



REVISED PLAN NOVEMBER 2021

DINGY SKIPPER

Erynnis tages

1. INTRODUCTION

The dingy skipper butterfly is well-named because on first appearance it can appear drab and moth like. At most sites adults are generally only seen in ones or twos so it can be easily overlooked. In dull weather and at night it perches on the top of dead flower heads such as black knapweed with wings curved in a position not seen in any other British butterfly. On warm sunny days it can be highly active and territorial.



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In Warwickshire the dingy skipper larval foodplants are species of bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus spp.*). The butterfly not only requires large vigorous plants but also plants growing in situations where the outer shoots of the plant are growing over bare ground or aggregate. Some taller vegetation is also required for shelter and roosting. Loss of bare ground due to lack of management or scrub invasion are the biggest threats to the species. Most Warwickshire colonies are found on post-industrial habitats such as brickworks, quarries, disused railways and spoil banks, these sites contain early successional habitat. Colonies are often small and discrete with less than 50 adults present during the whole of the flight periods.

2.	OBJECTIVES	TARGETS
Associated Action Plans are: 'Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land', 'Lowland Heathland', 'Lowland Calcareous Grassland', 'Roadside Verges', 'Quarries & Gravel Pits', 'Small Blue' and 'Chalk Carpet'		
PLEASE CONSULT THE 'GENERIC SPECIES' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR OBJECTIVES COMMON TO ALL SPECIES PLANS		
A.	Increase the level of monitoring so that at least 20% of sites are covered by species timed count or full transect.	2025
B.	Maintain the current population size and range.	ongoing
C.	Increase the range of the dingy skipper and increase the number of viable colonies.	2025

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

The dingy skipper is on the current UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species list published in 2007([Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#)). The targets and objectives for the [Dingy Skipper](#) BAP, updated in 2010, may be seen online.

[Butterfly Conservation](#) has produced a National Action Plan (Bourn *et al.* 2000) for this species and has classed the species as “*medium priority*” for conservation action. The immediate major objectives of the Butterfly Conservation Action Plan are:

- *to halt the rapid decline of this butterfly in the UK*
- *to maintain viable networks of populations throughout its current range*
- *to conduct research on the distribution and ecology of the species to enable its effective conservation*
- *in the long-term to restore its 1950 Warwickshire range*

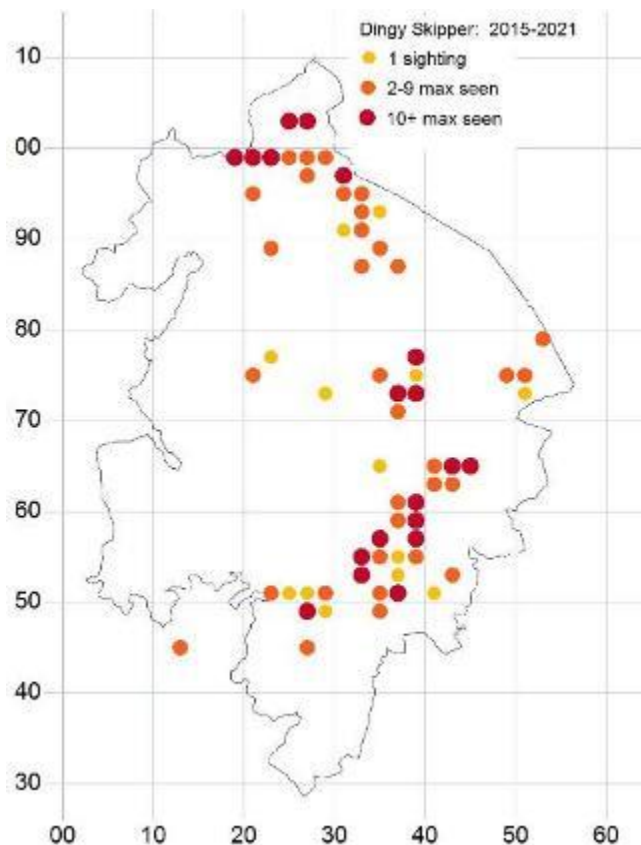
4. CURRENT STATUS

The dingy skipper is a relatively widespread species in the southern half of the UK but has declined substantially in many areas during the 20th century. This decline has been most marked in the eastern counties of England and lowland Scotland where the species is now extinct in a number of counties; it is becoming far more restricted in its remaining English and Welsh strongholds. The [National Butterfly Monitoring Scheme](#) shows that the number of 10km grid squares occupied by the species declined by 46% since 1970 (Fox *et al.*, 2006) and over the last ten years it has suffered a 5% decrease in distribution and a 19% decrease in population (Butterfly Conservation, 2011). The strongholds for this species are central and southern counties of England.

The [Millennium Atlas Survey](#) 1995-1999 (Asher *et al.* 2001) found 38 sites for dingy skipper in Warwickshire, spread over 14 tetrads, over 40% of which are designated Local Wildlife Sites.

