



High Brown Fritillary

Vale of Glamorgan, July '24

There is a lot of literature to draw on when it comes to learning about butterflies and moths. Brilliant books and articles, written by the experts' as well as some great YouTube talks. Much of it draws our attention to the fact that butterfly numbers have generally been declining throughout the last century, increasingly so since the 1970's.

The single greatest threat being the loss and fragmentation of their habitats.

Several butterfly species inhabiting our islands are breeding at the extent of their worldwide limits making them especially vulnerable to any changes in climatic conditions.

Apart from being beautiful creatures they are of course pollinators and seen as important indicators as to the ecological health of our countryside, helped by the fact that butterflies are some of the easiest insects to evaluate.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Cumbria - Jun '22

There are butterflies that roam and others that live in close proximity of each other in colonies of varying sizes. These 'specialist species' require very specific conditions. Micro climates maintaining critical temperatures, where the plants their caterpillars depend on thrive.

Delicately balanced environments which are gradually being depleted and in the worst cases disappearing altogether. No thanks to intensive farming methods, the over use of pesticides, pollution and the fact that coppicing in our woods has virtually died out to the detriment of our woodland species.

Most depressing of all is the fact that over a long period of time Britain has become one of the most nature-depleted countries on earth.

There are strong arguments for increasing the number and size of our nature reserves, joining them together where possible, reconnecting habitats by creating landscape corridors “highways” for wildlife and plants to thrive. Increasing and protecting our hedgerows for a start, which are so important for plants and wildlife.

A greater understanding of rare butterflies and the specific requirements of their habitats has led to the successful re-introduction of two subspecies after their native species became extinct in England in the 1970’s. The British Large Blue and Chequered Skipper, though the latter has survived throughout this period in Scotland. In recent years the numbers of Large Blues in England have been steadily increasing thanks to the enormous amount of dedicated work carried out by scientists and **Butterfly Conservation**. In the case of the Large Blue it took the best part of a century to fully understand the butterfly’s complex habitat which depends on a community of interacting plants and animals.



Chequered Skipper

Fineshade Wood - May '22



A Mountain Ringlet on Amalia's finger.
Cumbria, June '24

I joined **Butterfly Conservation** ten years ago. The charity dedicated to protecting butterflies and moths largely through the management of their habitats which operates around thirty five reserves in the UK.

Based in East Lulworth in Dorset, the charity has thirty three branches and by all accounts a very healthy membership. It's work relies heavily the help of thousands of volunteers spread around the UK and of course the generous donations it receives.

Since the 1970s an important aspect of their work has been coordinating the monitoring of butterfly numbers. Gathering vital data which is helping scientists and entomologists better understand the impact climate change and other factors are having on our butterfly and moth populations.