

Butterflies & Moths of the Shropshire Commons

Jenny Joy & Mike Williams





Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons Shropshire Hills

A three-year, £3m, 25-partner project helping to secure the future of upland commons in Dartmoor, the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and Shropshire Hills.
Led by the Foundation for Common Land.

The project has been made possible by funding from National Lottery players, grants from Esmée Fairbairn and Garfield Weston Foundations and locally the Millichope Foundation among others

The Programme's Aims



- Collaborative management of Common Land
- Healthy Commons / Resilient commoning
- Reconnect the public with the natural and cultural heritage of Common Land
- Enhance the environmental and ecological benefits offered by Common Land

The Shropshire Hills Commons

Clee Liberty

- Grid ref SO 5838 8454
- Owned by Clee St Margaret Parish Council
- Nordy Bank - Scheduled Monument

Long Mynd

- Grid ref SO 4310 9405
- Owned by National Trust
- Largest SSSI in Shropshire and holds a number of habitats supporting special plants and animals
- Also listed as a geological SSSI, with Ashes Hollow designated as a Regionally Important Geological Site
- Over 20 Scheduled Monuments

Stiperstones

- Grid ref SJ 3719 0028
- Owned by Natural England
- The Stiperstones Common makes up a large part of the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve (NNR)
- Four Scheduled Monuments.
- SAC - designated for European dry heaths (primary reason for selection) and old sessile oak woods (qualifying feature).

Our Upland Commons in the Shropshire Hills

Commons are owned areas of land where others (commoners) have rights to farm the land or use its resources - such as trees, peat and soil.

A common land is open access giving everyone rights for recreation on foot.

Commoners collectively graze their livestock (sheep, cows, ponies) on commons. Each flock has a 'heaf' or 'heft' (an area of the common) where they stay without fencing.

This way of shared land management is called commoning and has protected landscapes for a thousand years.

Commoning has ensured the survival of ancient monuments and rare wildlife, plants, birds and butterflies. Careful grazing maintains the balance of delicate upland ecosystems on huge stretches of open landscape.

Today just 3% (400,000 hectares) of England remains as **common land**.



Butterfly & Moth project

Overall Aims

- To undertake a baseline survey to identify the presence and habitat preferences for key butterflies and moths
- To produce habitat recommendations and engage with land managers and commoners to trial their effectiveness
- To involve the local community in the above, produce interpretative material and support the development of local volunteer groups to carry forward the work beyond the life of the project



Butterfly and Moth Festival 2022

A series of events throughout the summer aimed at:

- Celebrating our butterfly and moth heritage
- Helping people to identify species found on our upland commons
- Encouraging people to search out some of the key species and record what they see
- Programme includes guided butterfly walks, ID workshops, moth mornings, and training in recording
- <https://foundationforcommonland.org.uk/news/butterfly-and-moth-festival-2022>

Butterflies are in serious trouble!!

72% of British butterfly species decreased in distribution between 1970-82 and 1995-2004

Habitat specialists
93% spp. decreased



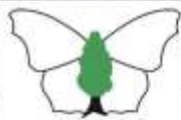
Wider countryside species
56% spp. decreased



Reasons for Decline




- Loss and fragmentation of Habitat
- Intensification of agriculture
- Changes in woodland management
- Climate Change
- Impact on Metapopulations
- **Research has shown that butterflies and moths survive better in well connected landscapes – the bigger the better – and this is what underpins our approach to conservation in the West Midlands region**



