

Conserving Warwickshire's Rare Butterflies and Plants

Rare plants, butterflies, bees, and moths are among the many species that occur on CEMEX's old quarries. Rugby's Malpass site dates from the 19th century and is especially rich.

Volunteers from Butterfly Conservation (BC) and the Rugby Group of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust have for many years helped CEMEX and its predecessors by monitoring these species and advising how best to look after them.

Habitats are naturally in constant change and development pressures also affect them. The development of the Climafuel processing plant inevitably added considerable pressure, and this is being addressed by restoration of flower rich grasslands lost to scrub invasion on the old spoilbanks.

Volunteers from BC & Rugby Wildlife met on Sunday 17th May for one of their periodic surveys.

Despite unfavorable weather conditions and a late spring, Green Hairstreak butterflies were found to be doing well, the increasingly rare Small Heath is still present, one was found on the newly cleared spoilbank which is a good sign the habitat is improving, but further visits are needed to find Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, Marble White, and Six-belted Clearwing moth.

In the case of the Grizzled Skipper this can be done by searching for the butterflies tiny eggs on wild plants of the strawberry family.

There is potential for the rare Dark Green Fritillary to recolonize the site if the many violets in the southwest corner of the site are carefully managed, as one was found near Long Lawford in 2013

Locally rare plants - Alpine Milkwort, Yellow-wort, Stemless and yellow Carline Thistle, Bugle, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Twayblade and Spotted Orchid positions and abundance were noted.

The recreation of habitats is now underway, and the first phase of a 5 year program was completed during the winter of 2014/15. Management of existing habitats during this period and beyond will be needed.

BC Warwickshire Branch will continue to monitor the site to confirm that these rare species are breeding in the newly cleared areas by searching for the butterflies tiny eggs.

We thank CEMEX for providing the resources to do this.

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<http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org.uk/>

<http://rugbywildlife.info/blog>