



Cornwall Branch e-Bulletin: winter 2023

Award Winner

Congratulations to Sue Allen, who leads the Landscape goal for CBC, on receiving the ‘Wildlife Champion’ award from Cornwall Wildlife Trust. The award was given in acknowledgement of the work she does as a conservation volunteer in the Wild Allet and Dynamic Dunes groups, for bringing CWT and CBC groups together to work at Penhale and Church Hay and sending CWT records from Windmill Farm, Breney Common, and more!

Sue has been volunteering for CWT since April 2016. “It is through them that I have developed my passion and knowledge of the environment and become a volunteer and then committee member with CBC.” she says”. “Part of the reason I got an award is because I have instigated occasions where CBC volunteers have worked with my CWT volunteer group Wild Allet. One was on 8th February this year when we worked on Penhale Dunes, an MOD site managed by CWT. It is the only site for Grizzled Skipper in Cornwall, and we were clearing scrub to allow more space for its larval foodplant. More recently we conducted a Marsh Fritillary larval web search on Breney Common, part of CWT Helman Tor complex and vital mid Cornwall site.”



Field Trips

We are just finalising Field Trips for 2024. Dates and venues will be announced in the Spring edition of the Cornwall Butterfly Observer and further details will be available on the CBC website: <https://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk/events.html>

Butterfly Conservation Wild Spaces

An opportunity to make a real difference. It is fun, free and easy to make your contribution count. I won't write an epistle here as all the details you need are on Butterfly Conservations own website on this link:

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/create-wild-spaces>



But a quick taster of your opportunities and some we've experienced already. The idea is that you register your 'Wild Space' - it doesn't have to be huge, it might be a balcony, a patio, a small garden, a large garden, a community space, a school, or something much larger.

To date we have been able to advise and encourage a variety of people and organisations to register their Wild Space.

- A small garden where advice was given on what to plant, not just wildflowers but a variety of whips.
- A Town Council with amazing amounts of green space. Again, seeding and plug planting, as well as some new hedgerows.
- A University campus again with so much opportunity for the future, will start with small steps and as funds and opportunity allow diversify still further.
- A farmer who was already working as an organic site, with new opportunities to add to the fantastic work he has done already. And establish a transect to monitor future trends.
- And a local Women's Institute to use small areas of their gardens to start with and advice on what to plant.

Just a flavour of what has happened so far. Butterfly Conservation want to create 100,000 Wild Spaces by 2026 – your patch will help, so register today on the link above. Lots of help, advice, and guidance on the website.

You don't have to be as mad as me, but my Wild Space gets bigger each year, and the residents love it 😊 (Steve Batt)



Habitat Conservation Work

Church Hay Down. 22nd October.



Our Volunteer Coordinator, Georgie Paul led our first habitat management work party this autumn which was enjoyed on 22 October on Church Hay Down. This is one of several breeding sites for Marsh Fritillary butterfly in the St Breward Area and the aim was to improve connectivity between this site and another one on the other side of a peat bog by removing gorse and brambles by brush cutting, clearing and burning on a drier part of the site. This also opened up an additional area to be grazed by a small group of cattle which are less welcome down in the village than they are up on the Down. After a

long morning of work, we were treated to a delicious and invigorating Pumpkin and Ginger soup, which helped to warm us up. And to end the day, we enjoyed some baked potatoes around the bonfire that we created to dispose of the arisings.

Thanks to every one of our volunteers and also to the landowner and to the Hamatethy Commoners for supporting our work. (Alan Stapleton)

De Lank outer slope. 18th November.

Despite the weather forecast warning us of rain, we were fortunate enough to have a dry day. We spent the day restoring paths and creating new ones to reveal and encourage violets, which are the only plant that the larvae of the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary like to feed on. We also removed saplings and scrub that shaded out good habitat, being careful not to remove too much shelter that the larvae need to stay warm when developing. After a long day of work, we felt pleased with what we had achieved and grateful for the good weather.



North Fellover. 25th November.