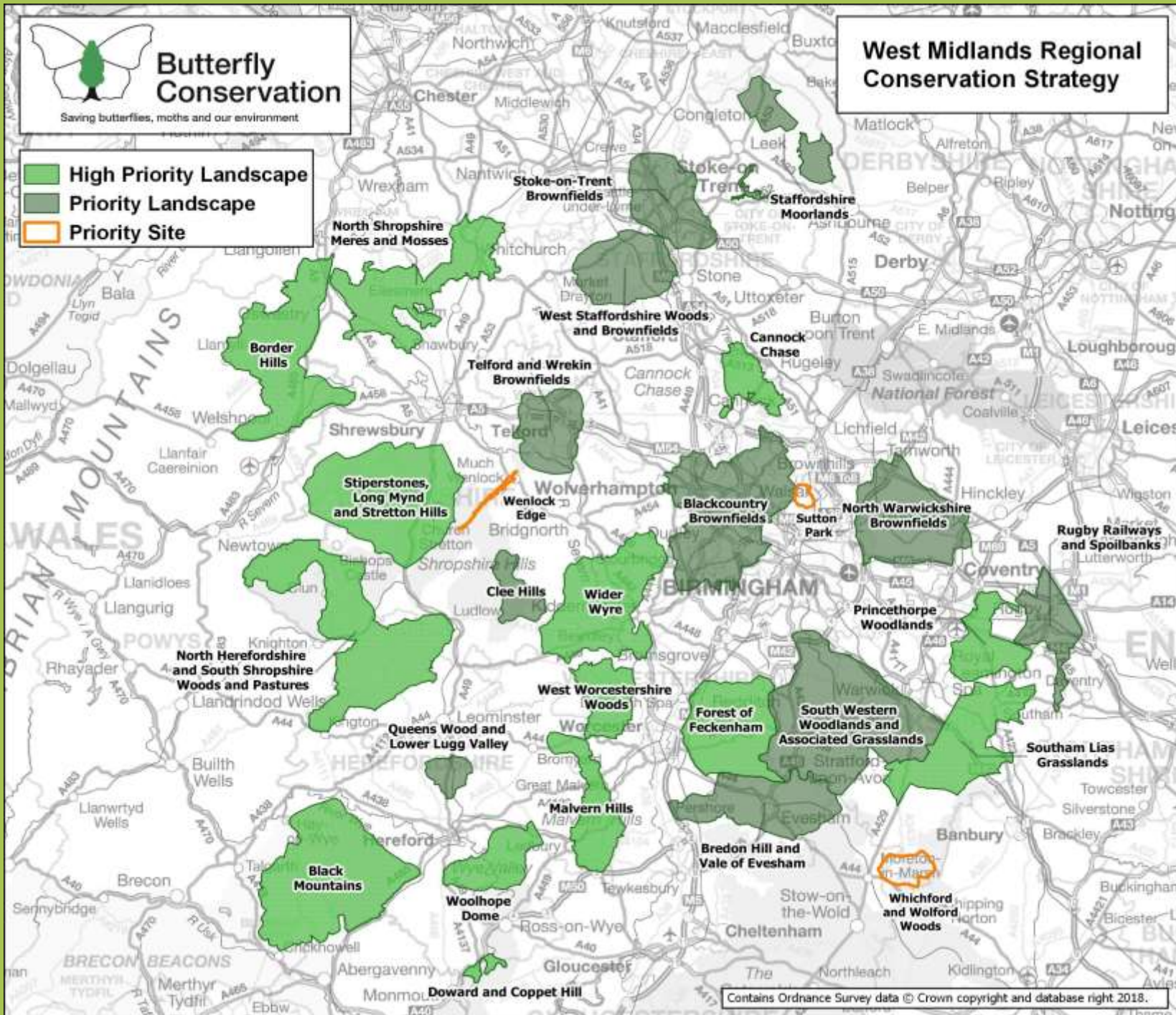


Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

-  High Priority Landscape
-  Priority Landscape
-  Priority Site

West Midlands Regional Conservation Strategy





HIGH PRIORITY BUTTERFLIES



Grayling

Maintain open, sparse vegetation with abundant fine-leaved grasses (e.g. Sheep's Fescue, Red Fescue, Bristle Bent, Early Hair-grass) and plenty of bare ground. In heathland, cut or burn heather on 5-30 year rotation. Ground disturbance can restore or re-create suitable habitat.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Maintain medium height swards with abundant violets in damp grassland, flushes, moorland (often Marsh Violet); Bracken/grass mosaics, scrub edge (often Common Dog-violet). In woodland, maintain continuity of flower-rich, sunny clearings/rides with damp soils and lush vegetation.



