

Field margins

Management summary		
	Key actions	Potential benefits
Grass-only margins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include tussocky grasses such as cocksfoot and cut infrequently • Margins situated next to hedgerows and ditches are especially valuable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits all small mammal species and predatory invertebrates such as carabid beetles • Creates a diversity of habitats
Grass and wildflower margins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include nectar sources such as knapweed, scabious and oxeye daisy • More species-rich seed mixtures will enhance plant, seed and invertebrate food supplies • Cut infrequently, and not in summer once established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits pollen and nectar feeders, other invertebrates, and a range of wildlife species
Naturally regenerated margins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred establishment method on light, less fertile soils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages local flora and provides conditions suitable for rare arable plants if cultivated
Beetle banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create beetle banks across arable fields • Include tussocky grasses and manage as grass-only margins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits small mammals and predators of cereal aphids, such as spiders and carabid beetles
Wild bird seed mixture and nectar flower mixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sow in strips or plots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages nectar feeding invertebrates and a range of bird species

Options especially relevant for field margins		
Code	Countryside stewardship options	Tier
AB1	Nectar flower mix	Mid
AB3	Beetle banks	Mid
AB8	Flower-rich margins and plots	Mid
AB11	Cultivated areas for arable plants	Mid
AB16	Autumn sown bumblebird mix	Mid
OP2	Wild bird seed mixture	Mid
SW1	4-6m buffer strip on cultivated land	Mid
SW2	4-6m buffer strip on intensive grassland	Mid
SW3	In-field grass strips	Mid
SW4	12-24m watercourse buffer strip on cultivated land	Mid
SW11	Riparian management strip	Mid
WT1	Buffering in-field ponds and ditches in improved grassland	Mid
WT2	Buffering in-field ponds and ditches on arable land	Mid

Find out more at:
www.wildlifetrusts.org www.rspb.org.uk www.plantlife.org.uk www.gwct.org.uk
www.naturalengland.org.uk



Mixed species mature hedgerow, Herefordshire © Tree Council Image Bank

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are among the most important remaining areas of semi-natural habitat on lowland farmland. Many of our hedgerows are ancient and of historical interest, and all hedgerows are able to provide a host of resources for wildlife: food, shelter, nesting sites, refuge from farm operations and corridors across the landscape. A whole range of wildlife species, common as well as rare and declining, depend on hedgerows for their survival.

Key points

- Hedgerows are of huge value to farmland wildlife
- Trim not more than every three years in January/February and aim for a variety of hedge heights
- Hedge-laying or coppicing can rejuvenate hedges
- Protect hedgerow trees

Hedgerows



Hedgerows are important for the declining yellowhammer © Malene Thyssen GNU



Hawthorn flowers provide nectar and pollen, and the berries provide food over winter © Dave Key, Hedgelink

Hedgerows are the most important wildlife habitat over large stretches of lowland farmland and are essential for a great variety of plants and animals. They are especially important for farmland birds, butterflies and moths, bats and dormice, with at least 47 species of conservation concern using hedgerows as their main habitat. The Hedgerow Biodiversity Action Plan concludes that over 600 plant species, 1500 insects, 65 birds and 20 mammal species have been recorded at some time living or feeding in hedgerows.

Many different aspects of hedgerows are important for wildlife. Species-rich hedges will provide a variety of foods at different times of year, with flowers supplying nectar and pollen for insects in the spring and summer, and fruits and berries sustaining birds and mammals over the winter months. Hedges are used as nesting sites, while bats will use tall hedgerows to commute between feeding and roosting areas. Hedgerow trees provide shelter for insects such as moths, and may act as stepping stones across farmed landscapes. Hedges and hedge base vegetation provide many species with cover from predators and refuge from farming operations such as ploughing and harvest.

Hedgerows and dormice

Dormouse occurrence in hedgerows has declined by 64% since the late 1970s. Dormice need species-rich hedgerows that can provide different foods at different times of year, such as hawthorn flowers in spring, insects in summer, and hazelnuts in autumn to build fat reserves for the winter. Hedgerows can support breeding populations of dormice and are also used as dispersal corridors, linking copses that are too small to support viable populations on their own. However, even small gaps in a hedgerow can prevent dormouse dispersal, so sympathetic management is crucial.



Dormice leave tooth marks on the outside of hazelnut holes, while neat gnaw marks follow its circumference, smooth to the touch © PTES

Hedgerows



Laying a hedge in the Midland style © Rob Wolton, Hedgelink



A hedge one year after laying

© Durham Hedgerow Partnership, Hedgelink



Newly coppiced hedgerow

© Durham Hedgerow Partnership, Hedgelink

Hedge laying

Hedge laying was once common practice on nearly all farms and its decline has resulted in a decrease in the value of hedges for wildlife. Hedge laying is another form of hedge management. Each stem is partially cut through, then the stems are laid over and woven together to produce a thick living barrier which re-grows from the base. There are over 30 styles in the UK, each developed over many years to suit different climates, farming practices and tree and shrub types. Laying the hedge rejuvenates it, encourages new shrub growth and keeps it bushy and healthy. Once laid, trimming should keep the hedge in good order for up to 50 years when it may be laid again.

