



Butterfly Conservation Nature Reserves: Moving Forwards

Butterfly Conservation's suite of nature reserves has grown considerably since the first were acquired 25 years ago. The size and type of site now being acquired reflects the development of our experience with this core function for our organisation. Reserves have long been a keen focus for our volunteers' efforts - the opportunity to directly save a butterfly's 'home' is a strong motivation.

Our formal reserves currently number over 30 and cover over 650ha. These sites provide high quality habitats that support many other taxa of conservation importance along with the Lepidoptera that are our primary concern. Half of the reserves have Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notifications. These cover 230ha, almost all of which is in favourable condition for the features they support, usually interests other than Lepidoptera.

Whilst reserves alone won't be able to reverse species declines, our experiences since the mid-1980s confirm the crucial role that they can play as refuges. In this role we hope they can help prevent the extinction of particular butterfly species and aid their recovery.

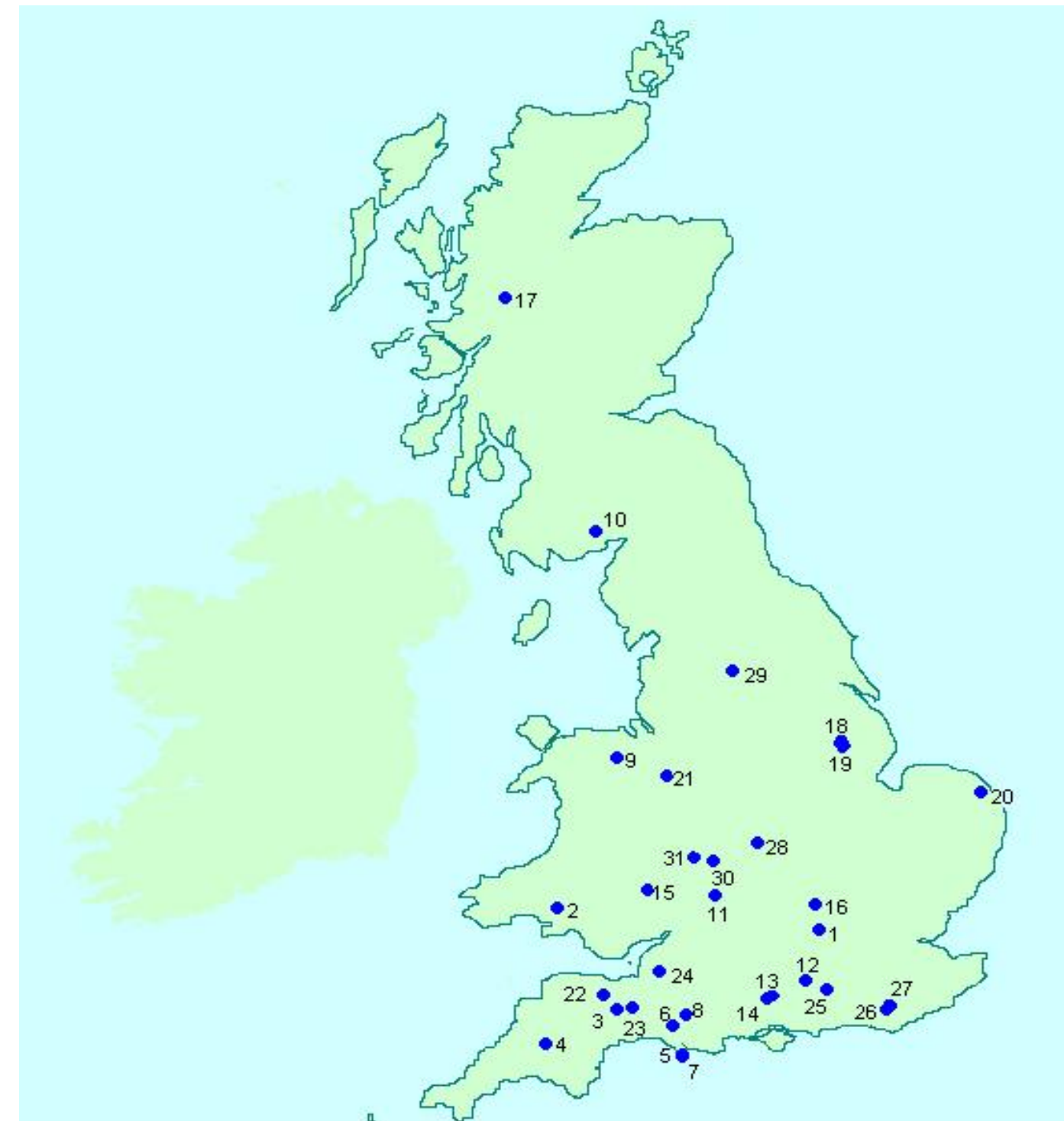
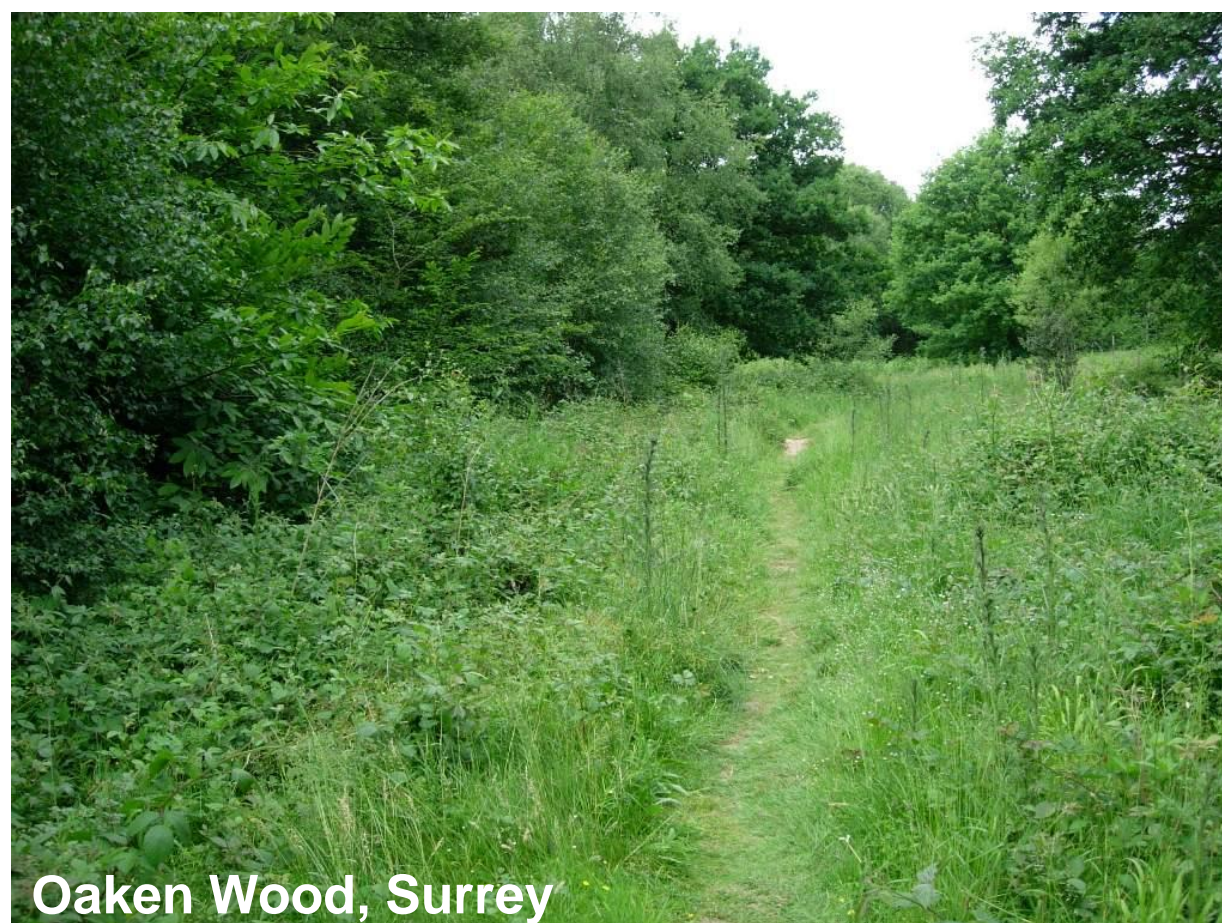
The conservation results achieved vary but include some significant successes for threatened species, such as retaining their presence in the county or region where most, or all, other populations have been lost.



