

Habitat management for the Dark Green Fritillary

Chalk and limestone grassland

Aim to maintain a structurally diverse violet-rich sward with a high proportion of medium height turf, as well as patches of scrub.

Grazing

Extensive or periodic grazing by cattle is best, encouraging violet regeneration. Reducing grazing pressure in the spring and summer enables larger-leaved violets to develop. Sheep grazing can provide suitable conditions if grazed on rotation, leaving areas for 1-3 years to produce taller swards. Winter sheep grazing is known to maintain suitable conditions on Upright Brome dominated sites, especially compared to oat-grass or fescue dominated swards. Ungrazed or neglected sites can be ideal for a short period but soon suffer from invasion by coarse grasses and scrub.

Scrub Clearance

Scrub patches are often important because they support high violet densities used for breeding. Patches should be cleared on rotation and allowed to regrow, creating a mosaic of scrub and grassland of varying heights. Areas where scrub has been cleared are especially good for violet regeneration. On exposed sites some scrub may be beneficial by providing shelter.

Damp grassland, flushes and moorland

Aim to maintain damp or heathy vegetation where violets (often Marsh Violets) are abundant in medium height swards and suitable nectar sources are available. Waterlogged sites can be unsuitable especially under very acidic conditions.

Grazing

Extensive light cattle grazing is ideal, as some poaching encourages violet regeneration. Heavy grazing, especially by sheep, is detrimental. Where grazing is impractical autumn mowing and raking can be effective in maintaining suitable habitat.

Scrub Clearance

Scrub clearance can be undertaken as required. On afforested stream edges clearance of conifers and brash 5-10m back can create ideal habitat.

Grassland with Bracken

Aim to maintain abundant violets in medium height swards, in association with Bracken or scrub edges.

Grazing

Bracken/grassland mosaics encourage an abundant supply of violets by suppressing grass growth. Aim to maintain a light Bracken cover. Extensive cattle or pony grazing is ideal, especially in winter and early spring, as the trampling helps break up the dense standing trash which suppresses violet and grass growth. Some sites may be maintained by sheep grazing, though they are not as effective at trampling Bracken.

Bracken Control

Spraying in late summer or early autumn before the Bracken begins to die back can be effective in areas where dense Bracken is already established. Small-scale autumn and winter raking and disturbance of dense Bracken litter can also be beneficial. Periodic (3-10 year rotation) Bracken cutting by swipe in late May or early June can be used on ungrazed or too lightly grazed sites. Bruising by machine or by hand in June may also reduce Bracken densities. Scrub clearance (or burning) on a 5-10 year rotation can be undertaken, but scrub should not be eliminated as it often provides shelter.

Coastal grassland, dunes and scrub

The aims and prescriptions for coastal grasslands are the same as those for chalk and limestone grassland. Little is known about managing sand dunes for Dark Green Fritillary; however management practices aimed at maintaining herb-rich vegetation are likely to benefit the species.



above In the uplands, sheltered violet-rich damp grassland and flushes with abundant nectar sources provide suitable breeding habitat

below Ideal calcareous grassland habitat with a high proportion of medium height turf with patches of scrub



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

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Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP

Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)

Designed and produced by nectarcreative.com 01942 681648. Printed on 100% recycled stock.

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2010
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NATURAL ENGLAND

Produced as part of Butterfly Conservation's Midlands Fritillaries project with funding from Countdown and supported by the Tubney Charitable Trust.