

The Flight of the Fritillary

Volunteer engagement, scientific insights

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BACKGROUND

Open University (OU) scientists have been organising volunteers to count snakeshead fritillaries on North Meadow National Nature Reserve (Wilts) since 1999. Patterns are emerging relating population changes to hydrology.

Fritillaries are a rare species in Britain and are symbolic of a scarce floodplain-meadow plant community found on less than 1500 ha in the UK. OU researchers have been studying this vegetation type for 20 years.

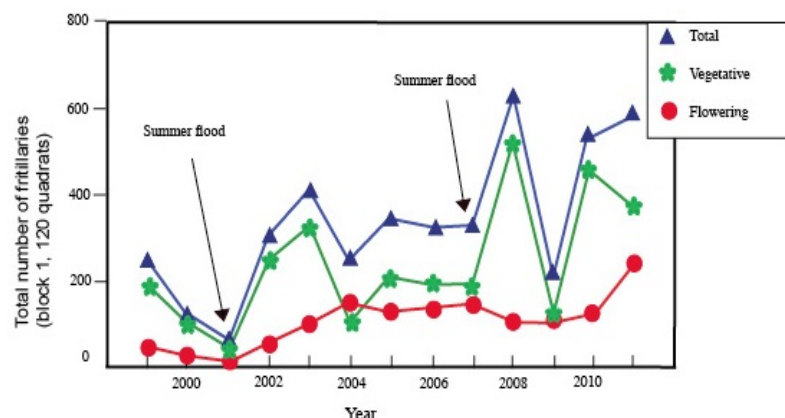
This member of the lily family relies on seeds for reproduction and their main pollinators are thought to be early season bumblebees.

Little is known about which species of bumblebee are important to fritillaries and whether the decline of bumblebee populations will prove a problem for them.



Albert Coporaal

Abundance of fritillaries at North Meadow, Cricklade 1999-2011



OUR PROJECT

The aim is to count fritillaries at two additional sites using the same rigorous methods as at North Meadow,

We will aim to use volunteers from different backgrounds at both new sites.

Provide volunteers with information on bumblebee identification and ask them to record sightings following standard methods.

Feedback will be provided to volunteer groups to develop understanding over three years and to encourage groups to be self sustaining.

Information will be gathered from the volunteer groups about their motivations in order to improve their experiences.

We will work with other conservation organisations and experts to coordinate research

PROGRESS SO FAR

We have

- identified two new sites (Lugg Meadows, Hereford and Clattinger Farm, Wilts), and sought support and permission from site owners.
- secured support from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BCT) and the Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI), including their help in training OU staff and volunteers in BCT survey method.
- fabricated 25 extra quadrat frames
- written an article in the Floodplain Meadow Partnership (FMP) newsletter (600+ circulation) and advertised in a local paper (Cricklade Chronicle) in Wilts to secure volunteers.
- Identified 2 dates for counts (14th + 24th April 2012)
- Planned to target volunteers with a natural history interest at Clattinger and family groups on the Lugg Meadows.