Dingy Skipper

Maintain sparse grassland swards with abundant Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (or Horseshoe Vetch, Greater Common Bird's-foot-trefoil), some tall vegetation and bare ground. Avoid heavy late spring/early summer grazing.



Wall

Maintain short, sparse, well-drained, unimproved swards with abundant Tor-grass, False Brome, Cock's-foot, bents, Wavy Hair-grass or Yorkshire-fog and some broken or stony turf in chalk and limestone grassland, coastal grasslands, underdiffs, moorland, disused quarries or brownfields.



Dark Green Fritillary

Maintain medium height swards with abundant violets in chalk and limestone grassland (with scrub patches); damp grassland, flushes and moorland; dry species-rich moorland (Scotland); Bracken/grass mosaics, scrub edges; coastal grasslands, dunes and scrub.

HIGH PRIORITY MOTHS



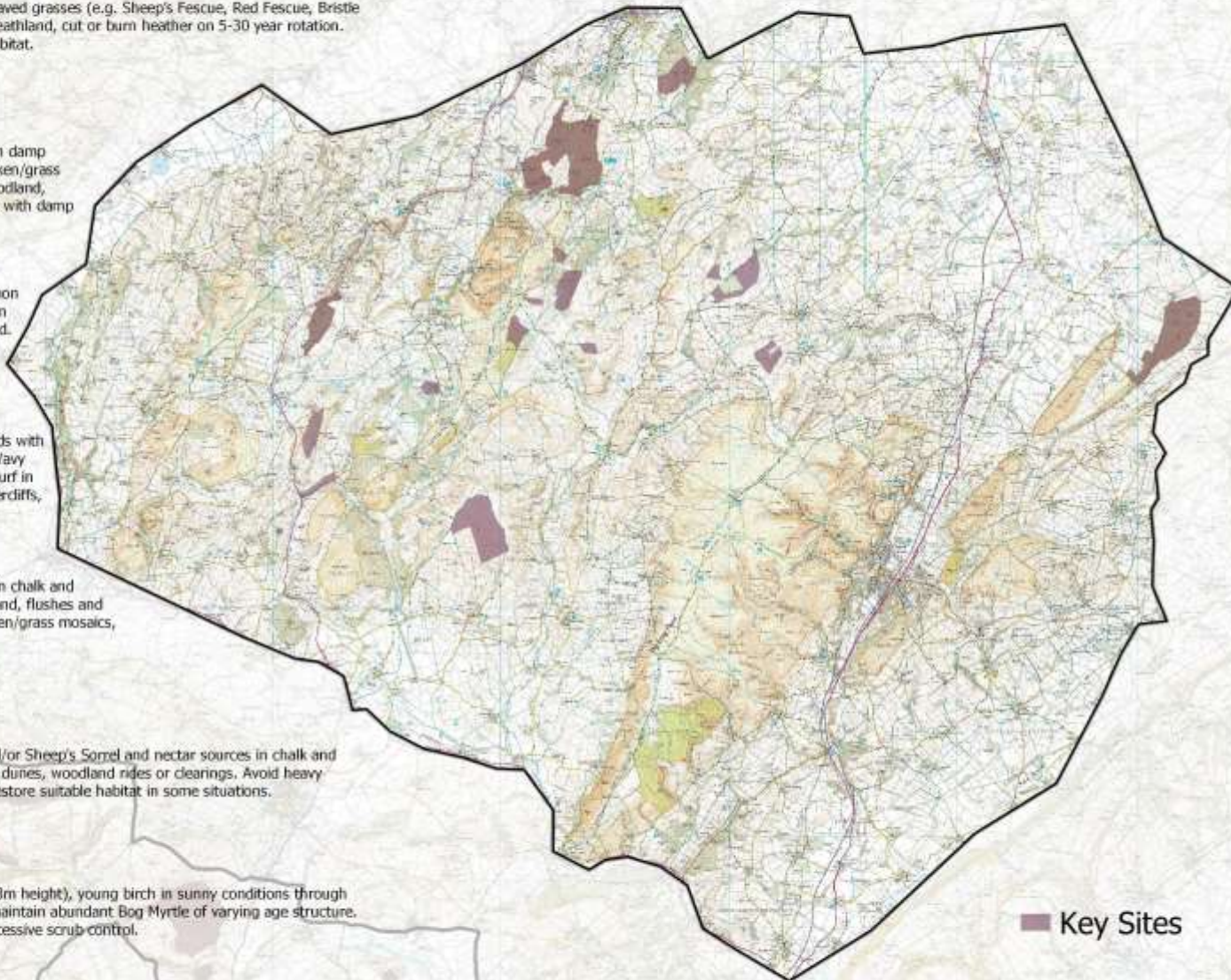
Forester

