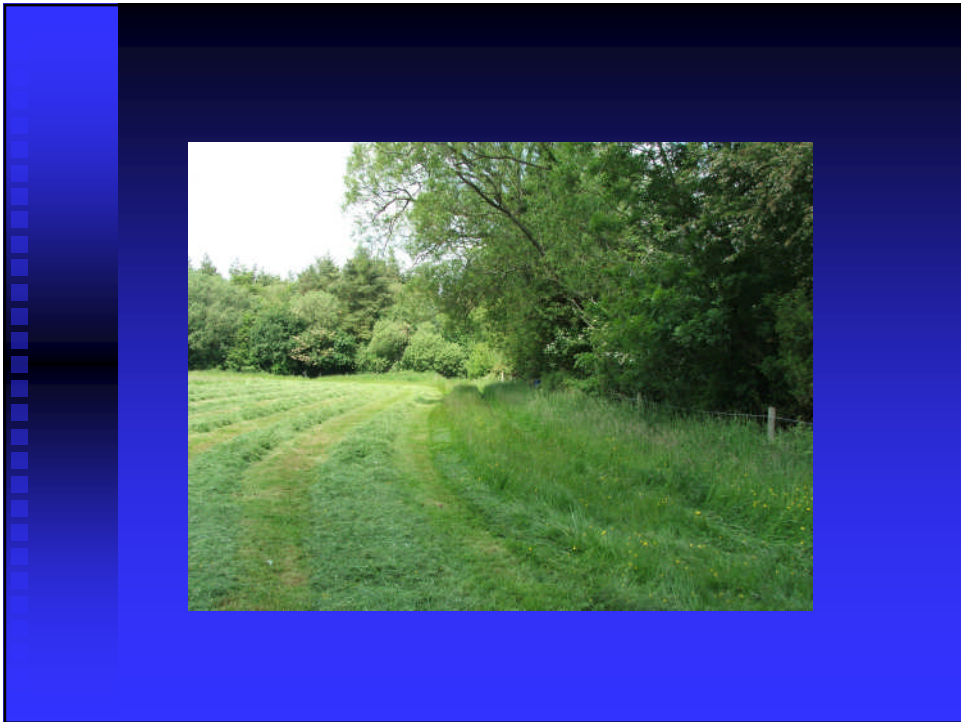


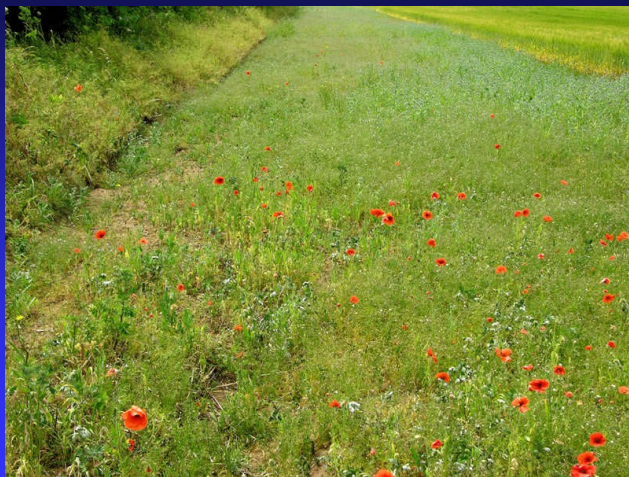
Field margins – benefits for wildlife, establishment and management

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What am I talking about?

