

Hedgerow



The North Devon Coast AONB contains a wide variety of habitats, including sand dunes and estuaries, rocky shores, species-rich hedgerows, coastal oak woodlands and culm grasslands.



Hedge networks are increasingly recognised to be of great importance for nature conservation, as well as defining our landscape. For many people, particularly urban visitors to the countryside, they are the most well known and loved feature of the rural environment, due to their accessibility, visibility and ubiquity.

Over large stretches of lowland Britain they are the most significant wildlife habitat remaining, and are an essential refuge and movement corridor for a great many woodland and farmland plants and animals. The number of species they support can be very high - over 600 flowering plants, 1500 insects, 65 birds and 20 mammals have been recorded at some time living or feeding in hedgerows.

Familiar species of breeding bird such as the yellowhammer, whitethroat, chaffinch, song thrush and dunnock may be particularly numerous, and in winter flocks of migratory redwings and fieldfares join the more familiar resident species in search of berries.

About half of our native mammals make hedges their home, notably dormice, badgers, rabbits and hares. Bats also use hedges as a safe travel route between roosting and feeding sites. Indeed the abundant insect life of a hedge provides a rich feeding resource in its own right. The often warm and sheltered micro-climate of hedges make good places for reptiles, such as slow worms, grass snakes and lizards.

Although very few of these species are found only in hedges, the sheer extent of the habitat means that it is of great importance for the survival of many.