



# Policy on Introductions and Re-Introductions

## Position Statement

Butterflies and moths are in steep decline, largely due to the loss and fragmentation of their habitats combined with changes in habitat management. Most conservation effort is directed at conserving habitats and allowing species to respond or re-colonise naturally. However, some sites are too isolated for this to happen and in such cases conservationists sometimes wish to consider deliberate introductions or re-introductions. Unfortunately, many past efforts to introduce or re-introduce species have failed and there are serious concerns that casual releases confuse conservation effort and disrupt the recording of species natural ranges and trends.

A careful approach is therefore important and we need to learn from experience. Following an attempt at introduction or re-introduction, continuity of management and monitoring are vital. The habitat requirements of the species and the reasons for its decline should be understood, while the cause of its extinction on the receptor site should have been removed. There should be a long-term management plan that will maintain suitable habitat, and the site should be large enough to sustain a viable population.

- Butterfly Conservation's goal is to secure and improve the status of butterflies and moths.
- In attempting to achieve this, it gives priority to conserving existing populations in the areas where they occur naturally, while promoting improvements in land management to enable butterflies and moths to re-colonise former areas and extend their ranges naturally.
- Butterfly Conservation acknowledges that we live in a fast-changing environment subjected to climate change, fragmentation of habitat, successional habitat development, and rapidly-evolving land management practices, as a result of which butterflies and moths will change in distribution and abundance with or without human assistance.
- Butterfly Conservation recognises:
  - the wish of the general public, as well as the charity's members, to see abundant and widespread naturally-occurring populations of butterflies and moths throughout the UK and to see them restored to their former ranges.
  - that attempts at introductions and re-introductions of butterflies and moths will continue to take place and wishes to encourage a responsible approach, openness and good practice. This involves the proper recording of introductions and re-introductions and properly informing organisations and individuals responsible for monitoring butterfly and moth populations, so that their changing status can be assessed accurately.
  - that, in restoring and creating habitat, it may be considered necessary in certain circumstances to establish butterfly and moth populations through re-introductions or even introductions outside their historical range to respond to climate change.
  - the legitimate interest in captive breeding; and in introducing and re-introducing species when it is scientifically sound to do so.

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- 1) Butterfly Conservation's goal is to secure and improve the status of butterflies and moths
- 2) In attempting to achieve this, it gives priority to conserving existing populations in the areas where they naturally occur, while promoting improvements in land management to enable butterflies and moths to re-colonise former areas naturally and to extend their ranges naturally.
- 3) Butterfly Conservation will only devote its own resources to re-introduction as an avenue of last resort – where, for instance, a species has become extinct or is on the verge of extinction, the habitat extent and quality is now suitably restored, and the species has no realistic chance of re-colonising naturally.
- 4) Butterfly Conservation will consider approving re-introductions if these are in line with Species Action Plan (SAP) and Regional Action Plan (RAP) priorities, and its staff have been fully consulted from the inception of the project.
- 5) Butterfly Conservation will only approve the re-introduction of butterflies and moths if all of the following conditions are met:
  - a) The re-introduction and necessary management for success and persistence has the permission and support of the appropriate landowner.
  - b) Extinction is confirmed at the receptor site and natural re-establishment is shown to be unlikely.
  - c) The proposal does not conflict with requirements or provisions for legally protected species or sites.
  - d) Careful consideration is given to the possibly adverse effects of habitat modification carried out for the re-introduction on other species of conservation concern in the area.
  - e) Evidence is provided that the proposal will not have a harmful impact on the donor population.
  - f) The habitat requirements of the species and the reasons for its decline are understood, and the causes of its extinction on the receptor site have been removed. There should be a long-term management plan which will maintain suitable habitat, and the site should be large enough to sustain a viable population.
  - g) The proposal and selection of donor and receptor sites arises from a recovery strategy for the species.
  - h) Evidence is provided of the likely success of the species establishing and sustaining itself
  - i) The re-introduction is properly monitored, recorded, and evaluated and the records are submitted to the appropriate recording agencies.
  - j) Butterfly Conservation and all other relevant conservation bodies and authorities have been fully consulted about the proposal.
- 6) BC's Director of Conservation will be responsible for advising those seeking Butterfly Conservation's support with proposals for re-introducing species and will report decisions to BC's Conservation Committee and consult them as appropriate.
- 7) Butterfly Conservation encourages the open documentation of all releases, whether or not these take place under its auspices. It strongly discourages the casual release of captive-bred stock.
- 8) There is educational value in the rearing of common and widespread species and their release back into the environments from which they were taken. Where 'surplus' or unwanted stock of captive-bred rare and threatened species is available, advice should be sought from BC's Director of Conservation.
- 9) The release of non-native species is illegal under UK law.
- 10) Butterfly Conservation considers that 'rescue' translocation is unacceptable as an excuse for permitting the destruction of sites occupied by rare and threatened species.

