

Orchards

The county once boasted extensive orchards, but these have been reduced to small or isolated pockets of trees hidden away; often neglected, unproductive and unprofitable. Traditional orchards need management; a neglected orchard soon becomes swamped with scrub and the trees will eventually succumb. With no new planting, the orchard's value for wildlife will not be sustained and if the trees are not adequately cared for and protected from grazing animals, they will suffer. An orchard that is well managed (in a low intensity way) will both crop well and function as an important wildlife habitat.

Traditional orchards are hotspots for biodiversity in the countryside, supporting a wide range of wildlife and containing other BAP priority habitats and species, as well as an array of Nationally Rare and Nationally Scarce species¹⁶.

A Traditional Orchard Survey, part-funded by Natural England and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, is currently ongoing and aims to locate and map the remaining traditional orchards within Cornwall. Once traditional orchards within the county have been mapped, the inventory will provide a valuable resource to be used by conservationists and orchard groups to ensure there is no net loss of this valuable habitat. With correct management advice the condition of many orchards

can be improved and suitable areas for expansion identified. Sustainable economic management should be considered and links with producers, large and small should be investigated.

It is anticipated that agri-environment schemes will be the key mechanism for delivery of this habitat.

Lead organisations: Natural England and Cornwall Council

Key BAP habitats:

- Orchards
- Hedgerows
- Wood-Pasture and Parkland

Key BAP species:

- Bats
- Birds
- Violet oil beetle
- String-of-sausages lichen
- Goat moth
- Pearl-bordered fritillary
- Common lizard
- grass snake
- slow-worm



Photo by Bill Bradshaw

¹⁶Nationally rare - Occurring in 15 or fewer hectads in Great Britain. Nationally scarce - Occurring in 16-100 hectads in Great Britain