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Cornwall Butterfly Observer



ALL THE MOOR BUTTERFLIES

Find out all about the project's successes, thanks to volunteers and the local community, in its final year (page 6)

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

If you've ever wondered why the name *fritillary* is used for both butterflies and flowers, then discover the results of Tristram Besterman's detective work (page 12)

A LEPIDOPTERA MEADOW

Volunteer Steve Batt's garden is full of Lepidoptera and other wildlife after he created a meadow (page 20)

Butterfly Conservation
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Cornwall Branch
www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk

Photos:

Front cover: Painted Lady (Steve Batt)
Back cover: Silver-washed Fritillary (Jim Cooper)
This page: A view from the bridge - field trip to De Lank Quarry in May (Tristram Besterman)



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Chairman's report

Cornwall Butterfly Conservation (CBC) was first constituted in 1993 as a branch of the national charity Butterfly Conservation. Its early years were mainly concerned with recording and monitoring existing Lepidoptera populations and small-scale habitat improvement work. Recording our butterflies and moths was, and of course still is, an extremely important aspect of CBC's work. However, since its establishment the branch has faced numerous challenges in its commitment to protect and save our Cornish Lepidoptera. Unforeseen events have arisen over this period with particular regard to habitat and management, including ongoing changes to our climate and the increasing use of toxic chemicals on our farmland and open spaces, to name but a few.



Peacock on Bramble (photo: Philip Hambly)

In response to this, in the last four years or so, the branch has gained an enviable reputation within Butterfly Conservation for its enthusiasm, innovation and positivity in transforming our work and habitat management procedures, taking the branch to new heights. An increase in our membership numbers to around 800 serves to illuminate our success. Working with partners, including Natural England, the Wildlife Trust, National Trust and Butterfly Conservation Head Office, we have exponentially increased efforts in habitat management, bringing about a huge increase in the number of new sites containing some of our rarest butterfly species.

So, what has been the main driver behind this new-found success? Quite simply, the appointment of a contracted Volunteer Coordinator. Although this appointment requires the branch to raise additional monies to fund the Coordinator's work, this is repaid in spades by the results arising from this

initiative. Cornwall was originally the only branch within Butterfly Conservation to boast such a scheme, but it is now being taken forward by other branches throughout the country. With so many volunteers coming forward to offer their services, it is imperative to adopt a professional and safe environment that complies fully with Butterfly Conservation's comprehensive Health and Safety requirements. This could not happen without the organisational abilities and duties of a competent supervisor. Yes, this might seem onerous and over-the-top to some, but, if any thing were to go wrong…. And, it goes without saying, none of this would be possible without the magnificent volunteers that choose to work with us. They also reap the satisfaction of knowing that it is being carried out in an orderly and professional manner. Proper job, then!



Hardworking CBC volunteers scrub bashing at De Lank Quarry (photo: Malcolm Pinch)

We are also in the throes of producing a new version of the Cornwall Butterfly Atlas, which requires us to raise considerable funds as we approach publication. We have successfully taken advantage of numerous fund-raising schemes in the last few years, but need to keep up the momentum for the foreseeable future in order to fund ongoing and new ventures. We will shortly be asking our membership if they would consider sponsoring the new Atlas, or supporting the project by pre-ordering a copy. Please help if you can. Full details of our project, and how you might help will appear shortly on the CBC website. We have a sub-committee tasked with delivering this project, and they have already given many hours of their time and resources to ensure we produce a book that you will all be proud to own.

With best wishes to you all

Philip Hambly
CBC Chairman

All the Moor Butterflies

Simon Phelps, Megan Lowe and Jo Poland report on the continued success of this project, now in its final year

The *All the Moor Butterflies* project has had another excellent year in 2019. Species have been surveyed, habitat improved, and communities engaged with the wonderful butterflies and moths found on Bodmin Moor. As this article is written near to the end of the project, it gives us an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved over the past three years.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (photo: Tristram Besterman)

One of the main focuses has been to start up a monitoring programme for each of the target species for Bodmin Moor: Marsh Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth. The work that has been done on this has delivered some interesting results. Over the course of the three years of the project, each of the seven annually occupied Pearl-bordered Fritillary sites have been surveyed each year using the timed count method. This has helped us to begin to understand how the species is doing at each site and to monitor any impacts from our habitat management work (more on that later). We have found that over the course of the three years the Pearl-bordered Fritillary has remained stable on Bodmin Moor, which is positive to see, particularly as this is a species that has declined nationally.