Maintain open, tall vegetation, with abundant Common Sorrel and/or Sheep's Sorrel and nectar sources in chalk and limestone grassland, damp grassland, heathland, brackland, sand dunes, woodland rides or clearings. Avoid heavy summer grazing. Ground disturbance (e.g. rotovation) can help restore suitable habitat in some situations.



Argent & Sable

In woodland, maintain continuity of abundant small (c.3m height), young birch in sunny conditions through ride management. In damp grassland and heathland, maintain abundant Bog Myrtle of varying age structure. Avoid heavy grazing, extensive heather burning and excessive scrub control.



■ Key Sites

0 1 2 3 4 km



What are the key species found – Butterflies

Green Hairstreak

Grayling

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Dark Green Fritillary



What are the key species - Moths

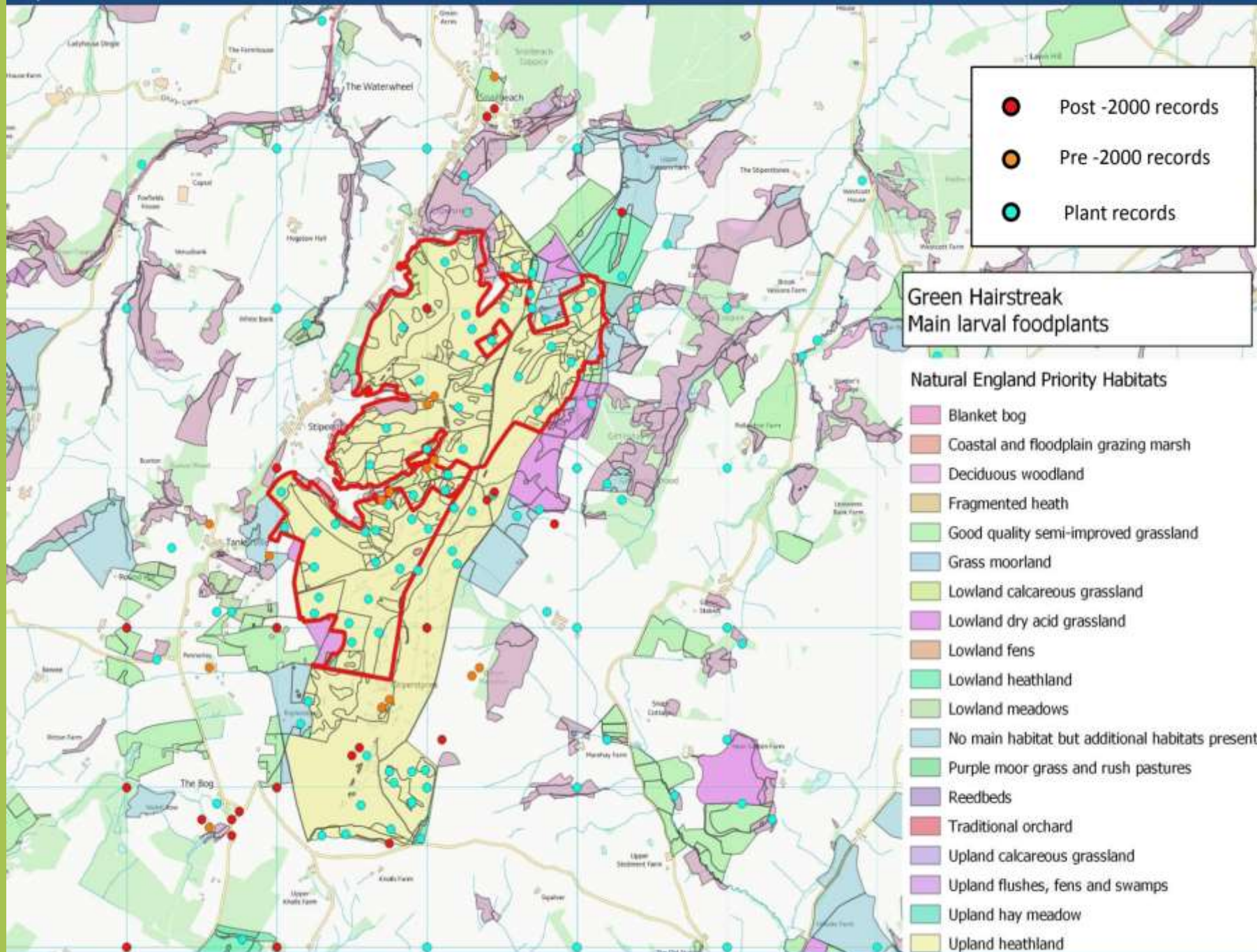
- Emperor Moth
- Burnet Moths
- Forester
- Argent & Sable
- Wood Tiger
- Northern Rustic, Glaucous Shears, Light Knot Grass, Confused + micros

