Manhood Wildlife & Heritage Group

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FIXING & LINKING OUR WETLANDS

HERITAGE FUND

Hedgerows on the Manhood Peninsula

Contents

Introduction

Hedges were originally planted to enclose livestock or define boundaries. Hedgerows can be made up of various tree species. If you look around the countryside today most of our hedgerows are Hawthorn and Blackthorn.

Some hedgerows in the UK date back 1000 years and were used to define parish boundaries. Even today, some hedgerows are still used as parish boundaries, and these can be defined as ancient.

Hedgerows provide cover for nesting birds and provide a habitat corridor for mammals. Habitat connectivity can link two or more habitats together, so it's important we maintain this connectivity.

“It’s difficult to think of a more quintessential symbol of the British Countryside than the Hedgerow, bursting with blackberries, hazelnuts and sloes, and home to field mice and butterflies. But we might dream about foraging for mushrooms or collecting wayside nettles foe soup, most of us are unaware of quite how profoundly hedgerows have shaped the history of our landscape and our species” by John Wright

History

Some early records in England date from 547AD in the west country, whilst some parish boundaries are still marked today with hedges over 1,000 years old.

The Neolithic Clearances inherited a virgin landscape from their Mesolithic predecessors. Small parcels of land where taken up for farming and their survival. This roughly happened 4300 and 4000.

The Bronze age and Iron ages began to see slightly more amounts of woodland disappear. Although this was generally small scale, land parcels where used to grow food and cattle began roam. Even today in Dartmoor, evidence of reeves systems can be seen. This is a system of parallel banks or also known as straight lines can be seen. This is more evident in southern Dartmoor.

"*Through the middle ages, hedge laying was used to keep livestock enclosed inside field parcels and transformed the landscape. From 1603 over 7 million acres of open fields or common land were enclosed, and Oliver Rackham estimates that over 200,000 miles of hedge were planted between 1750 and 1850" by the Peoples Trust for endangered Species.*

Habitat and Legal Requirements

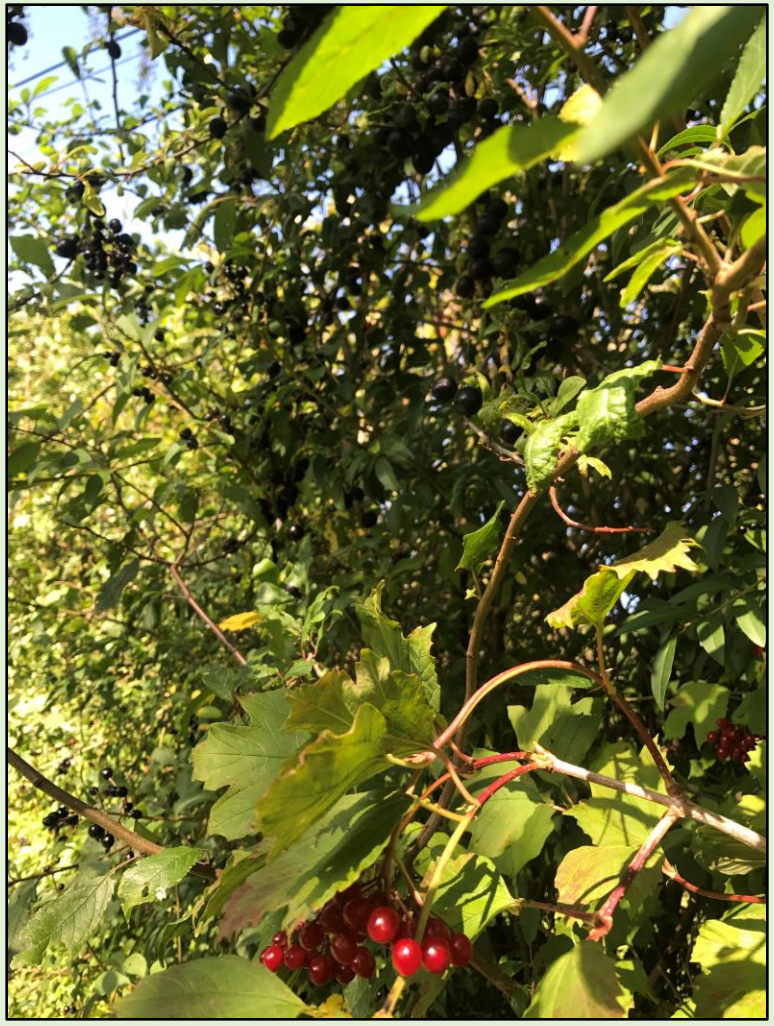
Increased mechanisation of farming methods during the 20th century and the move towards larger field sizes has meant that many miles of hedgerow have been removed. Calls to reduce the number of hedges, on the grounds of efficiency, began even as enclosure was still taking place. But the significant decline of hedges did not begin until after the Second World War. In 1946 there were an estimated 500,000 miles of hedgerow in England, which had decreased to 236,000 by 1993.

Before the second world war, larger areas of woodland were felled to allow more fertile soil to be used for farming. Hedges became important habitat features and species used these corridors to move from one woodland to another.