Our work on the Marsh Fritillary has taken two different formats: surveying for new sites and monitoring known sites. The past three years have been very exciting ones for this species on Bodmin Moor. Over the course of the project, we have discovered 18 new sites for the Marsh Fritillary, 15 of which are completely new and three of which are rediscoveries on sites with historical records.

We currently know of 38 sites for the species on Bodmin Moor, making it one of the most important landscapes in England for this threatened and rare species. Volunteers have played a key role in this process, discovering many of the new sites, some of which have proven to hold significant numbers of Marsh Fritillary, with one site containing 90 larval webs in 2018. Our monitoring work has also started to uncover the 'boom and bust' population cycle that this species is known for, with one site rising from 14 larval webs in 2017 to 76 in 2018. Our knowledge of the Marsh Fritillary on Bodmin Moor has been transformed through *All the Moor Butterflies*, and we hope that more discoveries await us in the future.

We have, sadly, had slightly less success with surveying for our final two target species. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary have proved to be a tricky species for us to dedicate surveys to, due to limited time and clashes with the flight periods of our other priority species. We have gathered some data about their distribution on Bodmin Moor, but there are still gaps in our knowledge that need more focus in the future. We have carried out surveys for the Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth each year of the project, but despite the habitat looking suitable and the volunteers' best efforts, we have yet to confirm their presence. This elusive moth was last seen on Bodmin Moor in 2008. Are they still here?! We will just have to keep looking…

One thing all of our surveys have helped us do is identify priorities for habitat management work. On Bodmin Moor, the majority of this has been targeted at the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Through capital works carried out by contractors and habitat management done by volunteers, we have improved and maintained suitable breeding habitat on five sites for Pearl-bordered Fritillary. This has focused on clearing encroaching scrub to maintain the open conditions that the butterfly requires. It is quite early to say whether this has had an impact on the numbers being recorded, but early signs are that numbers are starting to rise on sites where we have carried out management work. Volunteers have also carried out some brilliant work on a historic Marsh Fritillary site, which has enabled recolonisation of the site.

"Our knowledge of the Marsh Fritillary on Bodmin Moor has been transformed"

As already mentioned, a lot of this work would not be possible without volunteers or the support of local communities, for which we are very grateful. We are lucky to have a great team of volunteers in Cornwall, and have been very fortunate that the community in and around St Breward, a hotspot for the three fritillary species, has been extremely welcoming and supportive. Over the past three years we have worked with various individuals and groups here, including the local primary school, a community garden in Bodmin, and students from Cornwall College and Falmouth University.

The village has also been the home of our public 'Butterfly Festival' event for the past two years, engaging a wider audience and enthusing them with butterflies and moths.

All the Moor Butterflies has also inspired action in the village, with passionate landowners and volunteers coming together to form the new St Breward Wildlife and Conservation Group. The group are helping local landowners manage their land for wildlife as well as providing opportunities for like-minded people to get involved (find them on Facebook: St Breward Wildlife and Conservation Group). With their help and your continued support as members of CBC, we are confident that fritillaries will continue to thrive in this important area of Bodmin Moor.

The project is due to finish at the end of March 2020. As one of our final events, we are hosting a conference at the University of Exeter on the 26th of November. It is titled *Conservation in the South-West uplands: challenges and solutions*. You can book a place to attend the conference by visiting the webpage: www.butterfly-conservation.org/conservation-in-the-south-west-conference. There are opportunities to volunteer with the project this winter. See the Cornwall Butterfly Conservation website for more details: http://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk/vols.html.

