

Habitat management for the Grizzled Skipper

Woodland rides, glades and clearings

Aim to maintain a continued supply of open habitat (ride, glades or clearings) that contain foodplants growing over bare ground in sunny conditions with varied vegetation nearby.

Woodland and Ride Management

Conditions can be provided by clearing woodland plots (e.g. by coppicing) and ride management. Occasional disturbance of wide sunny rides is beneficial, creating areas of bare ground for breeding. This can be achieved by cutting low to the ground through scarification of the surface or general disturbance by machinery. Coppicing ride edge vegetation on a short rotation may also be helpful where no substantial area can be managed as coppice. A network of open, sunny rides and glades is beneficial and may be essential to link clearings in high forest woodland.

below Breeding habitat in a woodland ride
right top Breeding habitat on a brownfield site
right bottom Ideal egg laying situation

Unimproved grassland and abandoned industrial sites

Aim to maintain a mosaic of short herb-rich grassland with patches of bare ground for breeding, taller vegetation for shelter and roosting, and scrub for mate-location and as foodplant habitat.

Grazing

Suitable conditions can be maintained by low to moderate stock grazing, especially winter cattle. This creates patches of bare ground as well as short vegetation. Sheep grazing is only likely to be successful if bare ground is created simultaneously through scrub clearance or animal disturbance. Heavy spring grazing is to be avoided as it eliminates nectar sources, which appear vital for the butterfly. Heavy grazing by stock or rabbits is generally detrimental as it creates a uniform short sward which is not favoured.

Moderate rabbit grazing and burrowing can result in suitable conditions but populations need to be carefully monitored. A contingency plan needs to be established to implement stock grazing in the event of a crash in rabbit populations, or alternatively rabbit control or fencing in the event of a population explosion.

Scrub Control

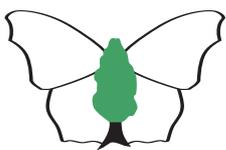
Patches of scattered young scrub (<5-10years old) should be retained and ideally managed so that a proportion is cut each year on rotation.

Scarification and Topsoil Stripping

Periodic scraping to create bare ground can also lead to ideal conditions and is often the preferred management technique on abandoned industrial sites where grazing is rarely an option. Topsoil stripping inhibits the growth of vigorous plants, allows colonisation by the foodplants and creates patches of bare ground.

Habitat Creation

Suitable habitat can be created by either turf stripping or importing inert, low nutrient status substrates. Suitable materials include crushed limestone, railway ballast, crushed concrete, crushed brick, pulverised fuel ash and steel slag. Natural colonisation is preferable to reseeding, but results should be monitored to ensure desirable foodplants are present. Where reseeding is needed it should be a maximum of 50% of the area and only seeds of local provenance should be used. Foodplants will take several years to reach the required size.



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

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