No two stretches of hedgerow are quite the same, this will be dependent on soil PH, moisture levels, climate and age. The origin of the hedge is also important, bank or ditch can close proximity to a hedge. This can dictate weather we are more likely to see wetland species.

“Post-war agricultural policy change gradually reversed the loss of hedges and their importance was recognised with The Hedgerow Regulations 1997. These were designed to protect exceptionally species rich hedgerows and those of landscape, archaeological and historical importance - i.e. ancient hedgerows, which have been in existence since the enclosures, and species rich hedgerows, which contain 5 or more native shrub species within a 30m length (4 or more in northern and eastern counties). Remaining hedges vary significantly in size and structure across the country and are managed in very different ways. All hedgerows which contain more than 80% native species are now classified as Priority Habitats in the UK and have their own Habitat Action Plan. Nearly all hedgerows are also protected through cross compliance measures. Peoples Trust for Endangered Species”

How Can We Help?



There are many ways in which you can help. Planting a mix species hedge is a good place to start. This will extend the pollination period, invite more birds, mammals and insects. Improve the food chain!

What species can we plant? Native trees to the UK are good, including:

Hazel, Cherry Plum, Common Pear, Guelder Rose, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Bramble, Dewberry, Dog Rose, Ivy, Ash, Dogwood, Domestic Apple, Field Maple, Grey Willow, Holly, Wayfaring, Beech, Oak, Buckthorn, Spindle, Alder, Native Honey Suckle and Wild Privet.

Do you have a garden, an open field with existing hedge or no hedge?

You can always improve existing hedge. Nice thick hedge at the base is good, in a continues row with no gaps.

You can always improve a hedge row with gaps, by adding species that are absent from the current hedge. If the hedge has gaps at the base, then we can try hedge laying.

Remember! There is lots of information on the People's

Trust for Endangered Species Website.

Planting and Managing Guide

Hedge Laying

Always lay your hedge first and then plant in the gaps afterwards. This will prevent the new trees from getting damaged.

Generally you can lay a tree with a minimum diameter of 3 inches.

Remember Hedge management only takes place between November to February when the sap inside the tree is not rising so much and the birds tend to nest between March and June.

Tree Planting

If you are planting a hedgerow...

- Try and mix your species.
- Always plant from November to March, when the ground is generally wetter. This gives the roots a chance to bed in.
- Protect young trees with rabbit guards.

Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands (FLOW) Project

How we monitor hedgerow habitats on the Peninsula.

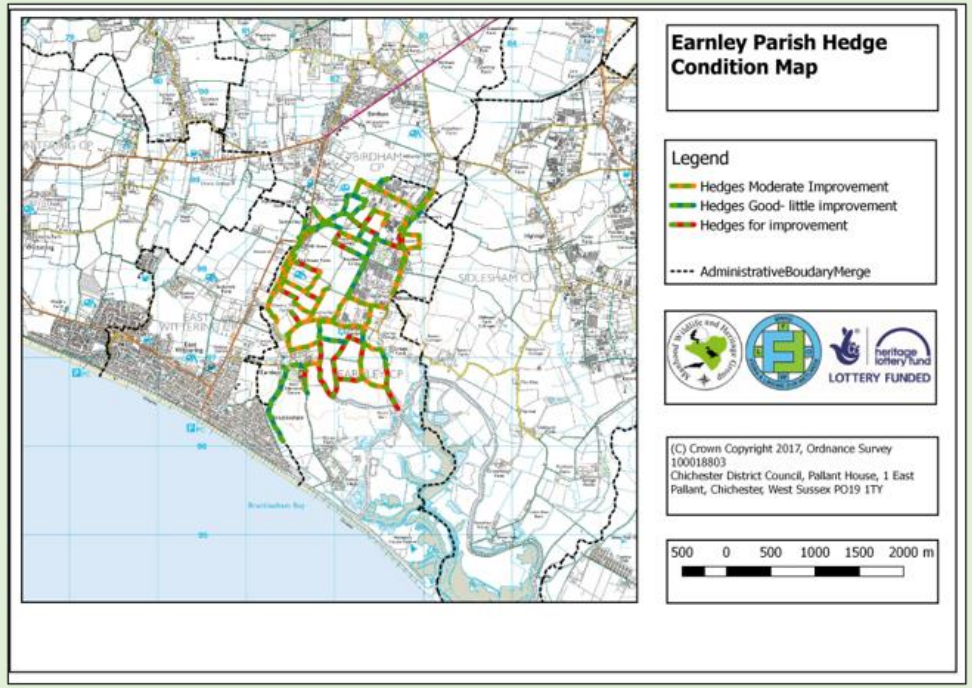
Hedge Surveying

Hedge surveying forms have been adapted by the FLOW Project, based on the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre hedge assessment form, to allow volunteers to identify hedgerows that may have dormouse potential.

Hedge data and mapping

Hedge data collected is mapped and put into an Excel spreadsheet, which is then used to created maps in GIS.

It can then be identified which hedges need connecting, where there are gaps, and where improvements could be made by laying, gentler management, more planting etc.



Learn more about protecting and growing hedgerows at www.mwhg.org.uk