Membership news

Branch Membership Secretary Kathy Wood updates us on how the branch communicates with members, the latest membership figures, and an idea for selling Lepidoptera-friendly plants at our next AGM



Members enjoying a field trip at De Lank Quarry (photo: Tristram Besterman)

Since the General Data Protection Regulations came into force in May 2018, I have been using the Dotmailer system via Head Office to send bulk emails to members (as personal email provider accounts are too easy to hack). While this is obviously important for data security, it does mean that branch emails now look similar to the bulk emails from Head Office, though I do always make sure that Cornwall appears in the subject line. If you want to be sure of receiving emails from the Cornwall Branch and avoid them going into your junk mail folder, please make sure you have: (1) given me your current email address;

(2) opted into receiving emails about the subjects in which you are interested (there is an option to click on your preferred topics at the end of every Dotmailer email); and (3) included the address butterfly.conservation@cmp.dotmailer.co.uk into your contacts. Please do not send emails to that address: if you have any questions, please contact me on my email address (see page 22).

You may remember that the annual membership statistics published in November 2016 and 2017 showed that Cornwall Branch had the highest percentage increase in membership of all the 31 branches nationally. While this did not continue in 2018 and 2019, Cornwall Branch membership is still increasing, albeit slowly, which is still a positive result.

At the time of writing (early September), the Cornwall Branch consists of 549 households (792 individuals). Please take every opportunity to publicise Butterfly Conservation and Cornwall Butterfly Conservation to anyone who might be interested, and encourage them to join. The more members we have, the more we can do for butterflies and moths. Why not show your copy of Cornwall Butterfly Observer and Butterfly to fellow nature lovers? I'm sure they will be interested, and impressed by both the quality of the magazines and the amount of conservation work being done.

Some committee members and volunteers decided, rather at the last minute, to have a stall selling Lepidoptera-friendly plants (nectar producers and caterpillar food plants) at the 2019 annual general meeting. Many thanks to Steve Batt, Jen Bousfield, and anyone else who donated or bought plants. The stall made £35, including proceeds from some left-over plants kindly sold by Jen at another event the next day, so it was well worth it. We have decided to repeat this in 2020, but this time we hope to make it even bigger and better by telling everyone about it in advance! So, if you will be raising plants next spring, please raise some extras for CBC and bring them along to the AGM in April.



A Small Copper on Vetch, one of the many Lepidoptera-friendly plants you could grow in a wildlife garden (photo: Philip Hambly)

Meet our volunteers

Over the next few issues of the Butterfly Observer we are going to introduce you to a few of our regular volunteers, without whom we could do nothing and be nothing! Our first interview is with Cerin Poland, who is 24 years old and is currently studying at university

Hi Cerin! Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I have always had a strong interest in wildlife and the countryside in general. This was brought about by my parents, who brought me up to look closely at nature. I think I knew more butterfly species when I was seven than when I was seventeen! When I left school, I did an apprenticeship and subsequently qualified as an Agricultural Engineer in 2013. I worked in that industry for a number of years and enjoyed it, but then decided that I wanted a change of career. My new path was to study for a foundation degree in Conservation and Ecology, and I am just beginning my second year at Cornwall College in Newquay, which is part of Plymouth University.

When did you first begin volunteering with Cornwall Butterfly Conservation and how often do you volunteer?

I started volunteering with CBC in 2014. I now volunteer as much as I can around my university course hours. Last year I gave over 25 days of my time to volunteering.

What inspired you to get involved?

My parents are both regular volunteers for CBC. My Mum is also the Volunteer Coordinator for the Cornwall Branch and she convinced me to come out and see what it was all about. I couldn't believe the variety of things the branch gets involved in!

What does your volunteering entail?

It really varies, which I enjoy a lot. I have done lots of habitat management all over Cornwall for rare species. I do recording and monitoring on CBC search days and I also independently explore places and look for things as a lone recorder. I help with fundraising and publicity, engaging with the public at different events and raising money for the branch. I run the branch Twitter page and also assist with the branch Facebook page.

In 2017, I took on a role as Cornwall Species Champion for the Grizzled Skipper, my favourite butterfly. I have got a lot of satisfaction learning more about its ecology and how to find it. It is quite an under-recorded butterfly on the one area in Cornwall (Penhale) that it is found, and through my observations I have discovered it in many new locations. I have recorded the butterfly using five different larval food plants which will hopefully aid its conservation on the Penhale site. I have also enjoyed helping with training courses about my species, and feel that I have taught many other fellow volunteers useful things.