Dog Violet

Our volunteers have been working on an important area that sits between separate populations of the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Our aim was to improve the habitat so as to link up the two populations and thereby hopefully increase the chances of their survival. We cleared scrub and overhanging branches and restored and created paths to reveal violets and create open areas for seeds to land and develop. We also planted a good number of violet plugs to encourage the butterflies to visit. Despite the challenging work, we were fortunate to have a good day with welcome visits from a low sun.

We have accomplished a lot, but there is still much more to do. The amount of work we can do is only limited by the number of helping hands

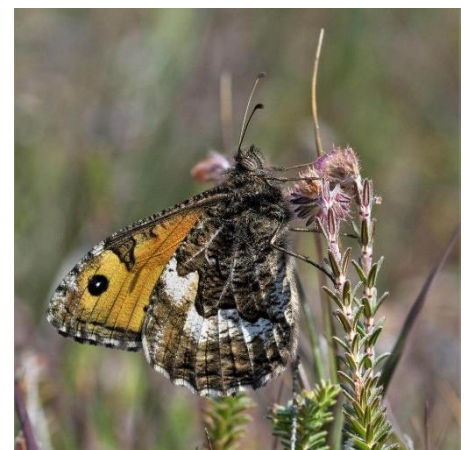
we can call on. We would be delighted to have you join our valiant band and help us make a difference. If you would like to help out, contact: gpaul@butterfly-conservation.org

Butterflies of our mining landscape

We have some very exciting news about our Landscape scale project on the Cornish Mining World Heritage Sites (CMWHS). Following on from surveys in 2015 and 2018 we are putting together plans to improve 2 sites for our target species, which are Silver-studded Blue, Dingy Skipper, Grayling, Wall, Small Heath and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Working with the CMWHS team at Cornwall Council and Cormac, who manage these sites, we have got permission to remove invasive species from Poldice to extend and improve an area used by Silver-studded Blues. We are also going to create diversity of age in an area of mature, leggy heather by brush cutting and scraping. We hope this will improve habitat for Silver-studded Blue by encouraging the ants *Lasius niger* on which they depend.

At West Basset Stamps we are extending an area for Dingy Skipper, which were recorded here this year. We are going to improve an area of heath by removing invasive gorse and cotoneaster. We will also be working to remove vegetation from “one of the finest surviving nineteenth century tin dressing floors in the world” where Wall butterflies have been recorded.



Grayling

Working with the Mining Villages Regeneration Group we also hope to encourage local people to join our work parties. Our first volunteer days will be on 5th and 13th December at Poldice, and anyone who's interested in joining us should contact Georgie Paul, our Volunteer Coordinator gpaul@butterfly-conservation.org

(Sue Allen)

Practical Conservation work coming soon

We have conservation work coming up at several sites in the next few months. Check the website for more information.

Poldice - December 5th and December 13th. Work will include cutting and removal of gorse, willow, buddleia, cotoneaster and other invasive scrub.

De Lank inner track (date to be confirmed) removing scrub, cutting and raking to reveal violets and create bare patches to encourage seed dispersal and growth.

West Bassett Stamps (date to be confirmed)- Cutting and removal of gorse, willow, buddleia, cotoneaster and other invasive plants, clearing encroaching scrub to increase the area of Bird's-foot Trefoil - food plant of the Dingy Skipper larvae.

Planting for Butterflies

This can of course be on any scale – the larger the better, but for most of us the opportunity is our own Wild Space. I started 6 years ago when I moved into our current house and have had 21 different species of butterfly in the garden this year. Best tip is to look and see what grows well locally and then source your seeds or plug plants, plenty of reputable firms on the internet like Emorsgate or Naturescape but there are lots more. Just a reminder you can't collect seeds from Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) without express consent from Natural England.



Orange Tip on Mullein

If you know what butterflies frequent your garden or are found locally, you can easily find out their caterpillar food plants and their nectar sources from a butterfly book, or of course on a website for example:

<https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/foodplants.php>

Always good to go for the obvious and easy ones to start with like:

- Birdsfoot Trefoil
- Oxeye Daisy
- Common Dog Violet
- Common Knapweed
- Scabious varieties
- Buddleia



Common Blue on Birdsfoot Trefoil

Amazing what else uses these as well as butterflies, I get a great variety of spiders, birds love the seeds, grasshoppers, beetles and even a stick insect among all sorts.

