

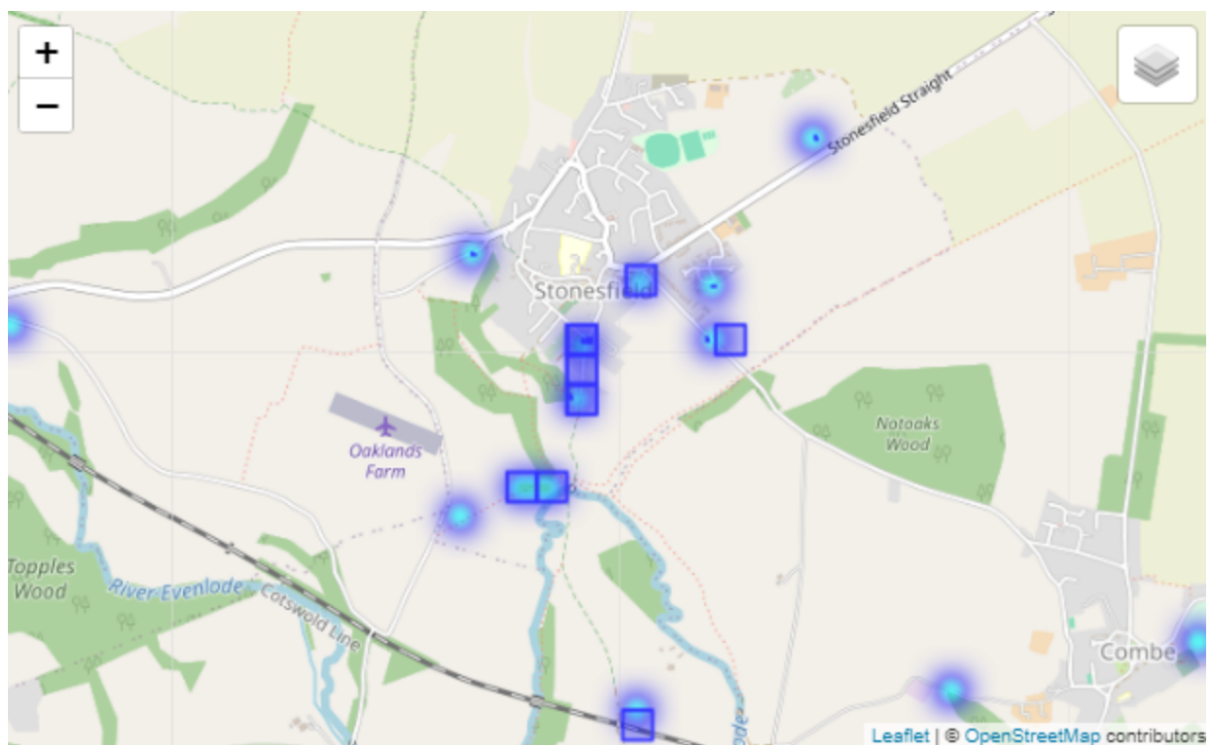
From the UK glow worm survey

Hi John,

Many thanks for getting in touch. I think the plan to create a community orchard is a good one that will very likely benefit the glow worms. A managed site is much better than one that is left to its own devices, which will inevitably become overgrown and with limited biodiversity.

I'm copying in Jim Alder, who is much better qualified than I am to talk about site management as he is a former countryside ranger and is actively involved with several projects in Derbyshire, and also John Tyler, author of the main book about glow worms in the UK.

I first became aware of glow worms at Stonesfield in 2007 when there was a report of 30+ glowing females along the footpath from a grid reference close to the site of the orchard (12 July 2007). The correspondent said he had not seen them there a year previously, but in fact they would have been there but maybe not in such numbers. The area around Stonesfield has several sites where glow worms have been reported, as the map here shows:



This is very good, as it suggests that there a healthy population in the area rather than the orchard being the last stronghold. But as developments inevitably take place, there is a danger that it might become just that. Numbers at a site vary from year to year and site to site, but in the past few years searches have returned numbers of around 12-15, which is about normal. The 30+ would have been an extreme, rather than the norm, and was probably the result of a combination of circumstances.

I wish we could give a magic prescription for encouraging glow worms, such as planting something or creating some sort of hotel, but I can't! As your report says, they are found on a wide range of habitats, but at the same time they seem to remain very localised rather than spreading. In your case, I'm sure the planting will not be a problem, however you undertake it, but the subsequent maintenance would be a matter of experimentation. The key thing seems to be to maintain a mosaic of low vegetation and open areas. If the glow worms are there now, they seem to be happy so major changes might actually be a bad thing. Scything once or twice a year is a good idea, but you need to keep the hawthorn, blackthorn and other invasive shrubs under control. An organic solution is probably a goat or even rabbits. At one time these would have kept many areas (and roadside verges) clear, but some people blame the loss of rabbits through myomatosis for the loss of glow worms as well. Without seeing even a photo of the existing area I don't really know what might be appropriate, but mown pathways around the site will keep footfall to certain areas. Often, the glowing females appear along the edges of pathways as this is where they stand the best chance of being seen by the flying males.

I think it's always a good idea to make people aware of the glow worms so that it becomes known as a place to see them. People in general do love to see them and will want to preserve them and their habitat. Just a sign to say 'please leave the glow worms where they are as they are very choosy about where they want to be' should be enough to deter most people. There is always the risk that people will collect one or two glowing females in the ignorant hope that they will have babies in their garden, or keep the snails at bay, but it's better that people about them than not. I wouldn't try to exclude people from the area or reduce footfall because of the wildlife. There are plenty of popular areas where glow worms are to be found. There may be a bit of collateral damage but we have to put up with that.

If possible, could you get local people to survey the area this year, starting immediately, to confirm numbers? Ideally it needs to be done as often as possible during the season so that we can monitor them in subsequent years. Maybe recruit some dog walkers (as long as they pick up the poo)! There are one or two people who already report from the site annually, so I'll let them know what's being planned. All reports should be sent to <https://irecord.org.uk/enter-glow-worm-record> or use the quick link [tinyurl.com/glow-worms](https://tinyurl.com/glow-worms) if you are mentioning it in print as it's easier to remember.

I will try and take a look at the site some time if I happen to be over your way, although probably not at night during the glowing season as I am in High Wycombe, about an hour away.

Please let me know how things progress.

Best wishes,

Robin Scagell  
UK Glow Worm Survey