Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Cornwall Branch e-Bulletin summer 2025

Magnificent Marsh Fritillaries on Bodmin Moor

We have started a new project this year focusing on the Marsh Fritillary populations of Bodmin Moor. This is partly in celebration of the All the Moor Butterflies project, as it is ten years since All the Moor Butterflies was conceived, and partly because we need to have a better understanding of managing the Moor for the Marsh Fritillary. As I write this, the adult flight period has started, being a bit on the early side this year; indeed, the butterfly was flying two weeks earlier than usual in Dorset.

The project involves the surveying of the adult butterfly, as well as the larval webs in as many of the sites where the species has previously been recorded as possible. We will also be undertaking an assessment of the condition of the habitat at each site, considering the abundance of Devil's-bit Scabious (the larval foodplant) and the current land management.

The work on the ground is being led by our brilliant Marsh Fritillary Species Champion, Alan Stapleton, and his band of volunteers. They will be attempting to survey as many of the sites as possible during the adult flight period, providing important information to guide the larval web surveys in the late summer/early autumn.

We are using some of the money we raised through sales of our *Butterflies of Cornwall* publication to engage an ecologist to undertake surveys of the larval webs at a number of sites, as well as assessing the condition of the habitat at the sites. We are hoping to match this sum through an application to the Farming in Protected Landscape Fund, overseen by Cornwall National Landscape team.

We have a field trip planned to Church Hay Down, one of the key Marsh Fritillary sites on 10 June 2025, as well as a volunteer survey day on 14 June 2025 at Carkeet. Please join in - see our website for further details. We will also be organising some days for searching for larval webs in the late summer/early autumn.

All this information will be used to determine the most appropriate habitat management for each site to ensure the long-term success of Marsh Fritillary on Bodmin Moor.

Sarah Board May 2025



Rainbow over Bodmin Moor (Steve Batt)



Marsh Fritillary (Steve Batt)

Jewels in the Cornwall Mining Landscape

We need your help to record butterflies for our new "Jewels in the Cornwall Mining Landscape" project. The former mining sites around Camborne, Redruth, and the Carnon Valley support a number of threatened butterfly species, including Silver-studded Blue, Grayling, Dingy Skipper, Small Heath and Wall. Cornwall Butterfly Conservation is developing a new landscape conservation project to restore and connect habitat for these species across the mining district, but to effectively target our conservation efforts we need a good understanding of where each species occurs. We would like to encourage members to visit selected mining sites this summer and to send us your records. Below is a list of mining sites which we are particularly keen to be visited between May and August (ideally, with two visits – one early (May/June) and the other late (July/August) in the season).

Dr Marcus Rhodes May 2025

Site	**Grid Reference**	**Nearest Settlement**
Dolcoath Mine	SW660403	Camborne
Carn Brea	SW680406	Pool
Wheal Francis	SW680393	Carnkie
Wheal Basset	SW690398	Carnkie
West Basset Stamps	SW688401	Carnkie
Redruth Transmitting Station	SW690394	Four Lanes
Wheal Uny	SW693408	Redruth
Wheal Buller	SW705401	Lanner
Tresavean Mine	SW719393	Lanner
Carn Marth	SW714407	Lanner
Wheal Busy	SW739446	Chacewater

Little Beside	SW736429	St Day
Poldice Mine	SW741429	St Day
United Mines Landfill	SW743411	Carharrack
Carharrack Mine	SW739420	Carharrack
Wheal Maid	SW745422	Carharrack
Wheal Fortune	SW755421	Twelveheads
Wheal Clifford	SW752415	Twelveheads
Nangiles Mine	SW763419	Twelveheads
Bissoe Arsenic Works	SW770413	Bissoe
Bissoe Nature Reserve	SW771413	Bissoe
Carnon Valley (Grenna Quarter)	SW783409	Bissoe
Carnon Valley (Viaduct Quarter)	SW786402	Carnon Downs
Carnon Valley (Devoran Quarter)	SW788397	Devoran



Silver-Studded Blue (Steve Batt)



Poldice (Steve Batt)

