

too ready to graze on young hazel shoots. Historically, much of the brash would have been used for 'dead-hedging', staked and woven around the stools to protect the re-growth from grazing, but these days the coppice wood is protected by deer fencing.

When Kathleen first started, the coppice was overstood, mixed with birch, alder, and oak and sycamore standards, as well as brambles and honeysuckle. Now, in the cleared areas, woodland herbs and flowers are flourishing. But coppicing isn't simply a matter of clear-felling. "It's a balancing act," Kathleen explains. "This is ancient woodland, so when you let the light in all the woodland flowers which were dormant, like ramsons, primroses, bluebells and foxgloves, start growing. But you also have to exclude light or else the brambles come back. As the hazel stools regrow, the canopy closes again and keeps the

brambles down." In the overstood areas, it is quite obvious that the brambles are only rampant at the edges.

She tries to manage the wood sensitively, ensuring that the coppiced areas – known as coupes – make a patchwork, linked by trees that act as corridors for wildlife. "The coupes aren't rigid – I just do what looks as though it would be right." In this she is quietly supported and encouraged by the warden, Keith Moxham, who spends time clearing brambles and taking down some larger trees by chainsaw – and who has the final say.

Most of the cutting is done by hand, using a bowsaw with a 'greenwood' blade, loppers and a bill-hook; trunks are cut as close to the ground as possible, on a slant so that water drains off. The aim is to encourage growth of as many new straight shoots as possible from the margins of the stool. The hazel is coppiced on roughly a seven to ten-year cycle, Kathleen says, "But it depends where it is and how it grows back. And what you want the wood for. Here the focus is on wildlife, elsewhere it might be on the product – you'd be looking for a certain type and thickness and strength of wood."

Brash is one of the products, and this is where the link to fish conservation comes in. Emma Dyson, Projects Officer for SCRT, also works with the Coniston and Crake Catchment Partnership. The previous day she and a group of volunteers had gathered brash and tied it into bundles known as 'fascines'. These are now awaiting collection at the

