



SCRUB

Introduction

This HAP covers scrub – vegetation that is dominated by low growing or multi-stemmed woody species.

Three UK BAP priority bird species – bullfinch, linnet and song thrush – occur in scrub in Bristol. Scrub is also part of the habitat requirement of the nationally rare priority moth species, silky wave moth, that occurs in the Avon Gorge.

Current Status

Scrub is widely scattered across Bristol, often as part of a mosaic with other habitats, including broad-leaved woodland, grassland and wetland. Most extensive examples fall within designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCl) and scrub is also well represented on Wildlife Network Sites (WNS), but there are numerous small patches of the habitat on undesignated sites.

There are two main scrub types in Bristol, those on neutral and those on calcareous soils. The most widespread type occurs on neutral soils and is usually characterised by large quantities of bramble, hawthorn and blackthorn, often with emergent saplings of ash, sycamore and pedunculate oak. There is often little ground flora associated with this habitat, but young stands may retain grassland species such as agrimony and meadow vetchling, and narrow-leaved everlasting pea can be a characteristic component, especially along old railways. Under older stands of this scrub type a woodland ground flora, dominated by ivy, can develop with other species including cuckoo pint, wood false brome and dog's mercury. Extensive examples of this habitat type occur at Stockwood Open Space, Eastwood Farm, the Downs and Malago Valley, and smaller examples are widespread.

Limestone scrub has a more limited distribution, governed by the occurrence of suitable soils and is largely limited to the Kingsweston Ridge and Avon Gorge. It can be species rich, with shrubs including wild privet, wayfaring tree, various rose species, spindle and dogwood. Tree species may include yew, ash and whitebeams. The more sparse open nature of this scrub often allows a diverse associated ground flora to be present, including remnant grassland species such as pale St John's wort and common rockrose. Wild madder and wild strawberry are particularly characteristic and ivy broomrape occurs on the edge of many patches.

Other scrub types with a more restricted distribution in Bristol include: broom scrub, which occurs on acidic soils for example at Troopers Hill; willow scrub, which occurs at wetland sites such as Lawrence Weston Moor; and buddleia-dominated scrub, which occurs often on derelict or previously used land.

Scrub is a key habitat for birds. As well as the BAP priority species listed above, population densities of species such as whitethroat, lesser whitethroat, willow warbler and goldfinch can be exceptional in scrub. Many of Bristol's badger setts and fox earths are protected by dense scrub. Scrub provides habitat for many species of invertebrate, often including rare species as well as attractive species such as brimstone and comma butterflies. Invertebrate value is usually greatest if tall herb or grassland habitats are present nearby.

There are several management issues associated with scrub. It can become a management problem where it encroaches across species-rich grassland (another BAP priority habitat). Elsewhere, it can make sites appear unmanaged and neglected. If not managed, it will usually develop into secondary woodland, which is usually much less species-rich.

In the grassland ecosystem, the ideal solution is to retain small amounts of scrub, whilst containing and, where practical, reversing encroachment across species-rich grassland.

Scrub habitats will require management, usually by flailing on an infrequent basis. Creation of scrub either by allowing natural regeneration or by planting can be successful in the right locations eg to create woodland edge habitat, and biodiversity benefits are often achieved far more quickly than by woodland creation.

Current Threats

- | Lack of knowledge of resource

- | Poor image of habitat, owing to the fact that in certain circumstances can make sites feel neglected and unsafe

- | Isolation of small areas of scrub

- | Lack of, or unsympathetic, management

- | Development pressures

Objective 1: Increase knowledge of resource

Target:

- | Collate information on the extent, distribution and type of scrub in Bristol
- | Assess and monitor distribution of scrub-dependent birds in Bristol
- | Identify areas with important concentrations of scrub, corridors important for connectivity and areas deficient in scrub

Objective 2: Ensure that development does not damage the overall resource

Target:

- Minimise the loss of scrub habitats caused by development
- Where scrub is lost, ensure that it is replaced by appropriate planting
- Where appropriate, seek opportunities for enhancement of resource, particularly in areas where scrub is scarce

Objective 3: Enhance the quality of the existing resource

Target:

- Ensure that sites with important scrub resource are in favourable conservation status

Objective 4: Increase awareness of special features of scrub

Target:

- Run an annual training event for land managers, planners and other decision makers, to highlight wildlife interest of scrub
- Run a public awareness raising event
- Produce a leaflet and web material highlighting value and management needs of scrub

SCRUB HABITAT ACTIONS	OBJECTIVE	DATE	IMPLEMENTORS
Map distribution and abundance of different scrub types in Bristol and develop a long term monitoring plan	1	2009 – 2010	BCC, BRERC
Map distribution and abundance of scrub-dependent bird species	1	2010	BCC, BRERC, BOC, BNS
Monitor populations of selected bird species	1	2011 – 2013	BOC, BNS
Seek to introduce appropriate management onto important areas of scrub habitat to ensure in favourable conservation status	1, 3	2010 – 2013	BCC, BRERC, AWT
Ensure that development does not lead to a net loss of scrub habitat and enhance extent where appropriate	2	2008 – 2013	BCC
Run an event for planners and land managers	4	2011	BCC, AWT
Run a public awareness raising event	4	2011	BCC, AWT
Develop a leaflet and web material outlining importance of scrub and management needs			