



## Greenscoombe Wood in the Tamar valley

### Site summary

Mixed heath and woodland, mainly coniferous plantation on the Cornwall side of the Tamar valley. Open glades, bordered by broadleaf, provide the habitat and main larval food-plant, Common Cow-wheat, for a breeding colony of **Heath Fritillary** *Melitaea athalia* re-introduced to the site by Butterfly Conservation in 2006 (having become locally extinct in 2002).

### Protected status

The Heath Fritillary is one of the UK's rarest butterflies and is listed in the UK Red Data Book as a vulnerable species. It is fully protected under schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act* 1981.

Greenscoombe Wood is one of only four places in the UK, where the Heath Fritillary is found. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and includes a Nature Reserve originally established by Cornwall Wildlife Trust. It is owned and managed by the Duchy of Cornwall.

### Essential information

**Owner:** Duchy of Cornwall      **Permission:** Not required      **Best time to visit:** May-June  
**Access:** On foot only, steep paths      **SatNav:** PL17 8NL  
**OS map number:** Explorer 108      **Entrance NGR:** SX 391 733 (south entrance track)

### What to look out for

Apart from Heath Fritillary, recent records include Brimstone, Silver-washed Fritillary, Green Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, dragonflies, damselflies and other insects; rare plants include flourishing populations of Butterfly Orchid (Greater and Lesser).

### Ecological setting

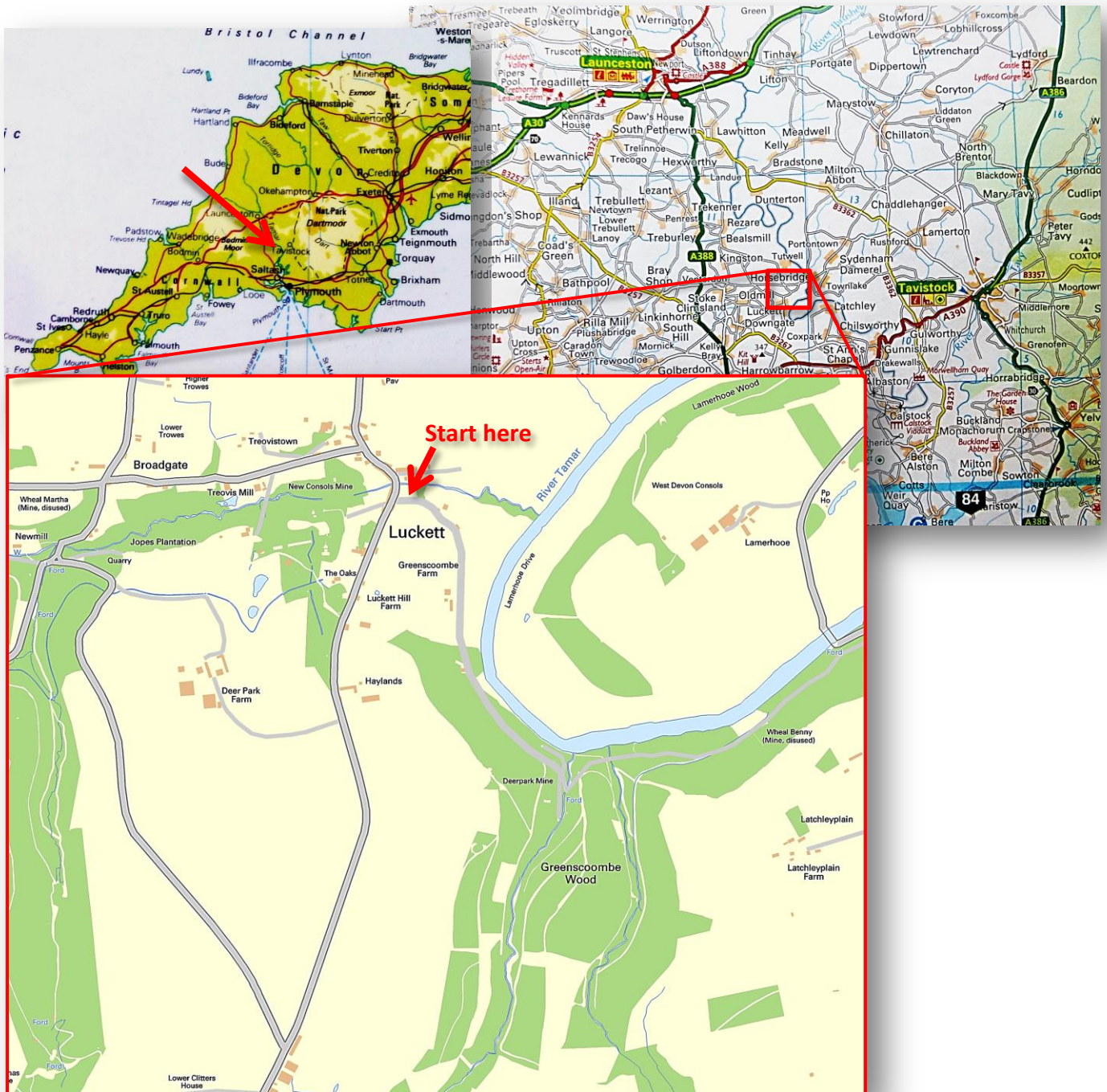
Situated on a meander of the River Tamar, the steep east-facing slopes are underlain by Upper Devonian slates. The area has a complex history of land-use going back to late mediæval times and is now under the stewardship of the Duchy of Cornwall. This includes a deer park, extensive mining for copper, tin, tungsten and arsenic (New Consols Mine re-opened briefly in the 1950s) and forestry. Recent re-planting of extensive conifer is characterised mainly by Douglas Fir and Larch. Since the mid-1980s, careful habitat management involving the Duchy, Butterfly Conservation and Cornwall Wildlife Trust has created the conditions for the Heath Fritillary to become re-established. The colony became briefly extinct, but luckily the gene pool had been secured through the creation of a 'daughter' colony at Lydford in Devon, from which the Heath Fritillary was successfully reintroduced to Greenscoombe Wood in 2006.



Heath Fritillary resting on Common Cow-wheat  
© Daniel Binfield

## Getting there

The site can be approached quite easily from the hamlet of Luccett. You can park your car in the village, near the end of the minor road that leads to the River Tamar and passes Greenscoombe Farm. Walk about half a mile along this road into the woods, continue downhill, cross a small stream and take the first track to the right, which rises steeply through the woods. At the top are the open areas where the Heath Fritillary can usually be seen in June.



## Useful links:

<http://www.cornishnature.co.uk/cornish-nature-diary/37-heath-fritillaries-at-greenscoombe-wood-luccett.html>

<http://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk/>

[http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature\\_reserves/where\\_to\\_find\\_the\\_nature\\_reserves\\_1/Luccett\\_Greenscoombe\\_Wood\\_nature\\_reserve](http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature_reserves/where_to_find_the_nature_reserves_1/Luccett_Greenscoombe_Wood_nature_reserve)

## Cornwall Butterfly Conservation

If you enjoy wildlife and would like to help it to thrive, why not introduce a friend and suggest they join Butterfly Conservation, giving automatic membership of the Cornwall branch? Just a click away on <http://butterfly-conservation.org/90/join.html>