De Lank and Pendrift Field Trip 10th May

We were delighted to have sunny weather on this, our first field trip of the season. Andrew and I led a group of ten people with the aim of viewing and recording numbers of the threatened Pearl-bordered (PBFs) and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (SPBFs) in a corner of Bodmin Moor.
Initially, we explored the area we call the De Lank Quarry Outer Slope. Andrew and I had seen 8 PBFs on our previous visit nine days before; however, on this occasion, we were disappointed and secretly a little worried that we saw none!
Our group then moved down the slope to Pendrift. This is a large, open common characterised by grassland, bracken heath, scrub and woodland. Early in May, it had been devastated by a large wildfire. One third of the area had been destroyed. So it was with some trepidation we set off looking for the Pearls.
We need not have worried. Not five metres from the De Lank River, we saw our first Pearl-bordered Fritillary; this was quickly followed by many more.
The PBFs are the first of these two butterflies to emerge, followed by the SPBFs a few weeks later. They look very similar to each other and commonly occupy the same habitats. Spotting the difference is a challenge, especially when they fly past without settling. Using binoculars, cameras, and the naked eye, we noted what we saw.
We ended up recording an amazing total of 151 fritillaries. Later, reviewing the photos taken, we concluded half were PBFs and half were SPBFs.
It was a great day. Not only did we share identification skills and have an enjoyable time, but we were also able to see that in spite of extensive fire damage, the plants had regenerated, and these special butterflies were flourishing in this beautiful landscape.

Liz Thomas



Pendrift (Liz Thomas)



Pearl Bordered Fritillary (Liz Thomas)

Butterfly notes for June 2025

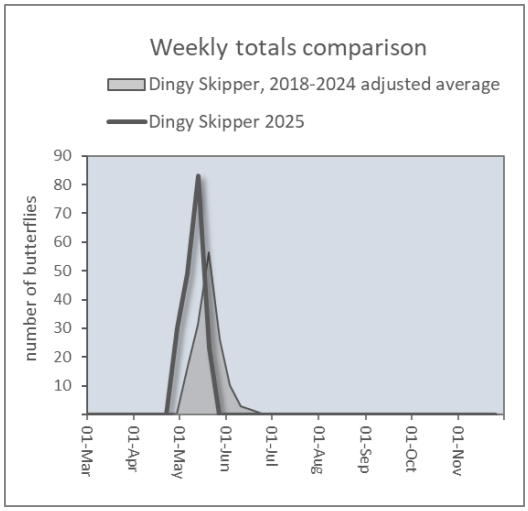
By Jerry Dennis, our county butterfly recorder

Email: records@cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk

We are coming to the end of a very dry and sunny May, although the weather has now become unsettled as we anticipate what June will bring. The sun has generally brought forward the spring broods by about a week and accelerated emergence, thereby shortening flight periods.

29 of our 37 butterfly species have now been seen on the wing – see table for details of their first emergence dates from the records I have verified. These total just over 11,000 butterflies.

This is one of those years in which it has been possible to see all four Cornish skippers in May, with the Small Skipper making a first appearance on 15th May. The numbers seen of the two early skippers, Grizzled Skipper and Dingy Skipper, were both higher than average.

