Urban Butterflies

Urban areas can provide very valuable havens for wildlife, including butterflies. Over the next three years our new Urban Butterfly Project will stage dozens of workshops to show people across Central Scotland how to identify and record butterflies.

This project will build on ‘Biodiversity in Glasgow’ (BiG), which ran in 2007 and 2008, in which newly-trained volunteers recorded the butterflies of greenspaces across the city. These areas (mostly parks, but also cemeteries and playing fields) varied greatly, some having no butterflies at all, while others had up to a dozen species. The new project aims to discover more about how butterflies use urban greenspaces, and, for those with few species because of poor habitat, we will work with land managers to improve them, for example through wildflower planting.

Some of our most active and enthusiastic volunteers joined us through the BiG project, and we hope that we will recruit more volunteers this time, with the help of our South West and East Scotland Branches, who are also generously supporting the project, along with the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage.

This year’s training events will be mostly in Glasgow, Fife, Stirling and Falkirk, with a focus in 2017 on Edinburgh. If you are keen to come along and learn or to help out, please get in touch with Anthony McCluskey via the Stirling office.
The Bog Squad continued on its quest to restore peatland habitats during 2015 with volunteers helping to improve the prospects of ten different bogs, from the Central Belt all the way up to Glen Affric.

We cleared nine hectares of dense scrub and installed over 60 ditch-blocking dams during the year. These measures help to re-wet the peaty habitats enabling plants, especially *Sphagnum* species and Hare’s-tail Cottongrass, the larval foodplant of the Large Heath.

The Central Belt peatlands provide a very important habitat for declining butterfly species such as the Large Heath, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Green Hairstreak, and moths such as Wood Tiger, Lunar Hornet and Argent & Sable.

The Bog Squad also recorded the wildlife on the project sites. The most exciting sighting in 2015 was of three Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moths on a bog in Lanarkshire, a very rare moth in central Scotland.

For more about the Bog Squad’s work go to [bogsquad.weebly](bogsquad.weebly). The Bog Squad was funded by Scottish Natural Heritage-led Peatland Action programme, charitable trusts, and donations from our Butterfly Conservation Branches.

Sadly the Peatland Action Programme, the Scottish Government initiative which funded the Bog Squad has come to an end. We are very grateful for the chance to get involved in a whole range of wonderful peatlands, and are particularly grateful to all the volunteers who took part.
Wester Moss – now a wetter moss!

Much work has gone on at our reserve near Stirling over the last 12 months. As well as the regular activities - volunteer workparties installing more dams across old drainage ditches, water table monitoring and scrub control on the open bog, some more substantial work was carried out.

A 500m long peat ‘bund’ was constructed in the driest part of the bog, an area badly damaged by past peat-cutting and fires. The bund will reduce the rate at which water leaves the Moss, keeping the water table high to benefit the bog flora and fauna. The very skilful contractors left hardly a sign they had been on site with a seven tonne JCB! In addition, another 0.5 hectare of scrub was removed to create more open bog.

Our work at Wester Moss is supported by Stirling Council Ranger Service, the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative, Ecoco LIFE, The Conservation Volunteers, and donations from Butterfly Conservation members.

AMAZING PEAT FACTS:

- Wester Moss has stored an extra 15.9 million litres of water between Oct and Dec, equal to 6 Olympic sized swimming pools
- That’s over 50% of all rainfall on the bog in that time
- Open bog at Wester Moss contains at least 87,000 tons of carbon
- That’s enough carbon to drive a small car to the moon and back 710 times!
Emergency action for one of our rarest moths

Despite its name the New Forest Burnet is now restricted the UK to just a single, very remote two hectare site on the west coast of Scotland.

Recent conservation effort has focused on reducing the grazing, particularly by sheep, which had been eliminating the caterpillar foodplant, Meadow Vetchling, bringing this Red Data Book moth perilously close to extinction. The installation of a fence in the 1990s, followed by a better fence a few years later resulted in a dramatic increase in the moth population from a low of possibly less than 20 adults, to over 10,000 in 2012 and 2013!

However, two major landslips during the winter of 2014/5 ripped through three sections of the fence, allowing access for up to 40 sheep. Alerted by locals to the situation, Tom Prescott co-ordinated a band of hardy volunteers for two weekend work parties to chase out the sheep and make temporary repairs to the fence - no mean feat given the long walk in over very steep and rugged terrain.

We are now working with the estate to develop a long term solution to secure the future of one of the UK’s rarest species.
On a monitoring mission

Our project that aims to assess how Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Chequered Skipper are faring on the National Forest Estate continues to deliver excellent data, despite the challenging weather:

Using volunteers, and contractors for remote and difficult sites, these two vulnerable species are monitored annually by a combination of single species transects, multi-species transects and timed counts. Five years of good data are needed to produce reliable population trends and 2016 will be the fifth year of the project.

The great bonus of the work will be that later this year we should be able to produce an accurate UK trend for the Chequered Skipper for the first time. We are very grateful to Dr Kenny Kortland (Forestry Commission Scotland Species Ecologist) for supporting this work, and securing the five years of funding for this exciting project.
**The Lynx effect**

We have been working with scientists at Canterbury Christ Church University in Kent to develop effective pheromone lures to aid survey and monitoring of some of our rarest day-flying moths, including Slender Scotch and Mountain Burnet, Forester and Kentish Glory.

The first stage is to identify the chemical composition of the natural pheromones, the second being to manufacture similar compounds in the lab and the third to test different blends in the field.

The lures themselves consist of small rubber bungs impregnated with different blends of synthetic pheromone, and testing involves dangling the lures in suitable habitat and weather, from a “washing-line”. Assessment of the effectiveness of different blends is by counting the number of attractions to each blend by male moths over a set time period. Last year this process identified an effective lure for the Forester moth. Please contact Tom Prescott if you would like to help with the Forester surveys.
Great news that Tom Prescott, our Senior Conservation Officer, won the RSPB Species Champion ‘Nature of Scotland’ 2015 award for his work for the Marsh Fritillary!

Tom said: “This rare butterfly’s fortunes are now much rosier, with much more land being managed for it through agri-environment schemes. In this work we had great support from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Agricultural College and the Agrimony consultancy, plus of course, the landowners, BC staff and volunteers. Many thanks to everyone!”

For more on the project go to www.bit.ly/1ShnbR1
For more on the awards, go to https://www.rspb.org.uk/whatwedo/scotland/natureofscotland/

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

Youth Award for James
It is very pleasing to report on James Hammond’s success in the National Biodiversity Network’s Gilbert White Youth Awards. James was presented with a prize as runner-up, due to his dedication, knowledge and enthusiasm for conserving and recording moths in Scotland.

James has been hooked on Lepidoptera since the age of 12. Since then, over four years, he has amassed over 2000 records, discovered eight species of micro-moths new to his home vice-county of Morayshire, and is also a volunteer at his local museum, checking, arranging and re-labelling their Lepidoptera collection. He also presented a thought provoking and entertaining talk ‘Mothing as a Teenager’ at our Members Day in 2014.
Iain Cowe has been doing great work surveying and monitoring the Small Blue colonies of the Borders, and co-ordinating the efforts of others, but more than that, he is an excellent photographer.

Thank you for the superb images Iain!

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**Keep in the loop with our e-newsletters**

Every three months we send out a newsletter by email. Full of butterfly and moth news and events from across Scotland, they are a great way of keeping up to date with what's going on.

If you would like a copy please just email Shona at sgreig@butterfly-conservation.org and she will add your name to our mailing list. You will of course be able to unsubscribe at any time.
Big Butterfly Count
Our annual Big Butterfly Count is set to kick off this summer on Friday, 15 July for three weeks until 7 August. Everyone can take part - you simply choose a sunny spot, using the downloadable ID chart to note how many butterflies (and moths) you see in 15 minutes.

You can then log your sightings at www.bigbutterflycount.org or use the free Big Butterfly Count app, and you can do the count as many times as you like!

IN 2015 SCOTLAND’S TOP TEN WERE:
1 - Ringlet
2 - Meadow Brown
3 - Small Tortoiseshell
4 - Six-spot Burnet moth
5 - Small White
6 - Common Blue
7 - Green-veined White
8 - Speckled Wood
9 - Red Admiral
10 - Large White

The Garden Butterfly Survey
The Garden Butterfly Survey allows you to record and report the butterflies that visit your garden over the course of a year. Create a free account, submit your sightings and help us learn more about how butterflies are faring in UK gardens.

Please tell us what is fluttering behind your fence and help us to monitor garden butterfly populations. The more we learn, the better we can target conservation effort to help struggling species. Find out more about the Garden Butterfly Survey at www.gardenbutterflysurvey.org

www.butterfly-conservation/scotland
SPREADING THE MESSAGE

Moth Night Scotland will take place this year on 9-11 June 2016, the theme being hawk-moths. The aim is to raise awareness of moths with the general public and also to target particular species and habitats.

For events in Scotland, go to www.mothnight/scotland

Social Media
We are delighted our Facebook page is doing so well. We have over 1800 followers who keep up to date with news, workparties, events and the latest sightings, at www.facebook.com/bcsScotland. We thought it was about time we tweeted too, so if you enjoy a tweet now and again, do follow us at www.twitter.com/BC_Scotland

Gardening Scotland 2016
Scotland’s gardening festival is the biggest plant fair in Scotland and will take place from 3-5 June.

We will be part of the ‘Living Garden’ section where you can find out more about our new Urban Butterfly project, and the insects that share our gardens. Please come and say hello! www.gardeningscotland.com
Join us!
If you have enjoyed reading the Newsletter but you’re not yet a member; then why not join Butterfly Conservation today with our half price reader offer? Just enter the promotional code HERALD16 when you chose Individual, Joint or Family membership online and pay by Direct Debit. The support of our members enables us to continue our important conservation projects to save threatened species of butterflies and moths.

As a member you’ll receive three fantastic issues of our UK Butterfly magazine every year, each packed with features, photographs and conservation updates. We’ll send you a welcome pack full of information about butterflies and moths, a gardening booklet and details of our reserves. Plus you will enjoy membership of your local Branch (we have three Branches in Scotland) who will send you an annual newsletter and invitations to events in your region, from walks and talks to conservation action days.

If you’d like to support us at a higher level you might be interested to learn about our Benefactor membership package, costing just £10 per month or £120 annually. To recognise your additional support, we will send you an annual update about our current projects, and an exclusive Benefactor pin badge. And if you are already a member – thank you for joining us!

For other ways to support our work, record your sightings, garden for butterflies or shop online visit our website at www.butterfly-conservation.org. For membership enquiries or further information please call our Membership Team on 01929 406015.

To find out more about leaving Butterfly Conservation a gift in your Will, please contact Helen Corrigan on 01273 453313 or hcorrigan@butterfly-conservation.org or visit our website www.butterfly-conservation.org/legacies. We have a free Will guide, available on request.
About us
Butterfly Conservation is the UK charity dedicated to saving butterflies, moths and our environment. Butterflies and moths are important because they respond quickly to change, revealing the health of the countryside.

We advise landowners, managers and other organisations on conserving and restoring important habitats in the countryside, towns and cities. We carry out surveys, monitoring and research, manage nature reserves and promote wildlife friendly gardening. With your support we can help struggling butterflies and moths recover and thrive.

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We are very grateful to the following for supporting our work:  

This newsletter has been compiled by Paul Kirkland with contributions from Helen Corrigan, Shona Greig, David Hill, Anthony McCluskey and Tom Prescott.

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