

# Nottinghamshire LBAP: Species Action Plan

## Grizzled Skipper

### *Pyrgus malvae*

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#### Current status

The Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus malvae*) occurs across the South of England up to the level of the Humber Estuary, although is rare outside central southern England and in the East Midlands is confined to a small number of scattered colonies. Its main larval food plants are creeping cinquefoil, agrimony, wild strawberry, tormentil and silverweed. The species relies on unimproved grasslands managed by low intensity methods, preferring areas where there are bare patches of earth; therefore disused railway lines provide ideal conditions. It has the strongest colonies on the lines south of Newark, and adjacent sites.

In Nottinghamshire, the species has experienced a decline and using criteria established by Butterfly Conservation, was categorised as “High Priority Regional Important” in 2000. This was because:

- There had been a significant decline in recent decades
- There were fewer than 30 colonies remaining

Between 1970 and 1988, the Grizzled Skipper was recorded in 10 10km squares in Nottinghamshire. However, records from the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre and Butterfly Conservation’s East Midlands Branch show that in the period

1980 to 1998 the species was noted in only 4 10km squares. Recent recording has seen an increase in distribution, with the species being noted in 38 1km squares (6 10km squares) between 2006 and 2015 and 35 1km squares (6 10km squares) between 2011 and 2015.

Period	1970-1988	1980-1998	2006-2015	2011-2015
No. of 10km squares	10	4	6	6
No. of 1km squares	Un-known	Un-known	38	35

Natural colonies in Nottinghamshire are all located in the south and east of the county, and the majority are found on disused railway lines running from Newark to Alverton; running south-east and west of Bingham, and at Barnstone. The species is also found on sections of active railway line, namely the Great Central Railway and a main railway line west of Bingham, the former population being rather isolated from colonies further east. Other sites where the species occurs include a disused airfield, former industrial areas, former gypsum works and new woodlands.

#### Targets

- 1) Maintain current (2006-2015) distribution of the species
- 2) Increase distribution to 45 1km squares by 2025

#### Threats

- Lack of habitat management, with a loss of open areas due to scrub encroachment
- Loss of suitable habitat on disused railway lines to development, including path and cycle path construction
- Small and isolated population size making colonies vulnerable to loss and limiting the chance of recolonization.
- Loss of sites, particularly post-industrial sites, to development.

#### Current initiatives

- The Grizzled Skipper is a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006),

## Current initiatives (cont'd)

- making it a focus for conservation action at a national level
- A SITA Trust-funded project (£66,000) coordinated by Notts BAG was run between 2011 and 2013, which saw enhancement works take place on 17 actual or potential Grizzled Skipper sites
- Subsequently, the surveying and mapping of Grizzled Skippers has continued to be coordinated by Notts BAG on behalf of Butterfly Conservation East Midlands, and it is intended that this will continue in future years.
- Notts BAG organises a group of volunteers to undertake habitat management works at key sites over the winter
- Notts BAG partner organisations have informed private and public landowners about the presence of Grizzled Skipper on their land, and given management advice to them on how best to manage areas for this species

## Proposed action

### *Policy and legislation*

- Nothing proposed

### *Site safeguard and management*

- Determine ownership of all known sites for the species and inform landowners of their conservation importance
- Seek to establish and implement management plans for all sites that hold Grizzled Skipper
- Continue volunteer work parties on key sites
- Identify potential sites for colonisation and ensure that they are brought into suitable condition
- Protect all known sites supporting the species from damaging development
- Carry out works to reduce fragmentation between populations

### *Species management and protection*

- Ensure that larval food plants are present on potential sites for colonisation
- Enhance egg-laying habitat through the creation of scrapes and ballast piles

## Advisory

- Produce a leaflet for site managers on habitat management for Grizzled Skipper

### *Future research and monitoring*

- Continue the recording of Grizzled Skipper in the county
- Establish annual timed counts at key sites in order to measure year on year variations in population size
- Undertake a study of population dynamics within core and satellite colonies

### *Communications and publicity*

- Promote, by publicising the successful spread of Grizzled Skipper, the worth of disused railway sites as valuable habitats for wildlife

## What you can do

- Report sightings of Grizzled Skipper to the county butterfly recorder, c/o Butterfly Conservation East Midlands
- Volunteer for practical conservation work benefiting Grizzled Skippers – contact Notts BAG

*First published in 1998: Original authors - Michael Walker & Dr Alan Birch (Butterfly Conservation East Midlands)*