

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Silver-studded Blue

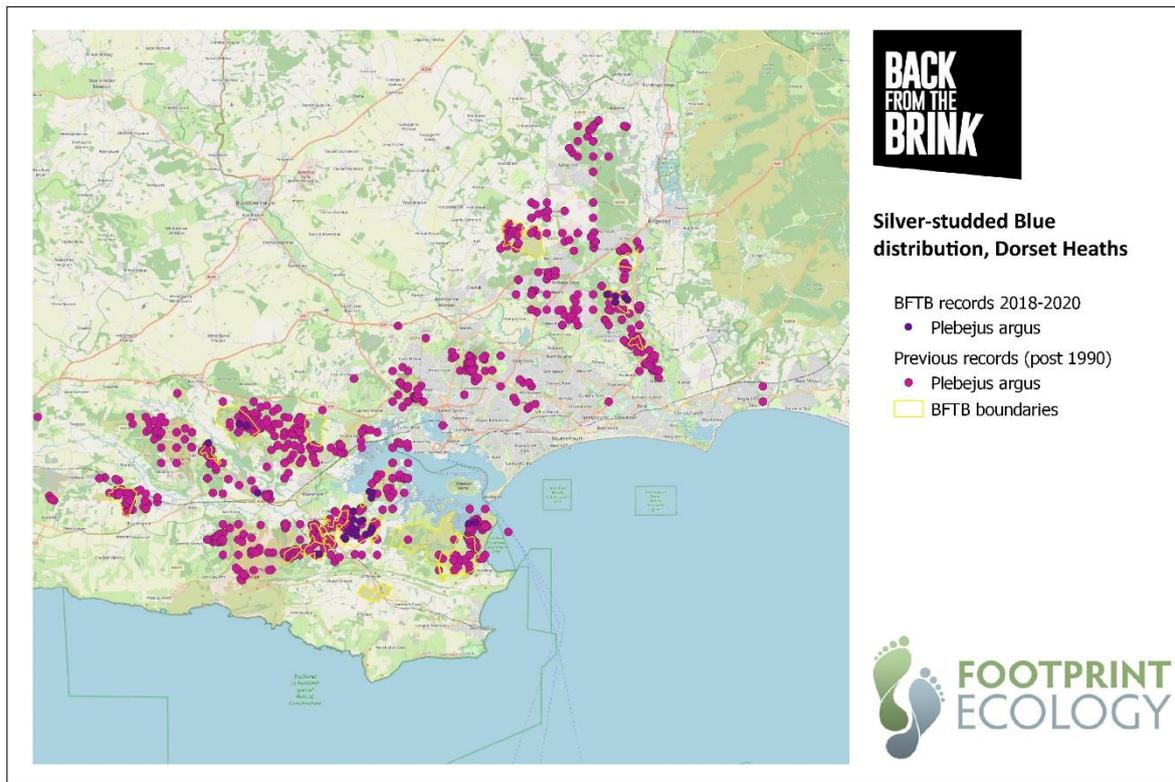
BftB project: IP01 Dorset's Heathland Heart

Project lead organisation: Plantlife

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Species name – common & scientific	Silver-studded Blue – <i>Plebejus argus</i>
Photograph	 <p>© D Liley & S Lake / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Insect - Lepidoptera
Conservation status	NERC S.41, GB Redlist - IUCN Vulnerable
UK distribution	Most colonies are in southern England, particularly Cornwall, the Dorset heaths, the New Forest, the Thames Basin Heaths and Sussex Heaths, the Pembrokeshire Coast and Gower Peninsula, also the Isle of Portland in Dorset and Great Orme in North Wales
Habitat associations	Found mainly in lowland heathland and occasionally in bogs, with a few colonies on calcareous grassland and sand dune. It requires short, sparse vegetation such as recently burnt heathland or quarries and cliff tops with thin soils where its associated species <i>Lasius</i> sp. black ants occur.
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	In the Dorset Heaths monitoring is carried out through UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme transects and some land managers carry out additional transects. A BFTB programme of self-led volunteer monitoring using timed counts was therefore set up with the intention of providing finer-scale information for sites with patchy records. Timed surveys were carried out on Hartland Moor, Hydes Heath and in Wareham Forest. Incidental records were also collected during surveys for other species.

Sites habitat management works	Prescribed burns, Heather cutting and gorse clearance were carried out on five sites (Stoborough, Grange, Barnsfield and Godlingston Heaths and Hartland Moor) over an area of about 15 ha of habitat suitable for the species. Only a small area was carried out specifically for Silver-studded Blue - the remainder was targeted at other species, but should provide good habitat for Silver-studded Blue in 2-5 years.
Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	Management (see above) carried out for Pale Dog-violet, Lesser Butterfly Orchid and Purbeck Mason Wasp also created suitable habitat for Silver-studded Blue.
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	Awareness was raised through volunteer training and survey events and through a variety of “taster” events (BFBT stall at community events).
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	Silver-studded Blue is widespread across the Dorset heaths (see Map 1 – previous records supplied by Dorset Environmental Records Centre). BFTB recording resulted in records from 30 additional locations within existing sites, notably at Hartland Moor, Hyde’s Heath, Slepe Heath, Higher Hyde and Hyde Bog. Some of these records are likely to be new populations resulting from landscape-scale management carried out just prior to BFTB (e.g. Hyde’s Heath), others are likely to be ones that were previously overlooked (e.g. Hartland Moor), while others may be a consequence of populations shifting over time in response to rotational habitat management (e.g. Studland).
Recorded Abundance of species populations	854 records were made at over 30 locations during BFTB surveys. This is a small subset of the Dorset population and does not provide information about the total population size or trends.
Other results documented?	At Barnsfield Heath, after targeted Heather cutting was carried out, the population count increased by 25% to 212 individuals (note that a comparison with an unmanaged control is not available). BFTB volunteers also provided incidental records of Silver-studded Blue in areas managed through BFTB that would not have been suitable for the species previously (e.g. on Hartland Moor).
Species Recovery Curve progress made	6-7 Best approach adopted (<i>partially</i>). BFTB management resulted in a population increase at one site where baseline data were available. Small-scale management on other sites has also increased suitable habitat for the species. While evidenced recovery is very limited, rotational management for early successional habitats is now “business as usual” for BFBT partners, and Silver-studded Blue is likely to be a beneficiary.
Recommendations for future work:-	Ongoing, periodic monitoring across the heathland landscape will be needed to assess how the species is responding to management. This should be possible through the Purbeck Natural History Forum but will require investment in terms of survey set up and support to volunteers to achieve.



Map 1: The distribution of Silver-studded Blue across the Dorset Heaths (previous records provided by the Dorset Environmental Records Centre).