Green Hairstreak



- Found on all three commons
- Flies early in year – May/June
- Associated with scrub – often found around Gorse or Hawthorn
- Caterpillar foodplants include Bilberry, Gorse and Broom
- Wingspan 27-34mm
- Because of small size, colour and behaviour under-recorded









Emperor Moth attracted to pheromone lure



Green Hairstreak and Emperor Moth Walks

- Stiperstones – Wed, 18th May
- Clee Liberty – Wed, 25th May
- Long Mynd – Thurs, 18th June



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Upperside



Underside



- * Found only on the Stiperstones?
- * Flies June/early July
- * Associated with boggy habitats
- * Caterpillar foodplant – violets especially
Marsh Violet
- * Wingspan – 35-44mm
- * Possibly under-recorded because
habitats are generally wet underfoot and
hard to access
- * Could it still occur on the Long Mynd (old
records) or Clee Liberty (not far away)?



Marsh Violets



Join the Bog Squad

- Wetland search for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
- Fri, 17th June at The Knolls car park, Stiperstones
- Wear suitable footwear



Grayling





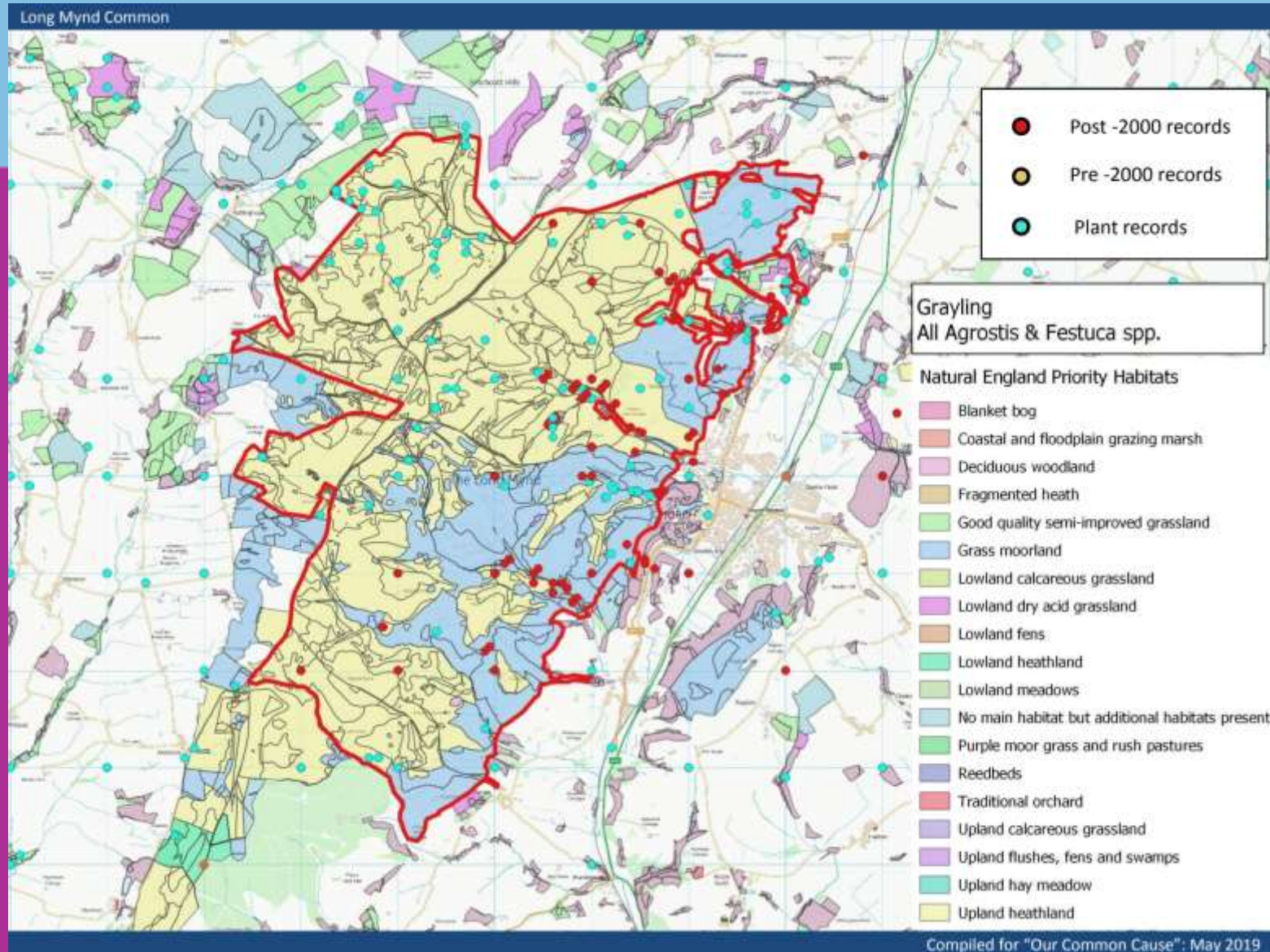
- * Found on the Stiperstones and Long Mynd
- * Flies July/August
- * Associated with bare ground and rocky outcrops
- * Caterpillar foodplant – Fine grasses esp. Sheep's Fescue
- * Wingspan – 55-60mm
- * Possibly under-recorded because habitats can be difficult to access



Grayling Hunt



Grayling records – Long Mynd



Grayling Hunt 2022

Sat, 16th July – 12 noon in Rectory Field car park in Church Stretton. Walking up through Townbrook Valley.



Dark Green Fritillary



Dark Green Fritillary –upper and under



- * Found on all three commons?
- * Flies late June - August
- * Associated with wet flushes and bracken stands
- * Caterpillar foodplant – Violet species
- * Wingspan – 58-68mm
- * Possibly under-recorded because of fast flight and problems with ID
- * Expanding its range?