Following recent proactive conservation measures and despite some losses the number of colonies has increased to 61 (2014), with the species present in all 5 Warwickshire districts and Solihull. The distribution map below shows a concentration of sites on post-industrial habitats in the north of the county and around the Lias grasslands around Southam and Kineton. The distribution around Southam matches that of the grizzled skipper. This species survives at low population densities on most post industrial sites in the county and monitoring of sites between 2005 and 2010 has rarely revealed double figure counts. The best sites are within and around the MOD Kineton military sites, Southam (Long Itchington) Quarry and the Kingsbury Colliery restored spoil heap (both designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Ryton Wood Meadows. All these sites are post-industrial and most are vulnerable to development pressure.

In 2015 the number of sites was 71, up from 31 in 1999, with 20 potential sites. By 2018 Ettington North and South was Warwickshire’s largest Dingy Skipper colony following conservation management of the site. In 2021 there are 84 definite colonies of which over 40% are designated LWS; although some old sites have been lost, more than one new one has been gained.



Distribution map for 2015-2021
(Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire)

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

A wide range of species and habitats are protected under international and domestic laws, including the [Wild Birds Directive](#) (1979), the [Wildlife and Countryside Act](#) (1981), the [Conservation Regulations](#) (1994) and [EC Habitats Directive](#) (1992). Protection of sites is afforded nationally through SSSI, [Special Areas of Conservation](#) (SAC) and [Local Nature Reserve](#) (LNR) statutory status. Other sites are offered recognition of their value through Local Wildlife Site status (LWS), Local Character Areas and identified Landscape Scale Areas. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2012) chapter/section 11 states conditions with regard to any development negatively affecting biodiversity, including protected sites, ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats (paragraph 118). The Wildlife & Countryside Act and schedule 2 of the [Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations](#) (2010) make it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take, possess, sell, buy or transport a range of species.

The dingy skipper is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act which only protects it from sale.

4.2 Current Factors Affecting the Species

- **Lack of and inappropriate management** to control natural succession of grassland to scrub or to prevent grassland becoming rank.
- **Destruction of suitable habitat** through housing, industrial development, intensive agriculture, tree planting or land 'improvement'.
- **Inappropriate Grazing.** The species can suffer from lack of grazing leading to an average turf height increase reducing the percentage of bare ground rendering its larval foodplant unsuitable. Drought or over grazing can cause the larval foodplant to lose vigour making it unsuitable.
- **Fragmentation** and isolation of existing colonies.

5. LOCAL ACTION

Current conservation action is largely reactive to threats to sites containing dingy skipper:

- The SITA Trust: Bringing Back the Small Blue Project has removed scrub from a large number of sites in the Southam area. This work has benefited the dingy skipper and the butterfly has recolonised two sites. Seeding of bird's-foot-trefoil at one further site has created conditions for a further colonisation.
- Extensive research was carried out in 2008 on 11 colony sites in Warwickshire to establish that they were the ideal ova deposition sites. In 2009 the results of this research was used to create habitat on one site and subsequently the dingy skipper population has shown a large increase in size.
- Where mineral and landfill sites are restored with conservation in mind creating habitat for the dingy skipper can be achieved relatively easily by seeding with bird's-foot-trefoil in areas with ample bare ground and/or abundant aggregate or stone
- In 2013 the Ecology Team at the Warwickshire County Council, led by David Lowe, Principal Ecologist, was awarded the 'Marsh Promotion of Lepidoptera' Award in recognition of its exceptional contribution to the conservation and promotion of butterflies and moths in the county.
- [Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire](#) volunteers monitor 23 sites by full butterfly transect. BCW aims to increase the range of the dingy skipper by :
 - working with [CEMEX](#) (2015 ongoing) at 6 quarrying sites (Meriden site at Cornets End, Griffin Farm and Southam Quarry Old Site, Parkfield Road and Malpass Quarry at Rugby and Marsh Lane, Salford Priors) and hoping for small blue and grizzled skipper as well. Dingy Skipper may have colonised Parkfield Road and Malpass sites but too early to call them colonies.
 - working with Rugby Borough Council (RBC) to clear scrub at Newton Cutting Picnic Site on ground already seeded with bird's foot trefoil and create a butterfly bank at Newbold Old Allotments (2015 ongoing). There have been sightings but it is too early to call them colonies.

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan

- work with [Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#) (2014/5) to seed a field with bird's foot trefoil at Stipers Hill in the Anker Valley has resulted in a colony being established.
- working with Warwickshire CC Highways (2018 ongoing) to carry out management for butterflies at Ettington North and South and Southam Bypass embankments.
- working with Jaguar Land Rover, a compensation site at Gaydon is now colonised.

