Butterfly Conservation
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

# Cornwall Branch e-Bulletin: Summer 2026

After a damp and windy start to the year the Field Trip Season has started and butterflies have been emerging! People around the county have reported large numbers of Painted Ladies. Did you vote for your favourite butterfly? As this goes to press the Peacock was winning! Coming up at the end of July is the Big Butterfly Count. Watch out for details from Head Office and don't forget you can record butterflies at any time of year using an app or sending details to records@cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk

## Pendrift Field Trip - 10th May 2026

Nine of us gathered at the entrance to De Lank Quarry at midday under warm, sunny skies—an excellent omen for a butterfly outing. Unfortunately, two would-be attendees were thwarted by the perils of postcode navigation (a gentle plug here for What3Words, which proved far more reliable!). We were grateful to the owners of nearby Eddystone Court for kindly allowing us to use their parking space—much appreciated.

Following a brief health and safety chat and a discussion of target species, we set off toward the outer slope of De Lank Quarry. It didn't take long for excitement to build: a Pearl-bordered fritillary (PBF) appeared in the small meadow below the path, quickly followed by another… and another. By the time we'd finished counting, we had recorded seven individuals—a very respectable total for this site.



We paused to admire the new wildlife corridor linking De Lank to Pendrift, looking particularly splendid in the early afternoon sun, before crossing the bridge into Pendrift itself. Here, we were immediately greeted by more PBFs, along with a couple of Brimstones circling freshly leafing alder buckthorn.



As we ventured further in, the numbers of fritillaries steadily increased, culminating in an impressive total of 70 by the end of the afternoon. Careful checking of photographs also allowed us to distinguish several Small Pearl-bordered fritillaries—always a satisfying confirmation. The soundtrack to our walk was equally rewarding, with a fine chorus of warblers and the unmistakable call of a cuckoo echoing across the valley.

As the wind picked up on our return, we took a few reflective moments beside the River De Lank before heading back—a fitting end to a thoroughly enjoyable and successful afternoon.

Andrew and Liz Thomas

# Butterfly Field Trip, 12th May - Penhale MOD

This was our first Butterfly field trip and we joined a large group of enthusiasts at Penhale MOD reserve on a fairly cool windy day. The group included those new to butterfly spotting, (like my sister and I) and some who are experts in botany and wildlife. We discovered that the particular butterflies which it was hoped we would see - the Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper and Brown Argus, are tiny little butterflies which were hard to spot even when just about on top of them! Luckily, because of the cool weather, they kindly stayed still for us to observe and take photographs.



Grizzled Skipper



Dingy Skipper

The group were also fascinated to see a grass snake, slow worms and ants nests underneath sheets of metal which had been placed at strategic points.



Common Lizard

After lunch, sunshine on a sheltered bank attracted Small Copper and Common Blue butterflies alongside lots more Brown Argus.



Browm Argus

We thoroughly enjoyed the day, and as Cornwall Wildlife Trust volunteers who assist with habitat management at Penhale under the instruction of the CWT Ranger, it was good to be able to relax, observe and appreciate the environment and the wildlife within it. It is always good to meet with like-minded people and learn from those who have amazing knowledge they are keen to share.

A. White
(Photographs by Gill Fisher)

*We have a few different field trips this year, in August we are off to Gunwalloe and Lundy Bay. Check our website [www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk](www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk) and see if you can spot the difference!*

# Dingy Skipper (Erynnis tages)

# By Liberty Bosisto



Photo: Bob Bosisto

The Dingy Skipper, is it a moth or a butterfly? They look like moths, fly like moths but they are in fact butterflies. Spanning about 29mm with ' dingy ' brown colourings these little butterflies are easy to miss and often overlooked as plain and uninteresting compared to many of our bigger and brighter species. The sexes look very similar with the female being generally larger with bolder markings and the male having a greasy fold on their upper wing called a costal fold. They often get confused with two moth species called the Burnet Companion Moth (Euclidia glyphica) and the Mother Shipton Moth (Callistege mi). They look similar, emerge at the same time and live in the same habitat. The adults emerge late April through to June and sometimes in very hot summers a small second emergence can occur in late July and into August.

Dingy Skipper butterflies are the only UK butterfly that fly in an erratic moth like way and tuck their wings in at rest.

