

Butterfly Conservation Nature Reserves: Features and Results

Three-quarters of the UK's 24 priority Biodiversity Action Plan ('Priority BAP') butterfly species can currently be found on BC reserves.

The conservation priority species most frequently occurring on our reserves are:

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* - on 23 reserves

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* - on 11 reserves

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae* and White Admiral *Limenitis camilla* - both on 10 reserves

Wall *Lasiommata megera* and Small Blue *Cupido minimus* - both on 9 reserves

Our 'richest' reserves for butterflies have up to 33 species recorded on them, the majority regularly breeding. This is over half the UK's total butterfly fauna. Overall our reserves have strong populations of the common species, and these can occur in very high densities. The quality of the habitats that the reserves can provide for the specialist species is a key objective for our management. However, this cannot prevent those species being adversely affected by external factors and influences.

Some of our reserves are regionally or nationally significant for their key species, as strongholds or even being the last remaining site.

The most threatened BAP species present on our reserves do not occur widely but can thrive in some localities when the habitat quality on the reserves and the extent available in the locality, is sufficient:

Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne* occurs on 4 sites

Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* occurs on 2 sites.

Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia* occurs on 2 sites



Wood White *Leptidea sinapis* is declining rapidly in most parts of Britain, even on BC reserves within large woodland settings. It is now only found on two of the four sites once occupied four years ago.



Eyarth Rocks in Denbighshire has one of the strongest populations of Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne* remaining in north Wales. Our reserve covers almost half of this limestone pavement hilltop, which is part of a larger SSSI. Careful management has made the reserve a regional stronghold for this highly threatened butterfly.



The thriving Heath Fritillary *Melitaea athalia* colony on Lydford Old Railway reserve in Devon results from a re-introduction from colonies in the lower Tamar Valley in the mid-1990s. These donor sites subsequently declined as a result of habitat deterioration but are now being strengthened by transfers of butterflies back from our reserve.



Park Corner Heath is an area of permanent open habitat within a large woodland with mostly transient open conditions elsewhere.

Park Corner Heath, East Sussex, is the core of the last known population of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene* in south-east England. The nearest are now in the New Forest and northern Hampshire. With breeding habitat reduced to c. 4ha, the species urgently needs the new areas we are starting to create on the adjoining extension – Rowland Wood.

Prees Heath Common Reserve, north Shropshire supports the only Silver-studded Blue *Plebeius argus* population remaining in the West Midlands. It had been isolated for several decades and considered a distinctive form of the species. The population strengthened under BC management from the mid-1990s, despite the reduced habitat area. Since 2006 our major heathland re-creation work aims to increase the available habitat at least tenfold.

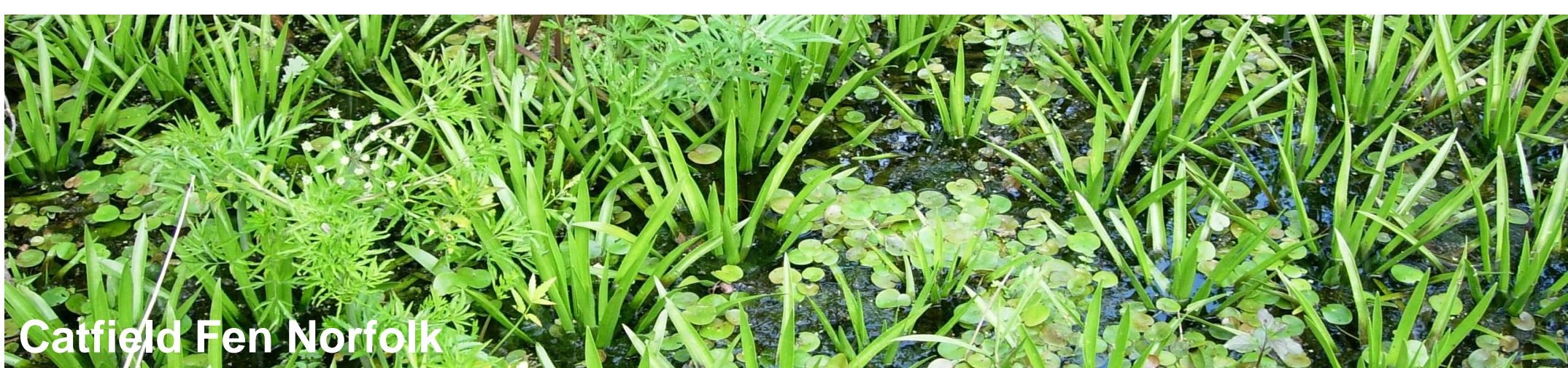


Silver-studded Blue *Plebeius argus* with attendant *Lasius niger* ants.

Some of our reserves are very popular for visitors, as they offer places to enjoy the countryside and its wildlife at their best. Guided walks and other events can be very popular. Open public use does, however, bring pressures and problems, along with a great deal of appreciation and support.



Prestbury Hill, Gloucestershire, is crossed by the Cotswold Way and is very popular for sightseeing.



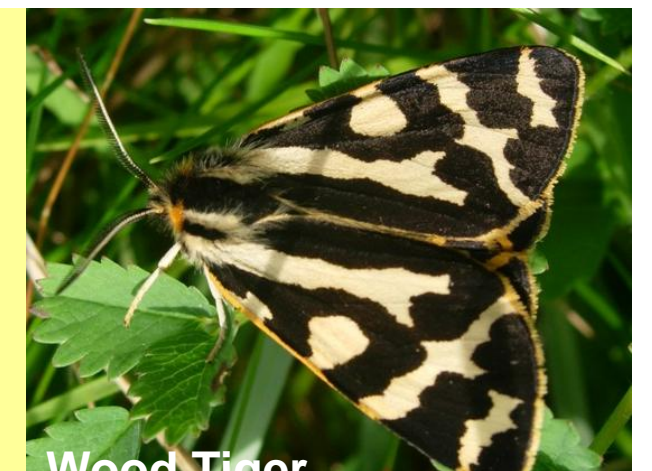
Catfield Fen Norfolk

Our reserves provide high quality habitats that support many other taxa of conservation importance. Half of the reserves have Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notifications, usually for features other than their Lepidoptera. Catfield Fen is a high quality part of The Ant Broads and Marshes SSSI, (also SAC & SPA) one of the finest unpolluted valley fen systems in Europe.



Striped Lychnis

Though we have not yet acquired any reserves specifically for moths, the presence of threatened (BAP) species helps justify all acquisitions and certainly guides habitat management. With such good habitats most of our reserves of course support large and varied moth faunas, and include significant species: Dingy Mocha *Cyclophora pendularia*, Striped Lychnis *Shargacucullia lychnitis*, Four-spotted *Tyta luctuosa*, Forester *Adscita statice* and Betony Case-bearer *Coleophora wockeella*. It is proving possible to incorporate management for these species, even when habitat needs do not coincide.



Wood Tiger

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