Moths of the Shropshire Commons

- Much less known as many are nocturnal and best recorded through light trapping
- Far more of them – only around 40 butterflies in all of the West Midlands compared to some 1700 species of moths recorded this century
- Some are very small and difficult to ID
- Some day-flying species which are well worth looking out for



Day-flying Moths

Burnet Moths



Wood Tiger



Moth Mornings

18th June 9am Batch Valley Car Park, All
Stretton – targeting Hawkmoths

16th July 10am Rectory Fields Car Park,
Church Stretton

31st July 10am Burnt House, Clee St
Margaret



Other important species

Wall



White-letter Hairstreak



....more

Small Heath



Small Copper



Butterfly identification – not hard

- Fri, 1st July Butterfly ID Workshop

10.30am at All Stretton Village Hall

Classroom session in the morning

Afternoon butterfly walk

Bring a packed lunch

Teas & Coffees provided



Not always the rarest species that cause problems of ID

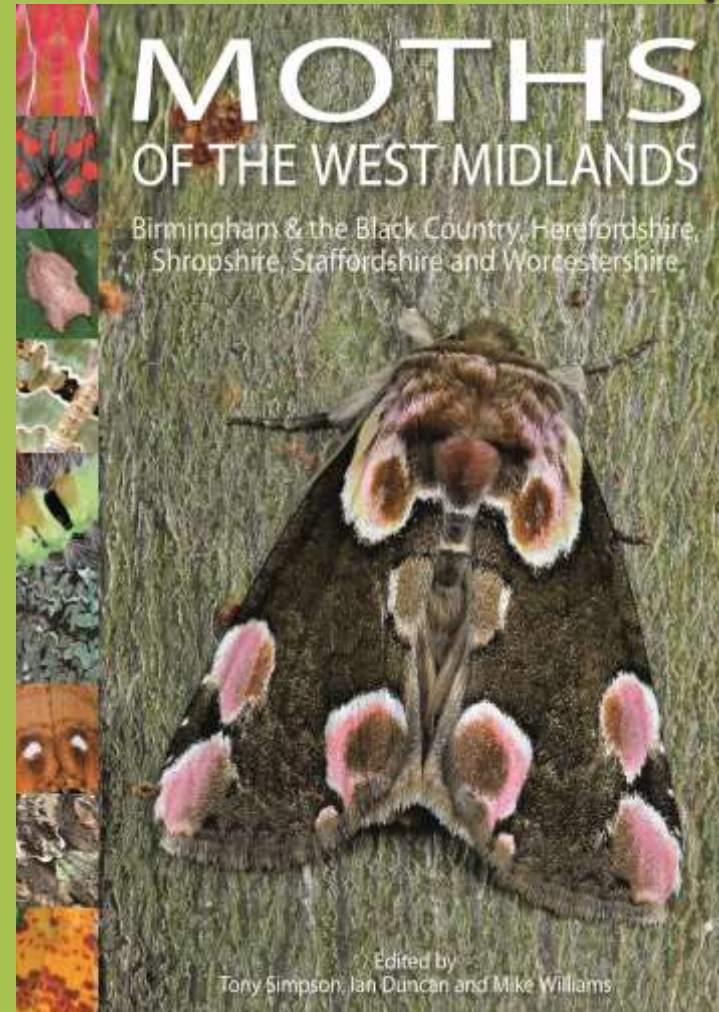
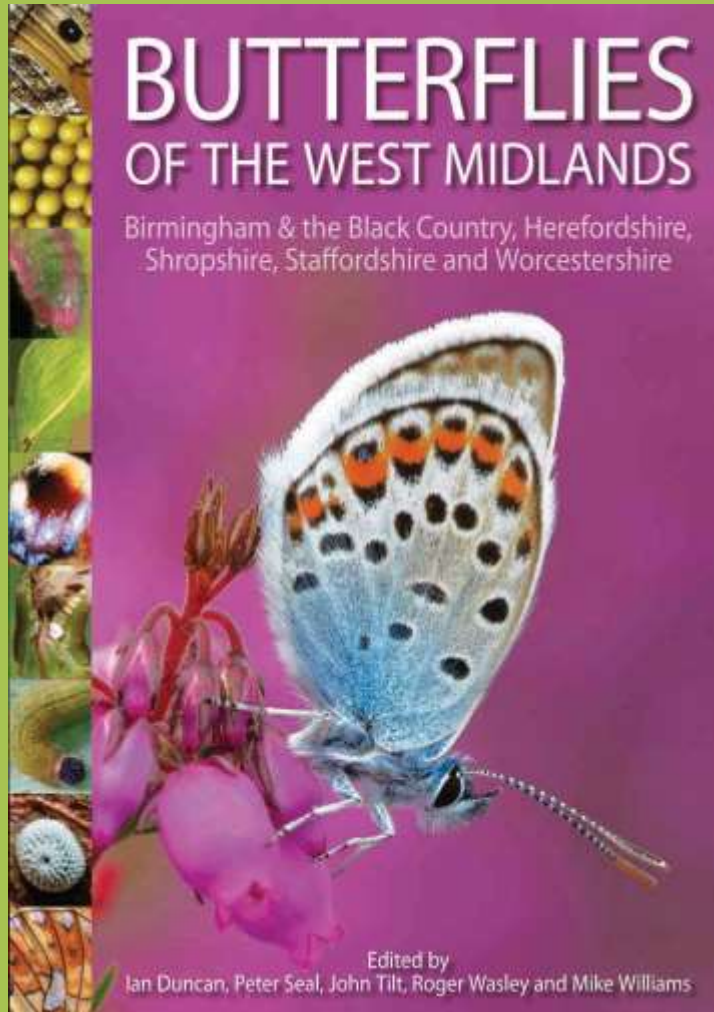
Large White