Their habitat needs are very specific, sunny bare patches of ground with tall patches of

vegetative matter nearby for them to rest, hide and breed in are needed. The caterpillars require a Trefoil species to feed on, and the pupa is often spun into a protective pouch in tall grass or amongst its food plant. This is why the clay pits of Imerys Cornwall are so important for them, providing everything these little butterflies need. With the large expanses of bare ground and suitable substrates for their host plants Dingys can thrive. With new areas being mined for Kaolin frequently, new areas are continually created for Dingy Skippers with the plants required for them colonising the bare ground quickly. When an area gets too tall or unsuitable with the clay mining works constantly uncovering new areas the Dingy Skippers are able to move close by and colonise newer patches of ground within the same local areas. According to the Butterfly red list of Great Britain 2010 (1) the Dingy Skipper has declined by as much as 26% in the last decade , this is mostly thought to be because of loss of habitat mainly due to scrub encroachment.



Bird’s-foot Trefoil – Caterpillar food plant, also showing encroaching scrub.

A species champion is someone who represents a butterfly species that’s at risk of decline or poorly understood, devoting their free time to helping promote the understanding of the species, their behaviour and how they can help to increase their numbers. Another important role is recording their numbers and hopefully discovering new sites where they inhabit.

My role as a species champion started in 2023 when I moved to a village called Foxhole in the Cornwall Clay district. I've always loved butterflies and once out on a walk near Nanpean

on an Imery's permissive footpath I came across what I thought was a moth on a bare patch of ground. When I researched this butterfly, I was taken back that in fact it was a very special butterfly that thrives in that specific environment. I was amazed that I had never heard about the Dingy Skipper butterfly before. As time went on, I found more in the area, mostly on the Imery's Cornwall permissive footpaths. After recording all my finds to the Cornwall butterfly county recorder I was asked if I wanted to become the species champion for them. What makes Dingy Skippers butterflies special to me is their unusual low darting flight , their special habitat requirements and just how uncommon they are within Cornwall with only 213 records in 2025.

Imery's Cornwall now has 38 miles of permissive footpaths in Cornwall (2) with the most recent path opening officially at Dubbers Restoration site on 22nd Apr 2026 (3). With this amazing expanse of Dingy Skipper habitat to explore, I invite you to go and explore these paths and if you are lucky you may see one of these wonderful butterflies yourself.

References:


- 1. Species Status No. 12: The Butterfly Red List for Great Britain **PDF** 340.2 KB SpeciesStatus-12-Butterfly-WEB-2010.pdf
- 2. imerys.com/public/2026-01/Imerys_Permissive_Paths_and_the_Clay_Trails_Digital_leaflet.pdf
- 3. Restored mid Cornwall China clay pit 'handed back to nature' - BBC News


# Wildlife on Banknotes

Your chance to vote for your favourite to appear on our banknotes in the future. Need to vote by 3rd July 2026. I see the Marsh Fritillary has made the short list, and of course this would get our vote 😊 – link below

https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/banknotes/help-us-design-our-next-series-of-banknotes

# 2027 Butterfly Calendar

This year we have designed and printed a Cornwall Butterfly Conservation calendar for 2027. This features some beautiful Cornish butterflies and moths, with photos kindly donated by members - they are stunning! Please support us in our fundraising efforts by purchasing a calendar for yourself and all of your friends!

Calendars will be available to buy on Field trips and local CBC events throughout the year, and cost £10. They will also be available on eBay- just search Cornwall Butterfly Conservation calendar.

We hope a CBC calendar will become a regular feature in the coming years.



# We would love you to get more involved

We have a few vacancies on our committee if anyone feels they have a few hours to volunteer. Enthusiasm is the main requirement but if you have the skills to help with admin (mainly learning how to use our volunteer portal Assemble) or feel you could be our treasurer you would be most welcome. Training will be given.

'Fancy being literally at the cutting edge of our habitat management? We are looking for new volunteers to train on the use of a Stihl Brushcutter to facilitate an essential part of our winter work. Full training will be given, and an external course will be paid for by CBC to ensure you get official accreditation. If interested, please let us know as soon as possible by contacting Mac McLeod secretary@cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk'




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.