



Butterfly
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Building Sites for Butterflies



Creating and managing beautiful grasslands within development for butterflies, moths and other wildlife

Small Blue butterfly, one example of 30 butterfly species that can quickly colonise new areas sown with seeds of the right plants for nectar and their caterpillars



KEITH WARMINGTON

STEPHEN BROWN



Since the A354 Weymouth Relief Road opened in 2011, 30 species of butterfly have been recorded on the chalk grassland slopes created next to the road. That's over half of the species known to live in Britain in just a few years.

Building Sites for Butterflies

Designing where we live and work to be better for wildlife is important. Two-thirds of butterfly and moth species are in decline in the UK, and urban sprawl is contributing to their demise. But it doesn't have to be that way. Our green spaces should be designed and managed to bring back abundant wildlife on our doorstep. Butterflies and moths are indicators of a healthy environment for us, and play an important role in the natural ecosystem as pollinators and as food for other species.

How to create grasslands good for wildlife

In the natural world our best grasslands for wildflowers are those that form on soils of lowest fertility. By designing our man-made landscapes in a similar way, finishing them with soils low in nutrients, or with bare mineral such as crushed chalk, we can mimic these conditions. The results can be a spectacular, enhancing our quality of life, and providing habitats full of wildflowers and insects. E.g. Sowing Common Bird's-foot-

trefoil seed onto bare ground quickly produces a carpet of yellow flowers, providing a good nectar source for pollinators, and a foodplant for caterpillars of the Common Blue butterfly.

Reducing soil fertility of existing amenity grassland

Cut-and-collect mowing can be a simple way to reduce soil fertility of existing amenity grassland. In the growing season, plants convert the soil nutrients into leaves, flowers and seeds. By taking the living material away, the nutrients are removed and cannot go back into the soil.

Common Blue.
KEITH WARMINGTON



GILES NICHOLSON

Cut-and-collect up to four times a year in the first two years, then in the third year reduce to twice, one in Mar/Apr and one in Aug/Sept. This allows wildflowers to flower and set seed. Cut-and-collect reduces the amount that grass grows in the first place, there is less to cut, so the maintenance costs us less. It also brings back wildflowers.

What's wrong with amenity grassland?

Most development schemes specify a finishing layer of good quality topsoil topped with grass seed. The grass grows well, especially Perennial Rye-grass, but there is little space for wildflowers which can't compete. The result is that amenity grasslands today are of very little value to wildlife. Amenity areas may look good when a development is first completed, but the grass has to be cut regularly, the rotting clods look messy, and the cost of maintenance has to be borne forever.

How you can help

Butterfly Conservation advocates that every development should include areas that use low fertility soils or bare mineral, to create wildflower-rich grasslands that are good for butterflies, moths and other pollinators, and for people to enjoy.

Butterfly Conservation's 'Building Sites for Butterflies Programme' is the first of its kind dedicated to advising how our built environment can be better designed and managed to support wildlife, so that we and future generations can enjoy wildlife where we live and work.



PHIL STERLING

For further information on Building Sites for Butterflies, please contact:

Dr Phil Sterling psterling@butterfly-conservation.org

or visit www.butterfly-conservation.org/buildingsites

or Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP

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Above: A flood protection bank sown with native wildflower seed on low fertility sandy soil.

Butterfly Conservation

Butterfly Conservation is the UK charity dedicated to saving butterflies and moths. Butterflies and moths are important parts of the ecosystem. They are beautiful and inspirational and people enjoy seeing them in their gardens and in our urban environment. They are sensitive to change and their fortunes help us assess the health of our environment. Butterfly Conservation improves landscapes for butterflies and moths, creating a better environment for us all.

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