Butterfly Conservation is also involved in the management of many 'partnership' reserves, working with their owners and managers (private individuals, statutory agencies and other bodies) to achieve some very satisfying results. This approach can be a very cost effective way of achieving conservation gains for key species.

These conservation successes on our formal and partnership reserves have helped emphasise the importance of landscape setting - the need for other habitat to be available in the locality.

Grassland is the most widespread habitat type across our reserve holdings – particularly calcareous types, but woodland covers a greater area. Controlling vegetation succession by scrub removal is the main maintenance task in both.



	Reserve name		
		16	Millhoppers Pasture
1	Holtspur Bottom	17	Allt Mhuic
2	Caeau Ffos Fach	18	Snakeholme Pit
3	Little Breach	19	Southrey Wood
4	Lydford Old Railway	20	Catfield Fen
5	Broadcroft Quarry	21	Prees Heath Common
6	Lankham Bottom	22	Haddon Moor
7	Perryfields Quarry	23	Mount Fancy Farm
8	Alners Gorse	24	Stoke Camp
9	Eyarth Rocks	25	Oaken Wood
10	Mabie Forest	26	Park Corner Heath
11	Prestbury Hill	27	Rowland Wood
12	Bentley Station Meadow	28	Ryton Wood Meadows
13	Magdalen Hill Down	29	Shipley Station Meadow
14	Yew Hill	30	Grafton Wood
15	Ewyas Harold Meadows	31	Monkwood



Chalkhill Blue *Polyommatus coridon* - an abundant species on Magdalen Hill Down

The costs of woodland management, to maintain a sufficient extent of the more open habitats usually needed, is considerably greater than corresponding extents of grassland and permanently open habitats, especially where these can be grazed.

On agricultural land reserves, external income from agri-environment scheme payments for managing habitat areas can generally cover or even exceed the costs of site maintenance, particularly the larger ones. This is in part thanks to the large amount of management work carried out by Butterfly Conservation and other volunteers.

Butterfly Conservation's strategy for further reserve acquisitions has been reviewed to identify our most pressing priorities and the best options for benefiting threatened species.

We aim to consolidate our existing sites to ensure the persistence of their key species. This can be by extending their coverage, or through other means that increase the extent of available habitat in the local area. The process of extending existing reserves is already underway where the need or benefit is self-evident. As is a considerable amount of 'out-reach' work to influence land management in the reserves' local settings. This vital work is often down to Butterfly Conservation's Branch volunteers whose efforts are the key means of sustaining our reserves.

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