Small White

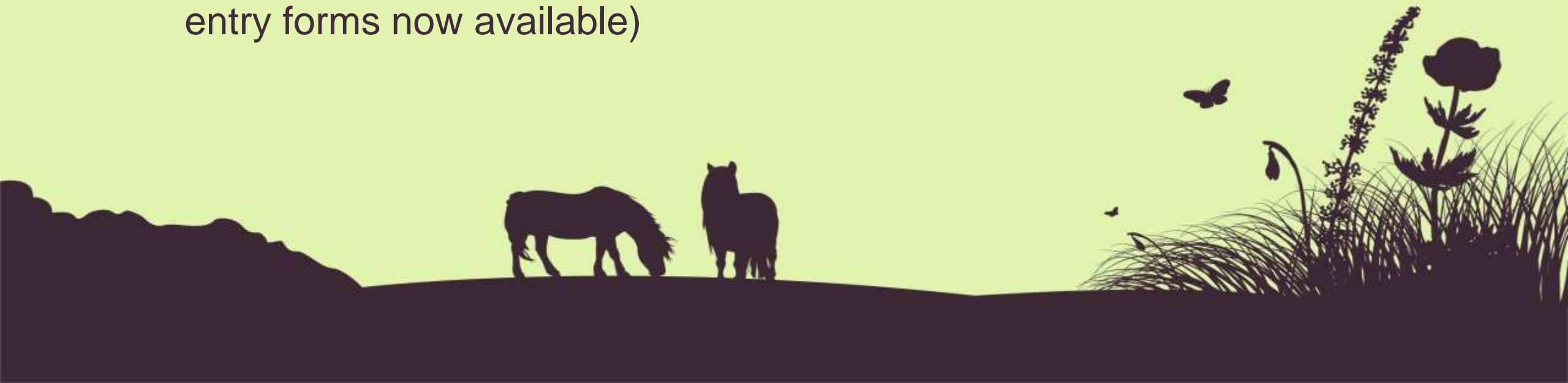


Help is at hand!



How you can help

- Come along to some of our Festival events (copies of the programme available)
- Help us to better record the 3 commons (download the iRecord app to your phone)
- Undertake targeted searches for key species
- Take part in our Photographic Competition (closing date – 30th Sept, entry forms now available)



Recognising key habitats 1

Bare rocks/scree = Grayling



Rush Pasture = Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary



Recognising key habitats 2

Gorse = Green Hairstreak



**Sunny bracken slopes =
Dark Green Fritillary**



Acknowledgements

- Thanks to all those who have supported the project so far by giving up their time and lending their expertise, with particular thanks to partner organisations like the various community wildlife groups, National Trust, Natural England and West Midlands Butterfly Conservation and of course the Commoners.
- Especial thanks to the Foundation for Common Land and the Heritage Lottery Fund for financial support



Any Questions