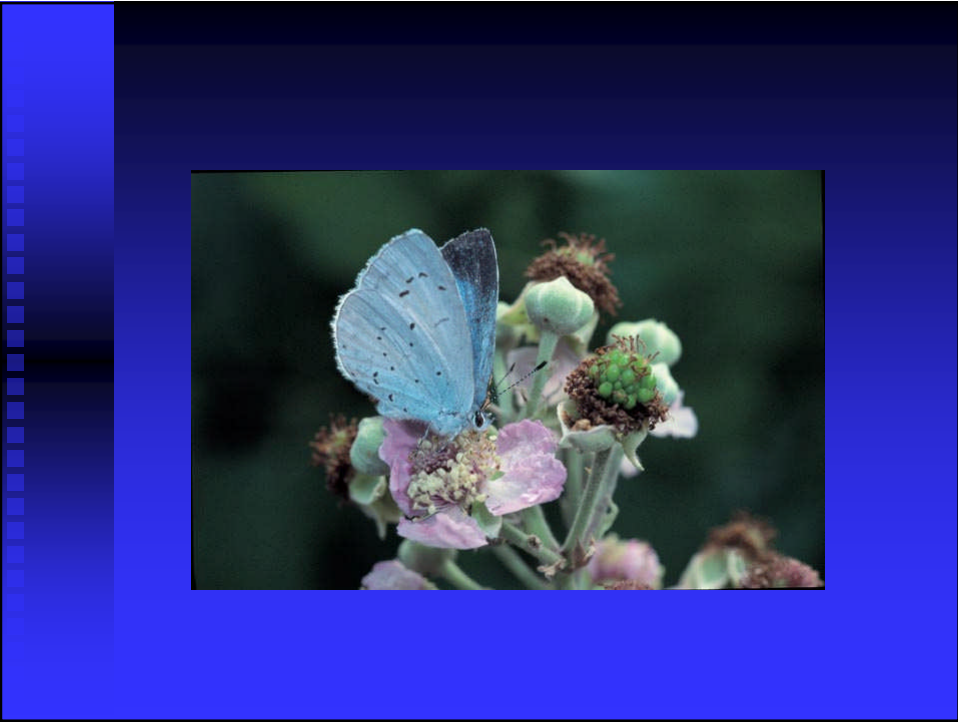
- Types of field margin
- Wildlife benefits
- Establishment and management
- How to maximise wildlife benefits









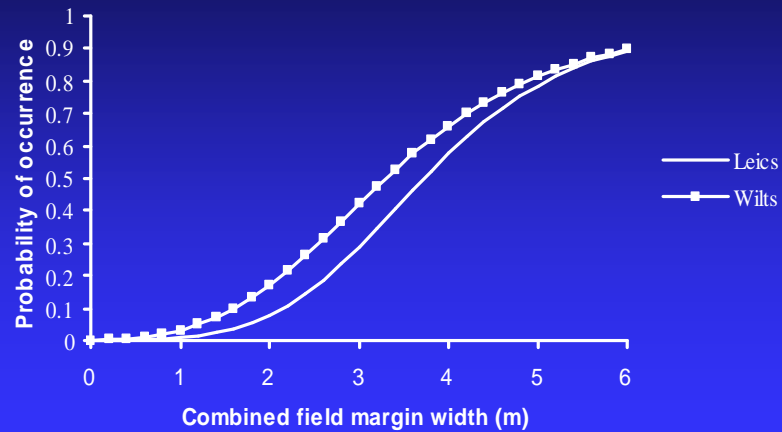




Other benefits of buffer strips

- Taking out least productive areas can boost income
- Buffer field boundary habitats from spray drift, fertiliser applications and cultivations
- Good public image of farming
- Weed control in field margins
- Access for hedge trimming and ditch management without crop damage
- Some reduction in risks of run-off and soil erosion

Benefits of buffer strips for whitethroats



Establishment

- Natural regeneration or sow native species?
- Tussocks or wild flowers?
- Weed control is priority in year 1

Management strategy

- Depends on function and structure required:
 - ◆ No management – hedge encroachment
 - ◆ Rotational trimming – tussocky margins
 - ◆ Annual trimming – open structure or flower-rich margins

Management

- Avoid cutting all margins in the same year
- Remove cuttings if possible
- Perennial weed control: top or spot spray
- Avoid fertiliser applications and spray drift
- Leave margins uncut in silage fields (light aftermath grazing may be beneficial)
- Leave uncultivated when grass ley replaced

Management for maximum wildlife benefits

- Diversity of margin types around the farm will benefit the widest range of wildlife
- Split management of 6 metre margins to provide tussocky and open swards
- Beneficial options adjacent to the margins to boost benefits, such as conservation headlands, pollen and nectar mixtures, or wild bird cover

Further information

- A management guide to birds of lowland farmland (RSPB, 2005)
- www.rspb.org.uk/farming
- www.farmwildlife.info