for an individual question is as follows:*

	UKFS Action			Ecosystem Service (ES)					UKFS x ES
	Yes	Planned (half)	No	Support	Regulate	Provision	Cultural	ES Total	Max (half)
Question about a UKFS forestry action.	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	4	8 (4)

Scoring System

Gold Star

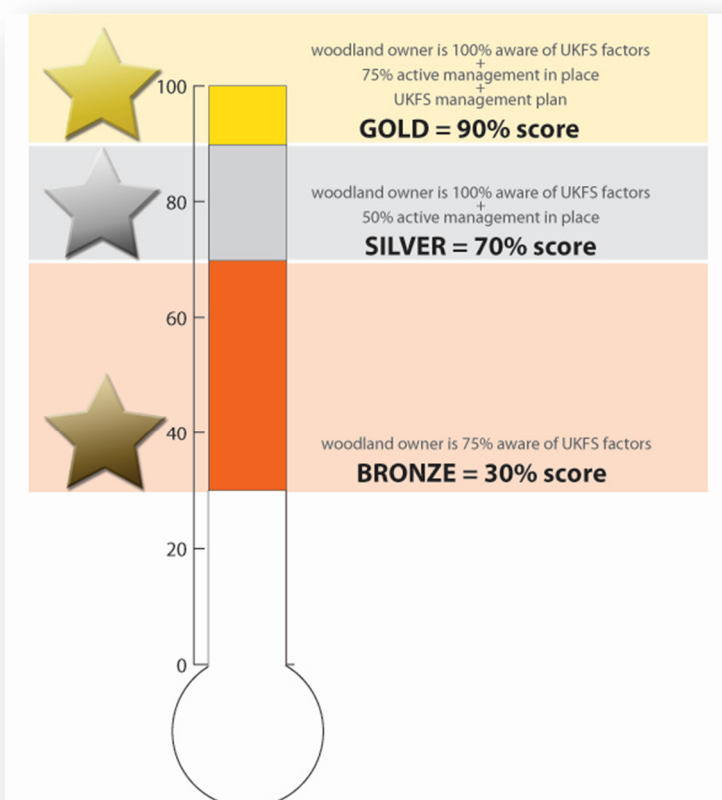
Woodland owners must attain a score that reflects that they are 100% 'aware' of UKFS factors, and indicate that 75% of these are being applied in active management within the woodland. It is not possible to attain gold standard unless a UKFS-compliant management plan is in place.

Silver Star

Woodland owners must attain a score that reflects that they are 100% 'aware' of UKFS factors, and indicate that 50% of these are being applied in active management within the woodland.

Bronze Star

Woodland owners must attain a score that reflects that they are 75% 'aware' of UKFS factors.



² Forestry Commission's Operations Note 3 [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ewgs-on003-property-boundary.pdf/\\$file/ewgs-on003-property-boundary.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ewgs-on003-property-boundary.pdf/$file/ewgs-on003-property-boundary.pdf)

Definitions

Natural capital:

Natural assets in their role of providing natural resource inputs and environmental services for economic production. Natural capital is generally considered to comprise three principal categories: natural resource stocks, land and ecosystems. (OECD).

Ecosystems and services³:

An ecosystem may be considered as a unit within which an assemblage of living organisms interact with each other and with the chemical and physical environment. The resulting natural processes establish a series of complex ecological balances. Ecosystems may operate at a wide range of scales, from long-term global systems such as oceans, to very small, localised or ephemeral systems such as freshwater pools that persist for only short periods.

Some of the interactions both between organisms and with their physical habitats (biophysical interactions) result in ecological processes that interact at different scales to deliver 'ecosystem services' or 'natural capital' that have value to people. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment grouped ecosystem services into four broad categories:

- Supporting services, such as nutrient cycling, oxygen production and soil formation. These underpin the provision of the other 'service' categories.
- Provisioning services, such as food, fibre, fuel and water.
- Regulating services, such as climate regulation, water purification and flood protection.
- Cultural services, such as education, recreation, and aesthetic value.

For example, the structures within woodland habitats can slow the passage of water into water courses, thereby contributing to the ecosystem regulating service of flood protection. The ecological processes that contribute to ecosystem services, in this case slowing the passage of water, are referred to as ecosystem functions. The habitats and organisms that give rise to the ecological processes are usually described as the ecological assets, and these can be protected to ensure ecosystem services are maintained.

Further Reading

- UK Forestry Standard - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs>
- Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services- <http://www.archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/documents/newp-evidence-nat-capital-110607.pdf>

Disclaimer

The Three Star woodland assessment operates as a self-assessment scheme; it is not an assurance scheme. It does not function as a management plan. All woodland operations must comply with the [UKFS](#) legal requirements.

³ <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/post/postpn281.pdf>