Coppicing

Coppicing involves cutting stems to ground level and allowing the stools to re-grow. It is particularly useful if a hedgerow is ready for rejuvenation but has too few stems for hedge-laying, or if the hedgerow is very wide. If the re-growth is protected from grazing by deer and livestock, a thick dense hedgerow can be recreated in this way in just a few years. It also gives the opportunity to plant up any gaps.

Hedge base vegetation

The value of a hedge for wildlife can be greatly enhanced by managing the hedge base to encourage plenty of vegetation. Hedge bases may have remnant populations of woodland flowers such as primroses, or plants such as cow parsley and hedge garlic, all of which provide important sources of nectar for a range of pollinator species. Tussocky grasses at the hedge base provide safe places for invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals. Roots and woody stumps provide additional wildlife habitat.



Swallowtail moth © Rob Wolton, Hedgelink

Hedgerow trees for moths

The importance of two key farmland elements - field margins and hedgerow trees - was assessed for moths, by light trapping over four summers across Upper Thames farmland. We recorded a total of 311 larger moth species, many of them spectacularly beautiful.

Our findings highlighted the importance of hedgerow trees, and wide field margins, in the conservation of wider-countryside moths. Wide field margins were beneficial for moths, but hedgerow trees had an even greater impact. Why did hedgerow trees increase moth numbers? When we looked at the types of moths found, we discovered that even those species whose caterpillars did not feed on the trees were in greater numbers. This suggested that hedgerow trees do not merely act as food resources, but provide important shelter for many moths in exposed agricultural landscapes.

Hedgerow trees may act as 'stepping stones' for some moths, especially less mobile ones, helping them to cross open agricultural landscapes in search of resources. They could become increasingly important, since they may help species to move northwards in response to climate change. Since 2010, options for tagging and buffering hedgerow trees are included in Environmental Stewardship.

Key results

- Hedgerow trees are even more important for many moths than wide field margins
- They provide shelter in open agricultural landscapes
- Support for hedgerow trees is now available through Environmental Stewardship



Hedgerow trees provide shelter for moths
© Ruth Feber

Hedgerows

Management summary		
	Key actions	Potential benefits
Hedge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut hedges on a rotation and do not cut more than once every three years • Aim for hedgerows of different heights around the farm • Lay or coppice hedges to rejuvenate them • Avoid repeated cutting to the same height 	<p>Will allow growth and fruiting of hedge</p> <p>Will provide a variety of suitable habitats for different birds and mammals</p> <p>Laying or coppicing will give them a new lease of life</p> <p>Relaxing the cutting regime encourages a dense growth of healthy hedgerow stems</p>
Hedge planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a mixture of native species, preferably those that are locally common • Where possible, try to link areas of woodland, other hedges or semi-natural habitats 	<p>Will provide the best food resources for wildlife, and fit best in the landscape</p> <p>Hedgerows can help wildlife move through the landscape from one patch of habitat to another</p>
Hedgerow trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and protect hedgerow trees 	Hedgerow trees are very valuable for wildlife

Options especially relevant for hedgerows		
Code	Countryside stewardship options / capital items	Tier
BE3	Management of hedgerows	Mid
BN5	Hedgerow laying	Mid
BN6	Hedgerow coppicing	Mid
BN7	Hedgerow gapping up	Mid
BN8	Hedgerow supplement - casting up	Mid
BN9	Hedgerow supplement - substantial pre-work	Higher
BN10	Hedgerow supplement - top binding and staking	Mid
BN11	Planting new hedges	Mid
TE1	Planting standard hedgerow tree	Mid

Find out more at:
www.hedgeline.org.uk www.rspb.org.uk www.ptes.org www.hedgelaying.org.uk www.naturalengland.org.uk



Woodland & scrub

Woodland has the potential to be one of the richest lowland habitats for wildlife. From the flowers that carpet woodlands in spring, to mosses, fungi, and invertebrates that, in turn, provide food for many mammals and birds, woodlands are home to an immense number of species. They are especially important in the wider landscape, and much farmland wildlife will use woodlands or scrub at certain times of year for nesting or foraging. The trees themselves can provide timber, shelter, or amenity value.

Key points

- Farm woodlands and scrub have great potential for wildlife
- They provide vital food, nesting sites and shelter for wildlife in the farmed landscape
- Encouraging native tree and scrub species, and managing for a range of structures and varying light levels will result in a rich diversity of wildlife