



The countryside charity
Sussex

Why are hedgerows important?

Hedgerows as Nature's Conductors

Hedgerows are natural conductors enabling animals and plants to move through our countryside and towns.

Hedgerows do much to impart character to the landscape. There were many more hedgerows in some parts of England in Victorian times than there are now. Many hedges were grubbed out in the interests of agricultural efficiency in the period after the Second World War and this had a big impact on many species of plants and animals. Part of the decline in birds can be linked to hedgerow loss.

Max Hooper is credited with Hooper's Law which says the number of species in a hedgerow increase with age. This rule of thumb works well in open countryside and suggests that over time hedgerows can add to biodiversity; the more hedgerows there are, the more biodiversity will get a boost.

Hedgerows are also important in urban settings. New developments where hedgerows are retained instead of being flattened are much greener environments for thriving communities to develop.

Hedgerows matter for climate change as well. A lot of emphasis in fighting climate change is focused on tree planting to create new woodland. But a hedge is a linear wood and that becomes obvious when hedges go unattended. Anyone who has had to manage a hedge knows how much wood they accumulate every year. The more wood the more carbon has been taken out of the atmosphere.

How hedgerows are managed also affects the biodiversity they support. The wider a hedge the more life that goes on within it, under it and near it. Hedges can be very diverse places and home to a large section of England's wildlife.

When you are on your walk send us pictures of what you see whether you can identify it or not. If it interests you or captures your imagination send it in and tell us where you were when you spotted it.

Professor Dan Osborn

Chair CPRE Sussex