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By
PLEASE CONSULT THE '<i>GENERIC SPECIES</i>' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL SPECIES PLANS			
Policy, Legislation & Protection			
PL1. Ensure the protection of all known dingy skipper colonies by designation as LWSs at the earliest instance and secure 4 sites within each meta-population area.	LWSP	HBA BCW WWT WDC RBC SDC NWBC NBBC SMBC	ongoing
PL2. Include habitat requirements of dingy skipper when drawing up mitigation or restoration measures in the development control process for quarries, 'brownfield' land etc., where located adjacent to existing colonies.	WCC	LOs SDC WDC NWBC RBC NBBC SMBC	ongoing
Site / Species Safeguard & Management Targets increased in view of progress			
SM1. Increase the number of viable colonies by 6 to a total of 90.	BCW	SMBC NBBC NWBC SDC RBC WDC LOs	2025
SM2. Encourage the maintenance of extent and condition of sites where dingy skipper occurs by appropriate management and ensure that any management at known sites is sensitive to the habitat requirements of the butterfly.	BCW	SMBC NBBC NWBC WDC SDC RBC WWT	ongoing
SM3. Remove scrub from grasslands on former sites to create suitable habitat for dingy skipper and where appropriate seed with bird's-foot-trefoil.	BCW	NE NBBC SMBC WDC RBC SDC NWBC WWT LOs	ongoing

SM4. Include habitat requirements of the dingy skipper in the management of public open space in areas where the butterfly occurs by establishing bird's foot trefoil.	BCW	SDC SMBC NWBC WDC RBC NBBC	ongoing
SM5. Seek and develop opportunities to establish new colonies on road side verges, new quarries and landfill sites.	BCW	CEMEX WDC SDC NWBC RBC NBBC SMBC LOs JLR	ongoing
SM6. Using recent research, create breeding conditions on another 10 sites.	BCW	WWT NE SDC WDC RBC SMBC NWBC NBBC LOs	2025
Advisory			
A1. Continue to disseminate information to landowners to introduce management for dingy skipper.	BCW	NE WWT WDC RBC SDC NWBC NBBC SMBC LOs	ongoing
Research & Monitoring			
RM1. Continue monitoring all large colony sites and at least one site in each dingy skipper meta-population to determine any change in status. Monitor annually at least 20% of sites by species timed count or full transect.	BCW	WWT	ongoing
RM2. Visit a minimum of 90% of all current and potential dingy skipper sites biannually and collate presence/absence results to establish population status and distribution.	BCW	WWT	ongoing
RM3. Continue to survey former locations for the species.	BCW	WWT	ongoing
RM4. Revise all meta-population maps using recent survey information. Prioritise areas for potential new colonies within or near to existing meta-populations.	BCW		annual
Communication, Education & Publicity			
CP1. Highlight the dingy skipper's ability to survive at low population levels and therefore the need for careful monitoring at former and existing sites through close liaison with landowners and managers.	BCW	WWT	NE ongoing

Abbreviations: BCW – Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire, JLR – Jaguar Land Rover, LOs – Landowners, LWSP – Local Wildlife Sites Project, NBBC – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, NE – Natural England, NWBC – North Warwick Borough Council, RBC – Rugby Borough Council, SDC – Stratford District Council, SMBC – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, WDC – Warwick District Council, WCC – Warwickshire County Council, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. PROGRESS WITH ACTIONS

From 2015–2020 there will be a rolling programme of reporting on progress, of 10 action plans per year with an annual summary of results. Progress with this plan up to 2015 can be seen at <https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/LBAP>.

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Oates, M. (2015) *In Pursuit of Butterflies: A Fifty-year Affair* - based on fifty years of detailed diaries.

Butterfly Conservation (2015) [The State of Britain's Butterflies](#) - an assessment based on recording and monitoring schemes and making recommendations for conservation.

RSPB (2016) [State of Nature](#) – a stocktake of all our native wildlife by over 50 wildlife organisations.

Natural England (2016) [Conservation Strategy for the 21st Century](#) Sets out how NE will help deliver DEFRA's ambitions for the environment to reverse biodiversity loss, sustain distinctive landscapes and enhance engagement with nature.

Measures, D. (2016) [Kaleidoscope. The secret lives of Britain's butterflies.](#) An illustrated guide to watching butterflies.

Worldwide Fund for Nature (2018) [The Living Planet Report](#): aiming higher. Published in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

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Butterfly Conservation - [Butterfly Banks](#), [Scallops](#), [Scrapes](#), [Seeding and Plug Planting](#) - management factsheets for advice on habitat creation and maintenance that can benefit several species of butterfly and moth in one location.

[Buglife](#) - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust

[Nature After Minerals](#) is a resource for everyone with an interest in quarry restoration & minerals planning for biodiversity.

[Warwickshire CC Mineral Strategy](#) - the minerals development framework consists of a number of documents.

MineralsUK - the British Geological Survey's [Centre for Sustainable Mineral Development](#). This website has a wealth of information on mineral resources, mineral planning, policy and legislation, sustainable development, statistics and exploration.

[Big Butterfly Count](#) 2019 – almost 1.6m individuals of the 19 target species (17 butterflies and 2 day flying moths) were recorded and, generally, more butterflies were seen than in 2018. The inter-continental migrant [Painted Lady](#) butterfly had an excellent year, making up one quarter of all the records and more than twice as many as the next most abundant species, the [Peacock](#).

10. CONTACT

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