Cerin Poland (left, with Simon Phelps of Butterfly Conservation) finding the Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth (photo: Megan Lowe)

"Volunteering has helped me interact with people of all ages and from all walks of life, with the extra bonus that I get to learn lots from them, too!"

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

What I most enjoy is the positive effect that getting outside and experiencing nature has on my mental health. Volunteering has helped me interact with people of all ages and from all walks of life, with the extra bonus that I get to learn lots from them, too! I get a buzz finding things that others miss: I was nick-named Radar when I was a child because I seem to possess the ability to do this!

What was your best moment as a volunteer with CBC?

My best moment came this year when I found the rare Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth in Cornwall. This species has been absent for over 10 years in the county and was thought to be extinct. *All the Moor Butterflies* included it in their recent project and I attended volunteer training run by them last year on how to find the moth, and then again, this year on the 27th June. The very day after the training, the 28th June, I found a lone

caterpillar of the species on Goss Moor! I just couldn't believe it, it felt completely surreal! According to records, it has not been seen on Goss Moor for over 50 years.

What was your worst moment?

Having the constant feeling that conservation organisations and the government are not working together in Cornwall. Although I know that CBC are doing their best on this, I feel there is still a very long way to go.

So you would encourage others to get involved in volunteering with CBC?

Yes, definitely. You can do just one event per year or much more. It's up to you. I feel that whatever time or effort we put in is truly appreciated by CBC.

And lastly, what advice would you give to someone starting to volunteer?

Expect the unexpected! We always find something amazing when we go out as a team.

Find out more: If you are inspired by Cerin, and are interested in volunteering for us, in any aspect of our work, Jo Poland, our Volunteer Coordinator, would love to hear from you. You can contact her at jogreenp@gmail.com. Our website is always kept up to date with exciting opportunities and they can be found at http://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk/vols.html.

What's in a name?

Tristram Besterman explores the chequered history of the fritillary

Embedded in the language that we use to describe the natural world are clues to a past that can be surprising. Just as DNA reveals the course of biological evolution, words contain fragments of cultural history.

The name *fritillary* intrigued me: it is easy to see that the flower and the butterfly share a distinctive pattern of alternating dark and pale patches. It turns out that both are the victims of mistaken identity. Fritillary is, in fact, based on a mistranslation from Latin four centuries ago.

My quest began when I discovered that *fritillus*, the Latin word from which the name fritillary is derived, means a 'dice-box'. The problem is that I could find no evidence of a dice-box from Roman times – or any other time, for that matter – that was decorated with a pattern that could explain why it was chosen to describe the fritillary, plant or insect.



A cylindrical dice-box made of metal, with dice. Roman period





Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* on bramble in Cabilla Wood (photo: Tristram Besterman), and Snake's-head Fritillary (photo: Magnus Hagdorn [CC BY-SA 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0)])

Solving the puzzle took me to sixteenth century France where the Latin word *fritillus* was first given to a plant, wrongly translated as the board upon which the game of chequers was played. (Plants, because of their medicinal and other useful properties, have been the subject of study for thousands of years. This accumulated knowledge appeared in books, known as herbals. By contrast, butterflies – which produce no silk, honey or even chutney – have been studied systematically only since the eighteenth century.)

The original culprit was a French apothecary, Noël Capperon, who found the plant in 1570 growing wild in meadows of the Loire valley. The following year, he wrote to Carolus Clusius, an eminent physician and botanist in the Netherlands, with a description and specimen of the plant, and the claim that 'local people' called it Fritillaria, because it resembled a chequers board. The only problem with Capperon's explanation is that *fritillus* never has meant any such thing: it is Latin for a dice-box. Plain and simple.

Capperon also corresponded with a Flemish physician and botanist, Rembert Dodoens, who, in 1576, published the first description of the plant using the name, Fritillaria. His herbal, translated two years later into English, contained the entry, "*Flos Meleagris*… some do also cal this flower *Fritillaria"*. This book, *A new herbal, or historie of plants,* became a standard work, renowned worldwide and in his time the most translated book after the Bible.

