



## Volunteers create Cornish hedge at Millennium Woods

Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Wild Penwith volunteer group has built and repaired over 100 meters of Cornish hedge over the years but living, "green" hedges are a fairly rare feature of the Penwith

## landscape. So when they were invited to Millennium Woods with the chance of creating one, it was an exciting challenge!

This group of enthusiastic volunteers has been running for over ten years and some of the current members have been there since its inception. The group carries out practical conservation tasks using hand tools to create and manage wild places. They are a crucial part of the Upstream Thinking project, which works with farming communities to help make changes which benefit both wildlife and water quality.

Millennium Woods, on the outskirts of Penzance is looked after by Penwith Environmental Network, with support from Cornwall Council's Green Infrastructure for Growth project. GI4G hopes to manage the woodland using traditional techniques which benefit wildlife. One such technique is to "lay" an existing strip of small trees such as hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and ash into a hedge.

The Trust's volunteers were joined by others from RSPB, many of whom had never layed a hedge before, but after being shown the basic principle of partially cutting through the stem of the tree until it can be lowered to an angle of around 30 degrees, bending rather than breaking, they were all eager to have a go. This traditional skill allows a thin strip of bark to remain intact so it won't die but live on and grow as part of the hedge.



The group quickly picked up these skills and in total created about 40 metres of expertly layed hedge.

Green hedges are invaluable to wildlife. They form linear thickets for birds to nest in and feed upon. Bats use hedges to navigate through the landscape and their removal can result in bats being unable to reach traditional feeding grounds. Hedges also provide a sheltered connective corridor between woodlands for small and larger mammals, allowing populations to mix and remain healthy.

Green hedges were once an abundant feature found throughout the country, many dating back several hundred years. After the Second World War many hedges were lost due to industrial agriculture and the need to feed a growing population.

Jason Appleby, Practical Projects Leader for the Trust says,

“To top off the day, a lone robin adopted the new hedge as part of its territory even before the group could down tools. What better confirmation of a job well done? Many thanks to Cornwall Council for inviting us along and to the RSPB for joining forces. Hopefully it will become an annual event”.



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