Remember wildflowers like nutrient poor soil to thrive, so a seeding of 'The Meadow Maker' Yellow Rattle (*Rhianthus Minor*) will get the grasses under control, needs a frost to germinate but the freezer works too!

If you are inspired then contact me direct and I will happily explore what can be done, rather than write copious notes here.

(battsmail@gmail.com) (Steve Batt)

Volunteer Survey

The number of volunteers joining us for surveys and work parties has been fluctuating greatly since we were able to get back in the field after Covid. Whilst we have heard this is a recurring theme for all voluntary sector organisations, we decided to conduct a short survey to find out if anything in particular is causing this fluctuation. Thankfully, the results did not point to any major issues but here is the breakdown of the results:

- *Q1 What types of volunteering activities do you enjoy? (in order of highest to lowest popularity) - Flight surveys; Habitat Management; Marsh Fritillary larval web surveys; Public engagement and fundraising events.*
- *Q2 What motivated you to become a CBC volunteer? (in order of most common answers) – Love of nature; Interest in helping and monitoring butterflies; Nature/biodiversity crisis; To learn more; Socialising with like-minded people; Practical conservation work; Something to do in retirement.*
- *Q3 What do you enjoy most about volunteering for CBC? (in order of most common answers) – The social aspect; Good fun helping butterflies; Improving butterfly populations; Visiting parts of Cornwall I wouldn't normally see; Seeing beautiful places; Recording butterflies; Improving habitats.*
- *Q4 What challenges, if any, have you encountered while volunteering for CBC? (in order of most common answers) – Time; Difficult terrain; Distance to travel; Dog can't be left alone all day; Public transport is difficult; Long day.*
- *Q5 Are there any specific skills or expertise that volunteering has helped you develop? (in order of most common answers) – Butterfly ID skills, preferred habitats, and life cycles; Communication; Plant identification.*
- *Q6 The most frequent reason why you don't attend volunteering opportunities for CBC? (in order of highest to lowest popularity) – Lack of time/Other commitments; The activity is too physical/Health issues; Not enough notice about the day; Too much notice/Forget to book.*

As we strive to offer an excellent volunteer experience for everyone, we have discussed the results with the committee and have decided to change a couple of things where we can, to help improve the experience.

- Dogs can now be brought to some volunteering activities if you ask permission in advance. This is dependent on the site allowing dogs and if the landowner also gives permission. Dogs must always be kept on the lead and under close control, you will be asked to leave if these rules are not followed.
 - Next year, our volunteer coordinator will aim to send you the dates for volunteering opportunities 3-6 months in advance, dependent on permissions. We will also send out a reminder 2 weeks before each event for those that prefer planning closer to the time.
 - For those that do not drive, we would like to remind you that we are more than happy to arrange car share collections from a train station or bus stop on route so you can still attend any event. Public transport tickets can also be claimed back as a travel expense like fuel costs can.
 - We would like to remind all volunteers that you are welcome to leave as early as you like if a long day does not suit you for any reason. We greatly appreciate any amount of time you can volunteer with us.
- (Georgie Paul)

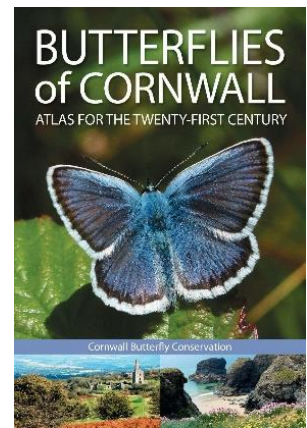
The perfect Xmas gift

Give your nature-loving friend the ideal holiday gift – Butterflies of Cornwall: Atlas for the Twenty-first Century.

This book is a treasure trove of valuable information that not only brings joy to your loved ones but also contributes to the conservation of Cornwall's diverse nature. By purchasing this book, you are directly supporting Cornwall's biodiversity as all profits from the sale go towards our conservation efforts.

It's a meaningful gift that lets you enjoy giving and do your part in preserving our natural heritage – a win-win situation!

Order your copy online at: <https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/295137982796>.



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.