

10.3 HEDGEROWS AND SCRUB

Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows

Ancient hedgerows are those that have continually existed since at least 1600 and are associated with early land enclosure. Some ancient hedgerows are associated with parish boundaries and can be traced back hundreds of years. Ancient hedgerows usually support a greater number of tree and shrub species and can also have woodland field flora species including ancient woodland indicator species associated with them. Late enclosure and more recent hedgerows were planted with very few species and are often dominated by hawthorn. Colonisation by other trees and shrubs is slow and as a consequence there are fewer species in younger hedgerows. Some species rich hedgerows may be of more recent origin either through enlightened planting or where they occur adjacent to ancient woodland thus allowing colonisation, particularly of field layer species.

In Derbyshire many species rich hedgerows have been removed, especially in the Coal Measures and on the Southern Magnesian Limestone. More intact patterns of old species rich hedgerows exist in the Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands and parts of the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent.

Scrub

The importance of scrub communities for nature conservation is poorly researched, but recent commentators (Hopkins, 1996) have increasingly highlighted the value of these habitats for wildlife especially birds and invertebrates. Scrub can vary from relatively common, species-poor types through to species-rich or rare scrub types of great ecological interest. Between these extremes lie many intermediate scrub types where conservation judgements are finely balanced. Scrub can make a significant contribution to the value of a site through associated species, structural diversity and provide an extra dimension to the physical conditions by creating a more varied ecotone between habitats. In Derbyshire the value of daleside scrub ('retrogressive hazel scrub') is recognised within the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan (PDNPA, 2000). However, more commonly scrub is perceived as a threat to more valued habitat such as unimproved grassland, especially acid and calcareous grassland types.

Common scrub communities in Derbyshire include those characterised by hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble and gorse sometimes with scattered oak, ash and sycamore. They may occur in mosaics with other habitats or as fairly homogeneous stands. Scrub can be an important associate habitat for birds such as stonechat, whinchat, redstart, spotted flycatcher, willow warbler, whitethroat, grasshopper warbler, chiffchaff, blackcap and yellowhammer.

Hedgerow and Scrub Selection Guidelines

Sites that meet one or more of the following guidelines will be eligible for designation as a Wildlife Site.

H1 Hedgerows of at least 50m that fulfil one of the following:

- ❖ **An ancient woodland ‘ghost hedge’ i.e. formerly part of an ancient woodland that has since been cleared.**
 - ❖ **Supports 3 or more veteran trees**
 - ❖ **Is on an old parish boundary and supports 5 or more woody native species (excluding sycamore), 3 or more of which must be frequent throughout.**
 - ❖ **Supports 7 or more woody native species (excluding sycamore), with at least 4 frequent throughout the hedge**
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UKBAP Habitat Action Plan - Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows
LBAP Habitat Action Plans – Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows (LD), Hedges (PD)

Application

This guideline should be applied to all hedgerows that are known not to have been planted in the last 30 years. The boundary of the site must include a buffer zone of at least 2 metres around the hedgerow.

Justification

Hedgerows originating from pre-Enclosure Acts are considered by the UK Habitat Action Plan for Hedgerows to be ancient hedgerows. Hedgerows are protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 under section 97 of the Environment Act 1995. However, protection is not always sufficient since it is the way in which the hedgerow and the associated field margin (headland) is managed that is critical. Species-rich hedgerows are considered to be priority habitats in the Lowland Derbyshire and Peak District BAPs.

Sc1 Sites supporting ‘retrogressive hazel scrub’ over an area greater than 0.25ha.

LBAP Habitat Action Plan – Limestone Dales (PD)

Application

This guideline only applies to ‘retrogressive hazel scrub’ found in the dales within the Peak District. Examples of this habitat may be present in White Peak outside of the Peak District National Park. This type of scrub usually occurs in a mosaic with other priority habitats, however, in some circumstance isolated patches may be present within relatively species poor grassland.

Justification

Retrogressive hazel scrub is thought to derive from ancient ash woodland and consists mainly of hazel and can have a rich associate flora of herbs and ferns. It is also favoured by bird species like Redstart, Song Thrush and Whitethroat. It is considered to be a valuable associate habitat within the Limestone Dales Peak District BAP.

Sc2 Scrub communities that include the following features: -

- **At least three shrub species present**
 - **Complex three-dimensional structure with shrubs varying in height, canopy shape, age and spacing.**
 - **Clearings and sunny glades present within the scrub, giving a high boundary/area ratio.**
 - **A well developed marginal zone which contains a range of rare, local or uncommon tall herbs and other grazing sensitive species not found in adjoining habitats**
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LBAP Habitat Action Plans – Limestone Dales (PD), Farmland Scrub (PD), Heather Moorland (PD)

Application

This guideline applies to any scrub community either occurring in a mosaic with other priority habitats or as more isolated patches within relatively species poor grassland or at the edge of woodland. Selection should consider the relative merits of the scrub habitat against any threat it may pose to habitats of value in their own right.

Justification

Scrub can make a significant and important contribution to biodiversity within an area and is often a distinctive and characteristic habitat type.