## Guidelines for Proposals

For Butterfly Conservation to take a favourable view of your proposal, you should consider the following points when formulating a species re-introduction strategy. These should be addressed in any formal proposal:

- i) The species should have declined significantly, or be threatened with extinction, at national or, in certain cases, regional level.
- ii) The proposal should not distract resources or attention from the effective conservation of remaining natural populations and the re-introduction proposal should be an integral part of a recovery strategy derived from the national Species Action Plan (SAP) or Regional Action Plan (RAP).
- iii) The habitat requirements of the species and the reasons for its decline should be understood, and the cause of its extinction on the receptor site should have been removed. There should be a long-term management plan which will maintain suitable habitat, and the site should be large enough to sustain a viable population.
- iv) Extinction should be confirmed at the receptor site, the mobility of the target species should be assessed, and natural re-establishment should be shown to be unlikely, despite any measures underway to promote it.
- v) Opportunities to restore networks of populations are preferable to single-site re-introductions, unless the latter is a necessary prelude to the former.
- vi) Sufficient numbers of individuals should be used in the re-introduction to ensure a reasonable chance of establishing a genetically-diverse population.
- vii) Wherever possible, the donor stock should be drawn from populations that are geographically close to the receptor site, and which occupy similar habitats.
- viii) The receptor site should normally be within the recorded historical range of the species
- ix) Removal of livestock should not harm the donor populations. Donor populations must be monitored before, during and after the re-introduction programme and receive no less management care and attention than populations in the receptor site.
- x) The possibility that re-introduction of a species and associated management might adversely affect other key species on the receptor site should be carefully considered.
- xi) While the number of individuals to be released can sometimes be boosted by a short period of captive breeding, the necessary knowledge, expertise and facilities must be in place to ensure that this can be achieved successfully. The long-term culture of captive-bred stock for later release is discouraged because of the problems of disease, in-breeding and adaptation. Stock for release should not normally have been captive bred for more than two generations.
- xii) Re-introduced populations should be monitored for at least five years and contingency plans made in case the re-introduction fails, the donor population is adversely affected, or other species are adversely affected.
- xiii) For Butterfly Conservation approval, proposals including consultation responses from the relevant conservation bodies and statutory organisations should be submitted to BC's Director of Conservation, who will consult with BC's Conservation Committee where necessary.
- xiv) Approval and support must be obtained from the owners of both receptor and donor sites and, in the case of proposals led by BC branches, with neighbouring branches involved in the relevant Regional Action Plan (RAP).
- xv) The entire process should be fully documented and reported to the Society, to local record centres, and the statutory conservation agencies.

Individuals or BC branches can obtain a questionnaire form from the Director of Conservation, to whom completed forms should also be submitted. Prior to completing the questionnaire, individuals are also encouraged to discuss proposals informally with the Director of Conservation.

## Terminology

The definitions used are drawn from those given in the 'IUCN Guidelines for Re-introductions' 1998.

**Introduction** – termed 'Conservation or Benign Introduction' in the IUCN guidelines to define an attempt to establish a species, for the purpose of conservation, outside its recorded distribution but within an appropriate habitat and eco-geographic area.

**Re-introduction** – an attempt to establish a species<sup>1</sup> in an area which was once part of its historical<sup>2</sup> range, but from which it has been extirpated or become extinct<sup>3</sup>.

**Re-establishment** – a synonym for re-introduction but carrying the implication that the attempt has been successful.

**Re-enforcement / Supplementation** – an attempt to strengthen or otherwise modify an existing population by the addition of individuals of the same species.

**Translocation** – the deliberate action of moving individuals from one site to another in an attempt to effect one of the above.

**Release** – in the simplest sense the action of letting go live animals, but more often used to describe opportunistic, casual or clandestine efforts.

**Restoration** – The overall purpose and context for re-introduction attempts. In this document use of the term should be assumed to mean it has an objective and planned strategic basis.

<sup>1</sup> or recognised sub-species or race

<sup>2</sup> for practical reasons should be limited to known or recorded native range

<sup>3</sup> A taxon is extinct when there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died. The causes may be both human induced and /or natural.