And so, the misnomer entered the literature and spread. Once the wrong name stuck to the plant, three centuries later it was also applied to a group of nymphalid butterflies,



Rembert Dodoens, who first published the name Fritillaria. Engraved by Theodore de Bry, 1669

because of their similarly distinctive pattern. And that, O my best Beloved (in the tradition of Kipling's *Just So Stories*) is how a flower and some butterflies were named after a plain old dice-box, which had no spots.

Etymology – rather like entomology, let's face it – is not everyone's cup of tea. So, does any of this matter? After all, the point of a name like Silver-washed Fritillary is that if I tell a fellow enthusiast in the UK that I have seen one, we both know what I'm referring to. One limitation of common names is that they don't migrate between languages. Our Silver-washed frit is *Tabac d'Espagne* in French and *Kaisermantel* in German, respectively 'Spanish tobacco' and 'Emperor's coat': expressions, perhaps, of more poetic cultures.

However, the real science resides in the Latin binomial, a system of nomenclature invented by Carl Linnaeus, in the eighteenth century. Whatever your native tongue, *Argynnis paphia* (named in 1758 by Linnaeus) is uniquely identified internationally.

To answer my own question, yes, I think it does matter - at least in the sense of our understanding of a name. Words matter, and in their origin lies their meaning. Mistakes, once dignified by publication, have an annoying habit of being repeated unquestioned, down the centuries. On its website, Kew gives the following entry for Snake's-head Fritillary:

> "*Fritillaria meleagris* was named by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in 1753. The generic name *Fritillaria* comes from the Latin word *fritillus*, meaning dice box (which were formerly chequered), in reference to the chequered markings on the flowers."

Dear old Carl was busy classifying the natural world, so can be forgiven for perpetuating the misnomer. But the Royal Botanic Gardens should know better: those dice-boxes never were chequered!

That said, it would be absurd to suggest that the name, fritillary, is 'wrong' and should be replaced by a word based on the correct Latin *latrunculi* for a chequered draught board. Silver-washed Latruncular is

a lumbering, earth-bound alternative to the fluttering, airborne fritillary. Despite the original mistranslation, custom and practice over the centuries validate the name. Language is a living thing that evolves, absorbs and shapes new words, discards those that fall out of use, and makes and breaks rules as it goes. Quite like Darwinian evolution.

I am greatly indebted to my friend and distinguished scholar, Oliver Padel, for sharing a lifetime's linguistic knowledge, access to his reference library and for his advice, all of which were indispensable to teasing out the tangled threads of this story.

Recording

Read on for updates on butterfly and moth recording, and the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey

Butterfly report 2018

Dick Goodere, County Butterfly Recorder, reports results from 2018

2018 was an amazing year for butterflies! It seems a long time ago now, but it was not until this summer that I managed to collate all the records…which just kept coming! The hot weather meant that not only many more butterflies were flying, but also encouraged a large number of people who previously had not been out recording to send in their results to me, or to enter the Big Butterfly Count (BBC) for the first time. As a result, 700 new recorders produced nearly double the number of records for the BBC.

Well over 34,000 records were entered on the ERICA database, with nearly 137,000 butterflies counted in 2018. This compares with 21,000 records and just over 65,000 butterflies seen in the previous year. These records were either sent directly to me or came from Butterfly Conservation, and include the BBC, Migrant Watch and iRecord app records. In addition, transect records compiled by the transect coordinators make up a third of the total.

The numbers were also swelled by the work of 20 volunteers who did a fantastic job visiting 37 mining sites throughout Cornwall as part of the CBC *Mining for Butterflies Project*. 1873 butterflies were counted and 29 species recorded, including six high priority species.

Three unusual sightings should be noted: Brown Hairstreak at Marsland Reserve, White-letter Hairstreak at Antony House (Torpoint) and a confirmed Essex Skipper at Breney. One wonders if there are more of these latter butterflies in Cornwall which are not being correctly identified. There were a few records sent that were a bit more questionable. These include a Camberwell Beauty and more Swallowtail caterpillars, with the latter possibly being progeny of the European Swallowtail. They were genuine sightings but their origin unknown! In 2019, we have had another White-letter Hairstreak sighting at Downgate, which was



Large Tortoiseshell on Buddleia (photo: Chris Webster)

excellent news, and several Large Tortoiseshell reports, most backed up by photographs and from well-respected recorders. Large Tortoiseshells have been seen in other parts of the country this year, so we are hoping that these are genuine migrants rather than captive bred specimens, which just confuse the picture.

