



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

22 April 2017

Chairman's report for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

### **Introduction**

The Cornwall branch of Butterfly Conservation (CBC) exists to help butterflies and moths to flourish in the county. We achieve this through a mix of activities which include habitat improvement, species recording and public education. Established in 1993, CBC is one of 32 branches spread across the UK supported by Butterfly Conservation's head office in Dorset. In the last two years, our membership has grown from 330 to 560.

From our committee, which plans, promotes and delivers CBC's programmes, to the teams who work hard in the winter to improve habitats and the individuals who send in records over the summer, CBC relies almost entirely on voluntary labour.

The committee's work includes fund-raising which enables CBC not only to buy equipment and publish the branch newsletter, but also allows the branch to pay for professional services, as described below.


### **CBC's achievements over the last year**


#### ***Fieldtrips***




CBC ran 16 field-trips between April and October 2016, and these were attended by a total of 300+ people. These walks cover the butterfly-rich areas of Cornwall and have now been enjoyed for over 20 years. They have an educative role as well as being both sociable and enjoyable.

#### ***Species recording***

There are five different ways in which individuals help CBC to build up the all-important scientific evidence of butterfly populations in Cornwall:

 **Sightings**, often opportunistic, of butterflies that people happen to see on walks, in their gardens, etc. These are submitted to the County Recorder on-line using the species record sheet you can download from the CBC website, or email directly to the County Recorder with all relevant details.

 **Transect walking** which involves weekly monitoring of all species of butterflies at (presently) 36 sites by walking a set route, both counting and recording what is seen throughout the butterfly season. As the same areas are covered year after year it provides a very reliable indication of changes which can be compared with records elsewhere to track annual fluctuations and longer term trends in populations.

-  **Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey** based on sightings in randomly selected 1km squares in the county. Six squares have been walked – we'd like to do more, if anyone is interested in coming forward to help!
-  **Own-a-Square**, a recording scheme in which people compile records of sightings in a 10km square allocated to them, which is convenient to them to walk on a regular basis.
-  **Timed Count** – a scheme for the more experienced observer, in which records are compiled in a strictly limited time-frame.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the data compiled by these means. In 2015 alone, over 20,000 butterfly records were entered into the ERICA data base, which is a unique recording system for all species of wildlife in Cornwall, and an estimated 70,000 individual butterflies were seen by those who submitted their records. This database provides information on the state of Cornish butterflies which is used by Head Office (together with the data from other areas of Britain) to inform Government policy and contribute to the national picture in relation to species decline and the significance of butterfly population changes. Locally, our own database (ERICA) provides valuable information for a variety of organisations *via* its distribution maps of sightings over the past 30 years.

Perhaps most important of all, the data informs CBC's decisions on the priority species on which the branch should focus its conservation efforts. For the last two years, CBC has concentrated on the Marsh Fritillary and the Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterflies – two endangered species included on the national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The result of this work has been the discovery of new populations and work to support and conserve their fragile habitats.

## **Special projects**

### ***Volunteers: recruitment, training and outreach***






CBC can do nothing without our volunteers: they are the life-blood of the branch. Numbers have been building steadily over the last two years as a result of active recruitment, support and training.

The *Training and Outreach Project* was launched by CBC in 2014. Applying accumulated funds in the branch account and following Butterfly Conservation's rules on tendering, CBC designed a project for a contractor to deliver services based on volunteer recruitment and training. Jo Poland won the tender and was appointed to the role.

Through Jo's work over the last two years, we now have 180 people signed up and ready to roll up their sleeves for the benefit of Cornwall's butterflies and moths. Furthermore, Jo co-ordinates the volunteers' programme of activities and ensures their welfare through compliance with health and safety regulations on site, often involving hazardous terrain and the use of hand- and power-tools.





## ***Site management and conservation***

Investing in our volunteers has enabled CBC to undertake a range of projects sustainably.

