



UPPER CLUN COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUP



LET'S LOOK AFTER THE HEDGEROWS

...AND THE BIRDS WILL LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES



Yellowhammers, Linnets, Tree Sparrows, Bullfinches - hedgerow birds that bring life and colour to the countryside, and don't ask a lot in return. Seeds, berries or insects to eat, a secure nest site, that's about it. But they're not always getting the little they do need: many hedgerows have been removed, others cut back too hard, or too early in the year, or too often, so that there's almost no life left in them.

A good hedge is a living thing, vigorous and robust

In order to support birds, and other creatures, hedges should be healthy and bushy enough to attract plenty of insects. At least some of them need to be allowed to produce berries, nuts and seeds. Mature hedgerow trees should be conserved - they produce more seed, support more insects, and often have holes for birds to nest in. Other plant species should be encouraged to grow in the hedges and any adjacent verges - the more variety, the more life there will be, not only birds, but butterflies, bees and flowers too.

Our surveys have shown that well-established hedgerows that have been kept high and dense attract more birds at all seasons. Here are a few simple steps you can take to help keep it that way:

- *maintain hedges by laying and trimming so that they stay dense and vigorous*
- *if possible trim in January and February, when berries &c have been eaten*
- *work on a two- to three-year rotation - this will save you time and money*
- *try to alternate the trimming of your hedges, so they're always at different stages*
- *don't cut any back so hard that they become low or thin*
- *protect the base of hedges from grazing livestock, especially sheep*
- *retain mature hedgerow trees, replacing them if they die naturally*
- *where possible, replant hedges on historic lines using a mix of native plant species*

REMEMBER – FARMLAND HEDGES SHOULD BE CUT ONLY BETWEEN 31ST AUGUST & 1ST MARCH TO MEET CROSS COMPLIANCE RULES FOR THE BASIC PAYMENTS SCHEME. THE DATES IN INDIVIDUAL ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENTS MAY BE MORE RESTRICTIVE. OTHER LANDOWNERS AND HOUSEHOLDERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO DO THE SAME.

SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

The Community Wildlife Group will help any farmer making a relevant grant application to Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Scheme

Further information and advice can be provided on behalf of the Community Wildlife Group by

Leo Smith 01694 720296

More detailed advice can be found at rspb.org.uk/forprofessionals/farming/advice/hedgerows