Of the 36 species that are seen regularly in Cornwall, 29 species had improved in records from the previous year, while five had gone down and two had remained similar. Of the 29 'improved' species, an amazing 16 recorded their best year of the last decade. The 'downs' mirror information analysed from the transects, with the exception of the Small Skipper which, according to my data, did better than in the previous year. The butterflies which experienced a down-turn were Marbled White, Red Admiral, Peacock, Holly Blue and Clouded Yellow.

Marsh Fritillary and Silver-studded Blues made particularly huge gains, as did Common Blues. The long spell of warm weather may have been a contributing factor for sightings of Marsh Fritillary and their webs, but the brilliant statistics were also a tribute to the fantastic work of the All the Moor Butterfly Project on Bodmin Moor, together with increased monitoring on The Lizard and at Breney Common.

Grassland species did well on the whole, with Meadow Brown recording the highest numbers of all species, rising from approximately 12,000 in 2017 to over 20,000 in 2018. The main exception to all this good news was the Marbled White, which showed a continuing decline since 2015.

Once again, I would like to extend my thanks to absolutely everyone who sends records to me. A particular thanks goes to a small band of dedicated recorders who send me superb records throughout the year! Please keep this up if you possibly can. It provides such important information.

Moth report, autumn 2019

Leon Truscott, County Moth Recorder, brings us his latest report

So far, in terms of numbers, 2019 hasn't been an exceptional year for moths. Despite a few periods of southerly winds, no large-scale immigration has been reported. There were spells of easterly/ southeasterly winds, which appear to have produced some of the more interesting species, several of which are new to Cornwall. Records for the following have been received (as at the end of August).

Ectoedemia decentella: One trapped by Tony Wilson (TW) at Callestick on 26 June is new to Cornwall. *Lampronia luzella*: Nationally scarce. One found by day at Narkurs by John Nicholls (JCN) is the eighth Cornish record. *Zelleria oleastrella*: The first British record was in 2006 on St Mary's IOS by Mick Scott, who has recorded it there several times since. 2019 produced the first two Cornish mainland records in the same week: on 28 June at Newquay by John Cook (JC) and 2 July at Torpoint by Alan Pease (AP). *Oecophora bractella*: A spectacular moth and new to Cornwall. One was trapped by Phil Boggis at the *Friends of Kilminorth Wood* moth event on 12 July.

Thiodia citrana: Although regularly recorded from Scilly, it is very scarce and local on the Cornish mainland. Marilyn Edyvean (ME) recorded two at Trevose Head on 10 July: the sixth mainland record and the first since 1993. *Eucosma conterminana*: New to Cornwall. George Davis (GD) trapped one at Maenporth on 3 August. *Gypsonoma oppressana*: Nationally scarce and another species new to Cornwall. One was recorded at Torpoint on 28 June (AP). *Pammene ignorata*: One confirmed as this species was recorded on 30 May at Callestick by TW. New to Cornwall, but TW suspects it has occurred at Callestick before.

Acrobasis tumidana has been recorded from Scilly (Mick Scott in 2005) and Lizard (Mark Tunmore in 2006). One recorded at St Blazey on 10 July (ME) is the only record since then. *Acrobasis marmorea*: One came to light at Downderry on 14 July (JCN), only the sixth for Cornwall. *Pediasia aridella*: One trapped at Maenporth by GD is the second for Cornwall, the previous record being from nearby Mawnan Smith in 1976.



Oecophora bractella (photo: Phil Boggis)

Bright Wave *Idaea ochrata*: A nationally rare (RDB1) species trapped at Saltash on 28 June by Ian Turner is actually the third Cornish record, following one from St Mary's, IOS in 2006 and one from Sennen Cove in 2008. Pauper Pug *Eupithecia egenaria*: One came to light at Zelah on 21 April (Shaun Poland), only the second Cornish record, following one at Pentillie Castle in 2003.

