

# Scrub



Often overlooked as undergrowth or waste ground, scrub provides valuable habitat for several important species and sheltered nest sites for breeding birds

Scrub is generally thick and relatively impassable preventing disturbance by people, this makes it particularly important for lying up sites for Otter, Deer and other species.

Much of the typical vegetation which forms scrub is spiny and unpalatable to browsing animals. This natural defence makes scrub ideal for a range of breeding birds helping keep predators at bay.

## Target Features

Aim to create or enhance the following features:

- Patchworks of scrub and open glades to produce valuable 'edge' habitats
- Edges with a southerly aspect, providing warm and sheltered conditions, are of particular benefit to insects
- Brambles and patches of other dense vegetation for nesting birds
- Dead wood and bare ground – both are important habitat features for a range of scarce insects, plants and fungi.
- Patches of long grass with wild flowers in some open areas – important sources of nectar for bees and other insects, and shelter for mammals and birds
- Adjacent hedgerows and grass margins to provide wildlife corridors to allow species to move from one habitat to another
- A variety of species providing berries, wildflowers and seeds at different times of the year to offer as many feeding opportunities for birds as possible

## Managing Scrub

### Grazing and Browsing

- Light grazing helps to maintain edge habitats and open areas
- It is important to get the right stocking density – too little will not help produce the desired vegetation diversity, while too much will lead to damage. Start with a low level (c.0.25 LU/ha) and increase as appropriate

### Cutting

- Cutting most species encourages re-growth and is a valuable tool for maintenance and restoration
- Avoid cutting during the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive)
- Aim to leave the cutting of berry-bearing species until later in the winter, to give animals and birds a chance to make full use of the berry crop
- Cut scrub in a rotation – most species mature in about 15 years, so cut 1/15<sup>th</sup> every year, or 3/15<sup>th</sup> every 3 years, etc.
- Try to cut small, scattered patches rather than large areas, to diversify structure.

For further information please contact: