



Working together in 2021

Dai Rees, Head of Conservation in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland,



In the Summer of 2020, amidst the first lockdown, Butterfly Conservation undertook a UK-wide strategic review which resulted in some new posts being formed and some staff changes. Fortunately, the Wales team (Clare, Judy and Andrea) has remained intact, as my role has been expanded and amalgamated with the Northern Ireland and Scottish 'Head of' roles. As you can imagine, working across three very different, devolved countries requires a lot of learning and understanding of policies, rules, legislation and meeting of new stakeholders and agencies. I'm getting there, slowly, and am hugely thankful that the teams in each country have remained intact as this has made the transition a lot smoother for me (and hopefully for them too).

A lot of our focus this year will centre around how we've been delivering for our priority species and landscapes, and what we need to do going forward to ensure we can deliver the best possible outcomes across Wales. Some examples of current and future projects we are involved with are:

Enviroparks mitigation.

We have recently secured a management agreement over 75 acres of potential Marsh Fritillary habitat in South Wales. This is funded by the Enviroparks development mitigation fund, which BC are charged with delivering.

We will be undertaking practical land management and implement a grazing regime that will encourage Marsh Fritillary to establish from nearby populations.



Marsh Fritillary: G Tordoff

'Natur am Byth!' (NaB)

A Wales' flagship Green Recovery project, this is a partnership uniting nine environmental charities with Natural Resources Wales to deliver the country's largest natural heritage and outreach programme to save species from extinction and reconnect people to nature.

We are currently at the Expression of Interest stage. If successful, the project would run for the next 5-6 years and benefit many species in Wales.

Skills development will create a new wave of nature ambassadors and celebrate 'Cynefin' – the distinct natural heritage that underpins communities across Wales. Our partnership will build organisational resilience and demonstrate how to save threatened species. The need for investment has been recognised by Welsh Government with a commitment to NaB from the First Minister and cash funding supporting our application.



Silky Wave, Gower: G Tordoff

If successful, our target species for NaB are [Silky Wave](#) and [High Brown Fritillary](#). Many other species of Lepidoptera are likely to benefit too.

Building Sites for Butterflies

Butterfly Conservation has recently established this UK-wide programme to encourage creation and management of grasslands for wildlife in the built environment.

One great example is habitat creation along the Weymouth Relief Road in Dorset, where regular recording has shown that over half the butterfly species in the UK have been found on the verges since the road opened to traffic just 10 years ago. I believe this is a fantastic way forward and presents an ideal opportunity for BC to become involved in the early planning stages to help conserve the species we represent.

Download **Building Sites for Butterflies** in [Welsh](#) and [English](#)

Two recently submitted funding applications:

- **Green Recovery Wales**

This is a bid of around 50K to the National Heritage Lottery Fund. If successful we will be able to research and investigate how we can better engage with a wide range of urban and rural communities and undertake a skills assessment with volunteers, members and others who wish to work with us to deliver positive engagement and environmental benefit.

- **MOD at Pembrey**

We have applied to the MOD for funding to undertake Lepidoptera surveys during 2021 on their aerial bombing range at Pembrey. This would be a fantastic opportunity to survey a site that has no public access and provide valuable information.

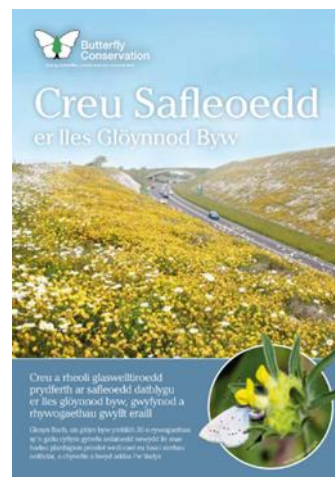
Aspirations

Recently I made a list of aspirations I think BC in Wales should be working towards. It's very ambitious, but even from a short time in post I believe that together, with yourselves and with partner organisations, we can achieve many of these outcomes over time.

- Recovery and safeguarding of threatened species
- Increase numbers of widespread species
- Integrated networks, ecologically connected with the wider landscape resilient to climate change, and where a dynamic approach to site designation and management enables habitats and species to thrive and expand, providing ecosystem services well beyond the site boundaries
- Inspire people to understand and deliver species conservation and provide increased opportunities for access to nature
- Maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and the building of ecosystem resilience
- Growing of citizen science activities for local communities
- Apply science, research and evidence-base to ensure effective action
- Use landscape and site-level approaches to maintain, restore and (re)create habitat
- Develop and promote action plans for conservation
- Advise landowners and land managers

How can I help with these projects?

We can only achieve some or all of these with your support and help, so if you feel you are able to help or contribute in some way please do [get in touch](#)



Small Blue, Pembrey: G Tordoff
Other important species in the Forest include Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, Marsh Fritillary and *Anania funebris*

Best wishes for 2021

Dai

Reviewing our Priority Butterflies and Moths in Wales

Clare Williams, Senior Conservation Officer, Wales



Butterfly Conservation has [Conservation Strategies](#) for each country. Over the winter period, the Wales team is reviewing its work on priority Lepidoptera. These are butterflies and moths considered either High, Medium or Low Priority based on assessments of threat resulting from an analysis of distribution and abundance data and are listed in [Butterfly Conservation Wales' Conservation Strategy](#)

This review will help us to take stock and decide a clear direction to move forward with our conservation work in the spring, ensuring that we target resources where they are most needed.

The review is initially concentrating on 18 High Priority species, six butterflies and twelve moths.

We are looking at what BC Wales have delivered for these species, what has worked well and what we need to do to improve their conservation status. We are also identifying factors limiting conservation delivery and how to tackle these barriers to ensure progress continues.

The results of this review will form the foundation of our work programme for the coming year and identify areas where volunteers can make a significant contribution.

We will be in touch in the spring with the results of the review, and information on to how to get involved. We will then be ready to move forward, when Corona virus guidance allows, to spend some much-needed time in nature with our fantastic volunteers, working together to halt and reverse the declines of Wales' most threatened butterflies and moths.



Grizzled Skipper, Pembrey: P Gadsby



Anania funebris, (one example of a Priority species): Chris Manley

How can I help with Priority Species?

We will be in touch in the spring (check Wales eNews) with the results of the Review and information on to how to get involved.

Opportunities will be varied, such as:

- site visits to determine species presence/absence and habitat suitability;
- setting up monitoring for data deficient species;
- helping raise the profile of particular species

Data collection in Wales: how YOU can help

Andrea Rowe, Conservation Officer, Wales



Silver-studded Blue:
Ben Williams

The data that volunteers help to collect each year is vitally important to the work that Butterfly Conservation undertakes in Wales and the UK. Could you be a part of this?

In the [UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme \(UKBMS\)](#), annual data on the population status of butterflies is derived from a wide-scale program of site-based monitoring and sampling in randomly selected 1km squares. The sampling framework includes:

1. **Weekly butterfly transects (Pollard walks);**
2. **The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS).**

The resulting dataset is one of the most important resources for understanding changes in insect populations and answering policy questions relating to status and trends in biodiversity.

1. Transects

So, what *is* a Transect?

[Transects](#) are fixed-route weekly walks that provide a fair representation of habitats at a site.

Species priorities

Species that need more sites producing indices include:

- [Grizzled Skipper](#)
- [Large Heath](#)
- [Small Blue](#)
- [Silver-studded Blue](#)
- [White-letter Hairstreak](#)
- [Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary](#)



White-letter Hairstreak: Ben Williams

If you have any of these priority butterflies on your transect, then it is worth checking that:

- your transect walks are covering their flight period, meaning weekly counts covering the whole flight period with zero counts at either end
- all these walks are undertaken at an appropriate time of day
- and in appropriate weather conditions

Unfortunately, if this guidance is not followed the data cannot be used to generate indices.

Some of these species have restricted distributions and / or their populations are hard to reach (eg Large Heath) making monitoring a more difficult task. Others, like the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, have a much wider distribution, which should make tackling the data deficiency a bit easier.

Covid 19

In the current lockdown situation in Wales, please stay at home and ensure that any activity that you undertake is in line with [Wales Government Corona virus guidance](#)

When guidance allows, we hope to welcome back existing volunteers and welcome new volunteers to transects and the WCBS!

What do Transect Walkers do?

- Fixed-route weekly walks, typically 1-3km in length, taking around 30-90 mins each time.
- Walking the transect at a slow, steady pace, recording all butterflies seen within a 5m band.
- Transects should be walked between 10.45 -15.45, during suitable weather, weekly, in the 26 weeks of April to September.
- Transects do require commitment but can be shared.



Large Heath and its habitat: G Tordoff

UKBMS data is used to produce county-level trends for each species that occurs in Wales. We typically need at least five sites per year producing indices before we can report a trend for a species. Indices can only be generated for a species if its flight period is sufficiently covered by weekly transect walks and these walks are undertaken in suitable conditions.

Transects in Wales have been hit by Covid

The number of active transects in Wales grew from six in 1976 to around 60 today. In 2019 data from 63 sites was submitted with a total of 1040 individual transect walks recorded. In 2020 less than half this number of walks (only 441) were made, due to Covid restrictions.



Transect walking, Alun Valley: G Tordoff

How can I help with Transects?

If you'd like to be a transect walker and live near to a population of one of these data deficient species, then your help would be very much appreciated. Obviously even if you don't have any of these priority species on your doorstep but fancy walking a butterfly transect then please do – the more data we have, the better idea we have of how butterflies are faring across Wales and where our conservation action is required.

Further information can be found at <https://www.ukbms.org/involved>. If you have any questions then a member of the BC Wales team will be happy to help via Wales@butterfly-conservation.org or 01792 642972

2. Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS)



Gatekeeper pair: Maggie James

Keeping track of 'common' species

[WCBS](#) was established in 2009 to improve data on the population status of butterflies across the countryside as a whole. This is important given that most site-based monitoring is biased towards good quality semi-natural habitat relatively rich in butterflies.

Many 'common' butterfly species have undergone serious declines and are in need of greater attention. The WCBS helps us sample the UK countryside in a representative way to fill the gaps and address these issues.

Coverage badly hit by Covid

In 2019, 31 squares were surveyed in Wales but in 2020 numbers fell to only 18, clearly once again affected by Covid. Of these, 13 were BC squares: 9 in North Wales and 4 in South Wales.

What do WCBS volunteers do?

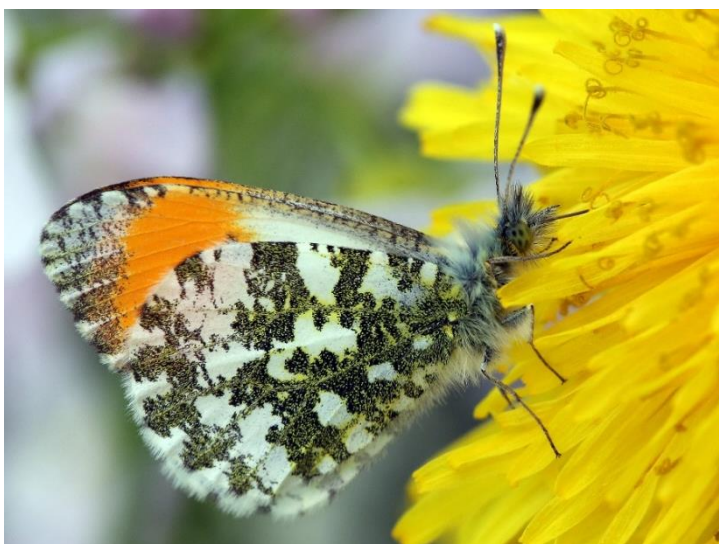
A minimum of two visits are required to each square per year in July and August, with at least 10 days between the two visits.

One or two further visits can be made during May, June, July or August (with at least 10 days between visits).

If possible, return visits to squares should be made at roughly the same time of day and should generally be walked between 10.45 -15.45 and only when weather conditions are suitable for butterfly activity.

Scientifically sound and efficient method

Wider countryside monitoring is organised in partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Strong emphasis has been placed on making sure that the WCBS is both scientifically sound (by sampling of the countryside through random sampling) and efficient (a scheme with fewer visits but still with sufficient power to detect change in butterfly populations across the countryside). The WCBS method is based on the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), counting along two parallel 1-km long transects subdivided into 10 sections, located within randomly selected 1-km squares.



Orange-tip:
Ben Williams

Help with WCBS while on holiday! (...looking ahead with hope!)

[WCBS Holiday Squares](#) have been set up to improve coverage of squares across the UK, especially in areas where few people live but which are popular holiday destinations.

This is a sample of what's on offer!

SH7942, Migneint, Snowdonia

Within this square is Cefn Garw, a remote abandoned farmhouse, which was once occupied by a Mr Roberts, who shepherded on horseback. It is a long but picturesque walk along a track beside the Afon Serw. Large Heath has been recorded in an adjacent square. Are they lurking, awaiting discovery here too?



This is our first Wales News in this format. We hope you've enjoyed reading in more depth about our work and plans and we'd love to read your [comments](#).

Thank you,
Judy Burroughs (Editor)



Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England and Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)
Mae Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw yn elusen wedi'i chofrestru yng Nghymru a Lloegr (254937) ac yn Yr Alban (SCO39268)
Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Butterfly Conservation Wales,
4D Heol y Cwm / 4D Cwm Road, Yr Hafod / Hafod, Abertawe/Swansea SA1 2AY

How can I help with WCBS?

We would ideally like to see more WCBS squares surveyed across the whole of Wales.

If you are new to WCBS and would like to get involved, then a new square can be allocated to you.

Please contact:

[Megan Lowe](#), BC's Senior WCBS Support Officer
or [Amy Green](#), BC Champion for North Wales

We would also really like to recruit a new **WCBS champion to cover South Wales**.

If you're interested, please contact [Megan Lowe](#)

All you need to do is check whether there is a square where you are holidaying and sign up if you can.

If you can only manage one visit that's fine, someone else could do a second visit.

The WCBS provides great opportunities for getting off the beaten-track and generating new 1km square records for butterflies in the UK.