



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

28 April 2018

Chairman's report for the year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

Introduction

The Cornwall branch of Butterfly Conservation (CBC) exists to help butterflies and moths to flourish in the county. We achieve this through habitat improvement, species monitoring and recording, and public engagement. Established in 1993, CBC is one of 32 branches in the UK, supported by Butterfly Conservation's head office in Dorset. In the last two years, our membership has grown from 560 to 720.

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 the time, expertise, labour and good will of volunteers.

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 occasional professional services.

CBC's achievements over the last year

Fieldtrips

CBC ran 16 field-trips between April and October 2017, and these were attended by more than 300 people. These walks cover the butterfly-rich areas of Cornwall and have now been enjoyed for over 20 years. They are educational 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) 38 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.

The importance of the data compiled by these means cannot be overstated. In 2015 alone, over 20,000 butterfly records were entered into the ERICA database, through the Cornish Biodiversity Network, which is a unique recording system for all wildlife species in Cornwall, and about 70,000 individual butterfly sightings were submitted. Over the past 30 years, ERICA has provided information on the state and distribution of Cornish butterflies to BC Head Office (together with the data from other areas of Britain) and other organisations. This contributes to the national picture in relation to species decline and the significance of butterfly population changes, which informs policy at Government and County levels.

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 three years as a result of active recruitment, support and training. The importance of volunteers was underlined by Julie Williams, Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation, who pledged to the Committee of CBC in February, that her organisation was to be 'volunteer-led'.

Continuing CBC's *Training and Outreach Project*, launched in 2014, over the last year, Jo Poland, CBC Volunteer Co-ordinator ran 8 site visits to improve habitats for rare butterflies and 7 visits to sites to monitor, survey and record endangered species. 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.

Through Jo's work over the last three years, we now have over 300 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.
-  Following a short-term, grant-funded project surveying for BAP species on specific disused mining sites in 2015, a second phase of this project is now under way. This is funded by grants totalling just over £8,000 from the Postcode Local Trust and Cornish Mining World Heritage Site.
-  Conservation work on Bodmin Moor has continued as part of the *All the Moor Butterflies Project*, initiated by Butterfly Conservation and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund from 2017 until 2019. As well as contributing significant resources to the project, CBC will be responsible for continuing the work for at least ten years from the end of the project, from 2020-30.

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** again this year, 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 25 events and raised funds for the branch from sales of Lepidoptera-related goods.
-  As reported to last year's AGM, the branch 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 in February 2017. It explains what the branch does and why it is important, as a means of recruiting volunteers and attracting support from potential funders. This video has been commended by Head Office and has contributed to increasing our membership numbers by the highest amount of any branch in the UK for the second consecutive year.



We have allocated funds in the budget to publish a revised, updated and well-illustrated edition of *A Cornwall Butterfly Atlas*, funded in part from the Postcode Local Trust grant.

Financial planning and management

CBC's *Business Plan 2016-2021* 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.

Although our fund-raising has been very successful, and raised our current bank balance substantially, all of these funds have been allocated in our business plan for ongoing projects, many of which require match-funding. So, we need to continue fundraising to deliver committed projects over the next two years.

The priorities in the business plan 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 2017, 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 and 2018-19.

Acknowledgements

I would like to end my report by thanking the many volunteers, members and committee for their enthusiasm and dedication to our Cornish butterflies and moths. 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.

Chairman
Cornwall Butterfly Conservation