-  New sites for the Marsh Fritillary on Bodmin Moor and on the Lizard have been identified. This involved working in partnership with other conservation organisations.
-  Two further projects followed, including surveying and undertaking conservation work to improve the habitat for the Marsh Fritillary on Mid-Cornwall Moors, and the Pearl-bordered Fritillary on Bodmin Moor. This project was funded 100% by Natural England (NE) and ran from September 2015 to March 2016.
-  There was also a short term grant funded project surveying for BAP species on identified disused mining sites in mid-Cornwall in the summer of 2015. We anticipate a second phase of this project in due course.
-  At the end of the NE funded project and, as a direct result of fund raising efforts, the initial Training and Outreach project supported by CBC was extended to December 2016 and has since involved conservation work and survey work for the Marsh and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries on Bodmin Moor and the Lizard.
-  The conservation work on Bodmin Moor has been undertaken in conjunction with the Butterfly Conservation's appointed Development Officer for the *All the Moor Butterflies Project*, initiated by Butterfly Conservation and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund from late 2016 until 2019. As well as contributing £1,000 towards the cost of the project, CBC will be responsible for continuing the work for at least ten years from the end of the project, from 2020 onwards.

## ***Promotion***

CBC communicates and promotes its work in many ways.

-  Most important is **word-of-mouth** – again we are greatly indebted to our volunteers, who act as our ambassadors in the community.
-  The CBC **website** - <http://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk/> continues to be the primary means of communication between the branch and its members, volunteers and supporters, with **social media** – Facebook and Twitter - becoming ever more important, thanks to the efforts of the volunteers who manage them.
-  We have been on **local radio** three times, showcasing the talents of Roger Hooper, our in-house broadcaster.
-  Our branch newsletter has been given a new identity as the ***Cornwall Butterfly Observer*** and a facelift through the talents of Amanda Scott, to whom we pay a small retainer as editor.

- 🦋 Shaun Poland raises public awareness with his **butterfly talks** and **moth evenings**: in the last 12 months, he has run 11 events and raised funds for the branch from sales of lepidoptera-related goods.
- 🦋 As reported in the February issue of *Cornwall Butterfly Observer* and in the national magazine, *Butterfly*, CBC has invested £1,000 in making a video of the work of CBC, entitled ***Cornwall's Butterflies: Back from the Brink***. The Falmouth-based documentary film-maker Nina Constable made the video during 2016 and it features on the home-page of the CBC website, where it was launched on 14 February 2017. It is intended to explain what the branch does and why it is important, as a means of recruiting volunteers and attracting support from potential funders.

### ***Financial planning and management***

CBC's *Business Plan 2016-2020* identifies the resources required to deliver Butterfly Conservation's key strategic priorities in Cornwall. The funds available to CBC have been given a boost through successful fund-raising (over £3000 has been raised during the year) and we have challenging fund-raising targets to meet over the plan period. A generous legacy from the estate of Roger Lane provides much-needed match-funding.

The plan priorities build on the success of projects initiated over the last two years to maintain momentum and sustain the level of activity. A key part of the *Business Plan* depends on contracting the work of a part-time Volunteer Coordinator to enable CBC to deliver projects.

- 🦋 A new contract for the appointment of **Volunteer Co-ordinator** was tendered in December 2016, which involved 30 days' paid work. The tendering process complied with Butterfly Conservation's rules and was overseen by a sub-committee of CBC. I am pleased to report that, in accordance with the sub-committee's recommendation, Jo Poland's tender was accepted and so she has been duly appointed to deliver CBC's priorities over 2017-18.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to end my report by thanking the many volunteers, members and supporters who work tirelessly throughout the year to ensure that Cornwall Butterfly Conservation remains the envy of the butterfly world in the South West of England. It is because of their hard work and commitment that our butterflies and moths stand a far better chance of beating the declines reported nationally.

And of course, our wonderful Committee, who spend so much time and effort to ensure that all runs efficiently. We are fortunate to have such a wealth of experience and competence within our Committee. Their enthusiasm and talents have taken CBC to new heights.

I am humbled by their dedication to the cause of Lepidoptera in Cornwall.

Philip Hamble