Crimson Speckled *Utetheisa pulchella*: Mike Spicer found and photographed this scarce migrant at Higher Bosistow on 18 February. The date is easily the earliest for Cornwall, the previous being 11 June. Most British records are from the autumn. The overall flight period is usually given as March to November, with British records as early as May, so this February record is exceptional! Levant Blackneck *Tathorhynchus exsiccata*: One recorded at Gwinear on 23 February by Scott Barron is only the fifth for Cornwall and the first since 2011.

Saxon *Hyppa rectilinea*: New to Cornwall. One was recorded at light at Maenporth on 2 August by GD. The Suspected *Parastichtis suspecta*: New to Cornwall. One at Maenporth on 28 June recorded by GD was followed by one at Newlyn Downs on 6 July by JC. Blossom Underwing *Orthosia miniosa*: One recorded by GD at Maenporth on 1 April is the fourteenth record for Cornwall and only the fourth this century.

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey

WCBS Branch Champion, Kelly Uren, explains how you could get involved

Butterfly Conservation is looking for volunteers in Cornwall to gather data for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS). No experience is needed, just an interest in butterflies and a willingness to gather some valuable data. This survey provides a fantastic introduction to butterfly recording and assists with the honing of identification skills.

The WCBS is a national survey, now in its 11th season. It was established in 2009 to help improve data being gathered relating to butterfly populations across the countryside as a whole. Butterfly sightings

contribute to both local and national records helping Butterfly Conservation monitor the state of the country's butterflies.

To date, over 800 1-km squares have been randomly allocated across the UK by Butterfly Conservation; these require monitoring during the peak butterfly flight season. A total of 25 squares are located in Cornwall, but currently less than 50% of these are being monitored. We have a dedicated band of volunteers who are currently monitoring squares for us, for which we are incredibly grateful, but we are in need of some more. **This is where we need you!**

Last year (2018) our WCBS volunteers recorded 697 butterflies of 21 species. Speckled Wood was the most widespread species observed in all of the squares monitored, followed by Green-veined White (found in 90% of squares sampled), Small White (80%) and Red Admiral (80%). Brimstone and Silver-washed Fritillary were the least widespread, being recorded in only one of the sampled squares.

This survey is an important monitoring tool as it tackles the observational bias that can be introduced by only counting butterflies in habitats known to be rich in Lepidoptera. As the squares have been randomly allocated they could literally be anywhere, encompassing a whole range of landscapes and environments; natural or man-made. The importance of monitoring urban



Speckled Wood: the most widespread butterfly in WCBS squares in 2018 (photo: Amanda Scott)

butterfly populations has never been more crucial, as it is within these areas that data is more limited relating to how butterfly populations are faring.

What is involved? The minimum level of survey required is two visits during July and August. However, many recorders also carry out additional visits during May and June, to help increase the opportunity of observing as many butterfly species as possible.

Would you be interested in helping us gather data from one of our vacant squares? Once you have chosen a square, you are free to decide upon a route through it, which will then remain fixed for each visit, and then you are ready to go...

We currently have vacancies for the following squares (see page 20; contact Kelly on ktherese@hotmail.co.uk).

HURRY! Squares up for grabs-1	
Map ref.	**Location**
SW6130	Carleen, Godolphin Cross, Helston
SW7725	Gillan Creek, Manaccan
SW9358	Gaverigan Manor, St Dennis
SX2760	Horningtops, Menheniot Station

Creating a wildflower meadow

Steve Batt has created a wildlife haven in his garden, and encourages you to do the same

From a young age I've always had an interest in wildflowers. My mother was a very good botanist: she actually mapped two square miles of Warwickshire for the book *The Flora and Fauna of Warwickshire* produced in the early 1960s, so the family were dragged out most weekends to document every species present within her patch. I remember she had a reference book which allocated star ratings for rarity to plants, with three stars indicating the rarest; naturally, I mostly found those with no stars! If I did find something rare, I would get a telling off for picking it – still a family joke with my two brothers!

