

This Habitat Action Plan sets out to maintain and improve species-rich hedgerows on Caravan Club-owned sites, and has been drafted for Club Site Teams and Site Wardens. It provides background information on species-rich hedges and makes recommendations on sympathetic habitat management for this habitat type.

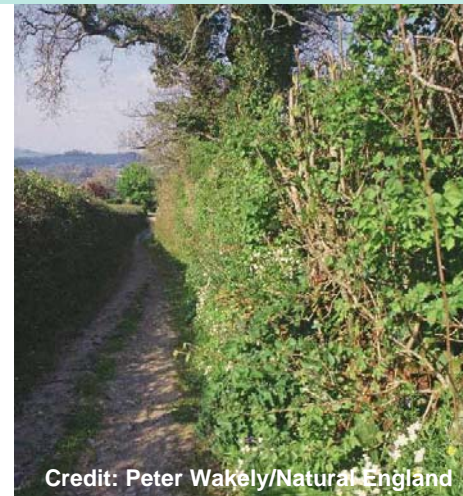
Introduction

Species-rich hedges are difficult to replace as many date back to the enclosures act of medieval times. They are important, as they can support up to 65 of our bird and 20 of our mammal species, and numerous plant and invertebrate species. They provide wildlife corridors and are the last strongholds for many farmland species caught amidst the ecological desert of intensive agriculture.

The Caravan Club audit 2006 revealed that 63 Club sites may support this habitat type

How to recognise this habitat

- 5 or more native woody species on average in a 30 m length in lowland England and Wales
- 4 or more native woody species on average in a 30 m length in upland England and Wales, and Scotland
- Hedges which contain fewer woody species but a rich basal flora of herbaceous plants should also be included, but practical criteria for identifying them have yet to be agreed at a national level



Credit: Peter Wakely/Natural England

Current status

- It is estimated that 190,000 km of the remaining 450,000 km of hedges within the UK are considered as ancient and/or species-rich
- Hedgerows are currently being lost at a rate of approximately 10% every year
- Factors causing loss or decline:
 - Development activities in rural and semi-rural locations
 - Over-management, through too-frequent cutting and removal of dead wood
 - Agricultural intensification leading to the removal and replacement of hedgerows with fencing
 - Agricultural run-off and increased use of fertilisers and pesticides
 - Damage from livestock and lack of in-hedge tree regeneration

Ecology/management requirements

Species-rich hedges provide important nesting and foraging habitats for many birds and small mammals. They can also contain many plant species, and following the outbreak of Dutch elm disease, are now one of the few places where English elms *Ulmus procera* can regularly be found. Hedges are very important as wildlife corridors for mammals, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates, and also harbour useful predators of crop pests (such as ground beetles and spiders).

How to look after this habitat

	Site safeguard and management	Species management and protection
DO'S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO Cut hedgerows at intervals of three or more years, to prevent excessive disturbance and loss of bird nesting opportunities DO Create new hedgerows where possible using a mix of native species of local provenance DO Lightly trim young hedgerows (newly laid or coppiced) annually for the first 10 years to obtain a good shape DO Fill gaps in hedges with various native hedgerow species of local provenance, and enhance species poor hedgerows by inter-planting other native species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO Prepare management plans to allow site wardens to effectively conserve species-rich hedges on an ongoing basis DO Survey all potential sites for species-rich hedgerows within 5 years DO Allow set aside land and grass buffer strips alongside hedgerows DO Conduct a survey of hedgerow trees to determine age and composition DO Survey composition of species-rich hedgerows every 5-10 years, for monitoring purposes
DON'TS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DON'T Cut/trim more than a third of site hedgerows in any one year DON'T Attempt to intensively cut hedgerow, shrub and scrub areas; <u>avoid a state of excessive 'tidiness'</u> during site management DON'T Allow hedgerows to develop into <u>tree stands</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DON'T Cut hedgerows between March and August inclusive, to avoid disturbance to breeding and nesting birds DON'T Remove dead wood from beneath hedgerows, as it provides valuable habitat to invertebrates and small mammals

For further information on this species visit:

The Caravan Club Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for species-rich hedgerows: <http://www.caravanclub.co.uk>

The UK BAP for species-rich hedgerows: <http://www.ukbap.org.uk>