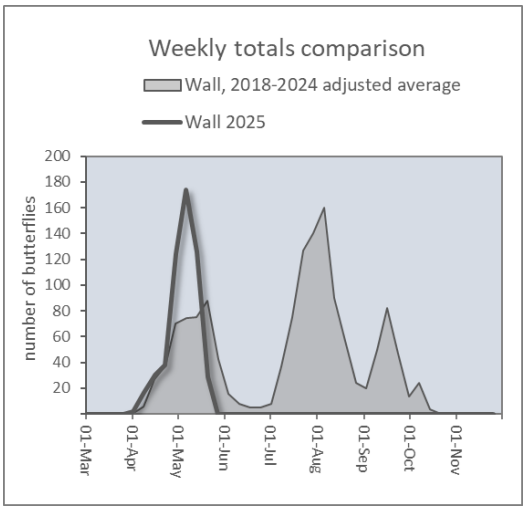


Species	First record	Total to date
Painted Lady	12-Jan	528
Small Tortoiseshell	14-Jan	124
Peacock	14-Jan	656
Comma	14-Jan	98
Red Admiral	15-Jan	737
Speckled Wood	27-Feb	2,143
Brimstone	28-Feb	129
Holly Blue	13-Mar	167
Small White	15-Mar	776
Green-veined White	16-Mar	406
Orange-tip	16-Mar	915
Large White	22-Mar	745
Small Copper	30-Mar	166
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	04-Apr	510
Wall	07-Apr	541
Common Blue	11-Apr	675
Brown Argus	16-Apr	188
Green Hairstreak	27-Apr	141
Grizzled Skipper	28-Apr	129
Dingy Skipper	29-Apr	185
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	30-Apr	537
Small Heath	06-May	163
Marsh Fritillary	06-May	48
Large Skipper	09-May	93
Meadow Brown	15-May	21
Silver-studded Blue	15-May	42
Small Skipper	15-May	9
Clouded Yellow	17-May	1
Heath Fritillary	19-May	201

The effects of the spring weather on this year's Dingy Skipper population can be seen on the plot above, with earlier and accelerated emergence and with nearly double the average numbers. Thanks to all who sent in their records and thanks to Tristram Besterman for his superb photo taken on 4th May at Gear Sands, Perranporth.



Two multivoltine species have had strong first broods. The Wall (see plot) had more than double the usual abundance and it will be interesting to see what happens with its second brood in July/August. The Brown Argus (top photo) also had great first brood numbers this year.





The last time we had a significant influx of Painted Lady butterflies (middle photo) was back in 2019 and this year has had the best spring numbers since then. Let's hope that we enjoy good numbers of this amazing traveller during the summer months. Here's one I saw at Porthgwarra early in May.



Species with low abundance this spring are first broods of Holly Blue and Small Copper and the number of awakening Small Tortoiseshells. All of these species had poor success in 2024 and may be struggling to recover numbers within one generation. Let's hope the summer numbers are much better.

In June be on the lookout for the iconic Silver-studded Blue that is now flying. Numbers will increase through June to peak around the end of the month. The best places to see them are on the Hayle Towans, particularly Upton Towans, and Gear Sands near Perranporth. I took this photo (lower) of a very fresh male at Cudden Point on 22nd May and its wings were not fully dried and inflated.



The Marbled White will also appear in June and it's always worth a trip to see this colourful species. Please let me know if you need more details as to where to see it near you.

The Dark Green and Silver-washed fritillaries will also be flying later in June and again, let me know if you need more details as to where to see these big, beautiful and fast-flying species.

Jerry Dennis, 29th May 2025

Georgie's last outing



It seemed fitting that the ancient cross of St Piran was the setting for Georgie Paul's final field trip, as CBC's Volunteer Co-ordinator. The patron saint of Cornwall (and of tin mining) gave her his petrified blessing on 4 May this year, with a small group of volunteers who had turned out to survey for Grizzled and Dingy Skipper. Typical of her passionate commitment to the environment and the group, Georgie organised this last hurrah unpaid, simply because she cared: cared about her work, about biodiversity and about the people she worked with.



Despite the chill wind, the sun brought out a good tally of butterflies to meet us, including the target species. As the reader may know, the only location in Cornwall where the Grizzled Skipper breeds is on the Penhale dune system. With Georgie's encouragement, the group notched up 16 individual sightings of this rare species. Accompanying Georgie on this field trip,

I realised that it was nearly three years to the day since she led, with some seasoned support, her first field trip with CBC. On that occasion, on 10 May 2022, it was to survey for Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Pendrift Bottom, near De Lank Quarry. Apart from the butterflies, an abiding memory was of our new recruit celebrating on a tree swing slung from the gnarled branch of an oak nearby!



In the three years that Georgie has been with the Cornwall Branch, she has organised and managed many field trips for volunteers, clearing scrub and surveying for some of our rarest and most endangered species. When we recruited her, Georgie was working for a small book printing company in Padstow. She soon proved a quick learner and able organiser, with a ready smile and a sunny disposition that won the loyalty of our wonderful, hard-working band of volunteers.