Fast forward about 40 years and, when I retired, I started volunteering on wildlife reserves for various organisations. I started off with two days a week, but this soon turned into five or more! I became heavily involved in management plans for nature reserves, and spent many a long day seeding and plug planting.

When we moved to Cornwall a couple of years ago, our garden was a neglected jungle, and the 'lawn' was never going to be one of those neat jobs with grass and stripes. I therefore decided to go the wildflower meadow route. I started by gently noting what was there, ordered some seeds to get things going from a reputable supplier, moved on to plugs, and then things took off. Having scoured many a garden centre and found various suitable plants, I can say it is amazing what you can find if you look. A word of warning about a slight issue which I will need to control: I ordered Bird's-foot Trefoil seeds but it is now evident they were in fact *Greater* Bird's-foot Trefoil, still lovely but a little large at present!

Creating the wildlife garden has in reality now become a hobby, and I recently enhanced the variety of species by ordering 120 plug plants so I could cover a wider area. The 'meadow' now has over 60 species of wildflower present – see the list below, which excludes grasses, only because I never was any good at their ID. I did have a very pleasant surprise this year when a Southern Marsh Orchid sprang up: I wish I could claim the credit for its appearance!

People tell me I only do it so I don't have to cut the lawn, as it only needs an annual cut and a bit of trimming in between, although I still cut a path



A meadow is a relaxing place for humans, as well as great for insects and other wildlife (photo: Steve Batt)

round the outside. But I have an area buzzing in the sunshine with a huge variety of insects. Even the Song Thrush nips in to collect the snails.

Why not have a go for yourself? It is great for the environment and I get loads of pleasure growing the seeds and plugs on to fruition, and enjoy garden colour from February through to November. If you'd like some ideas or help as to where to obtain seeds, plugs or plants, then I'd be delighted to help (contact me at battsmail@gmail.com). The likes of Emorsgate, Naturescape and Premier Seeds Direct are all very helpful, but there are many more besides.

See page 22 for some plant ideas.



The Southern Marsh Orchid in Steve's garden (photo: Steve Batt)

Steve's meadow species list (to give you some ideas):

Agrimony, Common
Bedstraw, Lady's
Betony
Bird's-foot Trefoil
Bird's-foot Trefoil, Greater
Bittercress Sp.
Burnett, Greater
Burnett, Salad
Buttercup, Creeping
Campion, Bladder
Campion, Red
Carrot, Wild
Cat's-ear, Common
Celandine 'Brazen Hussy'
Celandine, Lesser
Cornflower
Cowslip
Cranesbill, Hedgerow
Cranesbill, Meadow
Creeping Thistle
Daisy, Common
Dandelion – various species
Eyebright
Flax
Fleabane
Fritillaria
Fritillary, Snake's Head
Hawkbit family, various
Hawkbit, Rough
Hop, Trefoil
Ivy, Ground
Knapweed, Black
Knapweed, Common
Knapweed, Greater
Mallow, Musk
Mouse-ear, Common
Orchid Southern, Marsh
Oxeye Daisy
Oxlip
Plantain, Ribwort
Prickly Lettuce
Primrose
Ragwort
Rattle, Yellow
Robin, Ragged
Saxifrage, Burnet
Scabious, Devil's-bit
Scabious, Field
Selfheal
Sneezewort
Speedwell, Germander
St John's Wort, Perforate
St John's Wort, Square-stalked
Strawberry, Wild
Toadflax
Vetch, Common
Vetch, Kidney
Violet, Common Dog
Willow Herb, Rosebay
Willowherb, American
Yarrow

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Just a minute!

Could you take notes at a meeting, email them to committee members, support a Chair and help protect wildlife in Cornwall?

Then don't hesitate: our butterflies need YOU. Cornwall Butterfly Conservation is looking for a Branch Secretary.

If you are well-organised, have basic keyboard skills, a laptop, an email address, connection to the internet, and some time to spare for voluntary work, then this could be the role for you.

In return, we can offer the satisfaction of helping wildlife conservation in Cornwall, support from an enthusiastic team, a lot of fun and some tea and cake! Knowledge of butterflies is not required.

To find out more without commitment, please contact **Philip Hambly** on **01503 220385** or **philip@lethytep.co.uk.**

Thank you!