Georgie's own loyalty to our cause was never more in evidence than on her epic walk of 288 miles along the Cornwall coast path in 2022, to raise over £1,500 for the Branch. Unlike the *Salt Path*, Georgie's companion was her dog, Squirrel, adorned with butterfly wings for the duration of the walk. It was noticeable that Squirrel's stamina was not what it used to be, as we made our way back to our cars at the end of the Gear Sands survey, submitting to the indignity of being carried in the arms of her mistress. But she wore her wings with pride!



On behalf of the Cornwall Branch, it only remains for me to thank Georgie for all that she has done for CBC and to wish her all the very best for her new life in North Wales, where she has landed a full-time job for Butterfly Conservation. I know that she will be a success there and is learning to speak Welsh in preparation for her move. I'm sure that her Cornish experience will stand Georgie in good stead for mastering a new language, identifying new species of butterfly and working with independent-minded people!

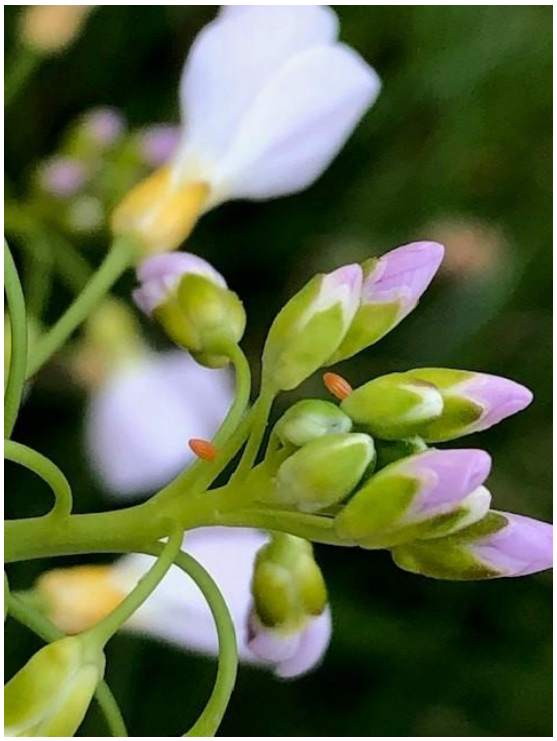
So, Georgie, goodbye and good luck, or as they say where you're going, *hwyl fawr a phob lwc!*

Tristram Besterman 2nd June 2025 (all photos in the article by Tristram Besterman)

Georgie's departure obviously leaves us with a huge void to fill and thus would love to find a volunteer to fill some of her shoes. We need someone who could help by attending school, college and university career days. If that's you please contact Sue Allen susanallen1953@yahoo.co.uk

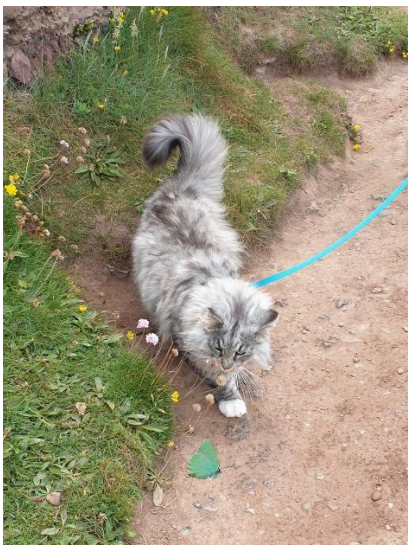
From Scott Martin of Buglife:

I counted 27 Green Hairstreak on Kit Hill on Friday, and I have had Orange-tips lay eggs on Cuckoo flower in my lawn and I've been following progress, the caterpillars are developing nicely.





The rarest sighting on our field trips so far this year was at Chapel Porth……



(Sue Allen adapted by Steve B)



(Steve Batt)

A Norwegian Forest Cat and despite the rain we did see Green Hairstreak but maybe not as in the picture!

Your committee wants to keep you posted on what we're doing for butterflies and moths and for you in Cornwall. You will receive the e-Bulletin in addition to the twice-yearly *Cornwall Butterfly Observer*, which you receive in spring and autumn.