

Butterfly Conservation

Despite the cool and wet conditions during spring and early summer, it has been a successful year for Marsh Fritillary on CABB project sites. Caterpillars successfully pupated, and autumn monitoring by Butterfly Conservation staff, partners and recorders identified new breeding sites again this year.

We continued to communicate and build capacity across our network, working with partners on the delivery of workshops on Marsh Fritillary and their habitats. Three larval web monitoring workshops were held in Counties Antrim and Tyrone and across the border in County Cavan. These were held in partnership with the RSPB, Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership, Ulster Wildlife, our sister INTERREG-funded project Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) and Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark at the Cavan-Burren Park.

We have also produced a Marsh Fritillary leaflet which we will make widely available through our partners and across our network. The leaflet, which folds out 'poster style', describes the life-cycle of the Marsh Fritillary illustrated by a useful calendar depicting the relevant stage at particular times of the year.

Last but not least, we delivered a capital works project at Pettigoe Plateau in County Fermanagh on a Marsh Fritillary breeding site we identified in early 2018. The programme of works included building a culvert, fencing and the installation of a pasture pump along the boundary of a designated site. The infrastructure will

enable the farmer to manage the cluster of small fields with grazing cattle to improve the condition of the habitat.



CABB Marsh Fritillary Workshop group at Dowara, Co Cavan. Credit: Rose Cremin



Marsh Fritillary Larval Web at Pettigoe Plateau. Credit: Rose Cremin

Further information

Visit our CABB webpage:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/co-operation-across-borders-for-biodiversity-cabb/>

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RSPB is the data controller for any personal data we hold. We will only use your personal data, on the basis of legitimate interest, to contact you with information about the CABB project which is relevant to you. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in future, please notify Caroline Marshall at caroline.marshall@rspb.org.uk or 00 44 28 9069 9090.

CABB partners, funders and supporters



CABB is supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Match funding has been provided by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in Ireland, RSPB Scotland and Mines Restoration Ltd.

CABB Newsletter

Issue 3: Winter 2019



The RSPB's new cot transferring cattle to the Lower Lough Erne Islands Reserve. Credit: Amy Burns

A major highlight for CABB since the last newsletter has been NI Water's Garron bog celebration day in September. The event was a huge success. It was great to be able to move on from the focused delivery of drain blocking to share details of a project well delivered with wins for both nature and people.

RSPB Scotland's peatland restoration work on 330 hectares at Tardoes has not only delivered peatland in better condition, it has also become a valuable best practice site to showcase peatland recovery work.

In Donegal, BirdWatch Ireland's predator-proof fences are proving vital in safeguarding remaining populations of lapwings and the new fences on the Pettigo Plateau will allow National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to graze the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with a view to getting it into favourable condition.

Looking forward, RSPB NI and Butterfly Conservation anticipate reaping results from the habitat management works at Montiagh Moss. RSPB NI also looks forward to managing its Lower Lough Erne Islands Reserve in 2020 aided by its new cot (pictured above).

Lots of other great work has effected positive change for habitats and species at CABB sites in the three countries.

We have also seen change within the CABB team. CABB is no different to any other time-bound project where staff on contracts move on to other full time work. On a positive note, this means that we can welcome new members to the CABB partnership and build up knowledge and skills for future careers and opportunities in nature conservation.



What is CABB?

CABB is a €4.9m partnership project funded by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.

By the end of 2021, CABB will:

- ⇒ Deliver 2,228 hectares of blanket bog in improving condition.
- ⇒ Prepare 8 Conservation Action Plans (CAPs) for key peatland sites.
- ⇒ Map habitats at CAP sites.
- ⇒ Improve habitat for Marsh Fritillary butterflies, hen harriers and breeding waders.
- ⇒ Share best practice and data.
- ⇒ Raise awareness of peatlands and key species.

Northern Ireland Water

On 19 September, Northern Ireland Water held an open day to showcase the successful completion of the capital works at Garron Plateau. Partners and key stakeholders were given the opportunity to visit the site and see the fantastic work of the 'Garron Plateau Bog Restoration Project'.

To begin the day, the visitors had a tour of Dungonnell Water Treatment Works and learned about the positive impacts of drain blocking on the water that filters down to the works for treatment. After the Treatment Works, everyone donned their wellies for a trip to Garron Plateau. Out on the blanket bog, visitors were able to see the benefits the bog restoration drain blocking work has brought to wildlife and the wider environment.

The IUCN Peatland UK Conference was held in Northern Ireland for the first time this October. Delegates from the UK and further afield had the opportunity to experience the Garron Plateau and see the drain blocking works for themselves.

The outcome for NI Water's work as part of CABB is to restore 444 hectares of the blanket bog on the plateau and deliver a quality better functioning bog. The works done to date on 500 hectares have already improved the water quality and habitat, creating ideal conditions for the native wildlife that

has been under pressure. As a result of blocking drainage ditches and raising water levels in the peat, bog pools have regenerated and water levels have been raised. This in turn provides the ideal conditions for sphagnum, the building blocks of peatland, to grow and flourish.

A Garron project video can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/NIWaterVideo>



Stakeholders on the Garron Plateau.
Credit: NI Water

BirdWatch Ireland



Dunlin on Tory Island
Credit: Michael Bell

As part of the CABB project, BirdWatch Ireland has been undertaking surveys of breeding waders at coastal sites throughout Counties Donegal and Sligo since 2017. Populations of breeding waders have declined at many of the sites since major surveys were last carried out in 1985 and 1995.

During 2019, a total of 366 breeding pairs of waders were recorded across 20 sites, consisting of 164 pairs of lapwings, 77 pairs of oystercatchers, 47 pairs of

ringed plovers, 37 pairs of snipe, 36 pairs of redshanks and five pairs of dunlins. Tory Island was the only site to hold breeding dunlins. Sadly this species seems destined for extinction in Ireland unless urgent action is taken to save it.

Lapwings were found breeding at 15 sites, though 10 sites held fewer than 10 pairs. The decline at Inch in County Donegal from 39 pairs in 2017 to just seven pairs in 2019 is a major concern. No successful breeding is thought to have taken place this year.

On a more positive note, declines in lapwing numbers have been reversed at three sites where predator exclusion fences were erected in 2014. Leading the way is Rinmore in County Donegal, where numbers have increased from a low of nine pairs in 2011 to 36 pairs in 2019.

This year, for the first time, several of the breeding wader sites were also surveyed for the presence of Marsh Fritillary butterflies. Twelve sites were visited during August and September with suitable habitat deemed to be present at five sites. The weather was far from ideal for much of the survey period. However, larval webs were found at three of the sites and another site is known to have breeding Marsh Fritillaries from historic records.

RSPB NI

The Pettigoe Plateau Conservation Action Plan (CAP) is in the final stages of drafting. The recommendations within the plan will include advice on drain blocking, grazing regimes, control of invasive species and wildfire response. RSPB NI will present the draft plan to NIEA shortly, anticipating that it will be finalised and signed off early in 2020. Our Pettigoe Project Manager, Katy Bell has finished working with CABB after contributing two years to the project. Katy's knowledge, expertise, enthusiasm and species recording will be greatly missed.

The Garron CAP is also in draft stage and our Project Manager Darren Houston has moved to a new job within catchment management. Darren has done an excellent job working with NI Water, statutory agencies, landowners and other stakeholders to present the draft CAP. His contribution towards the delivery of the drain blocking on Garron was greatly appreciated. We wish Katy and Darren well in their future careers and look forward to welcoming new staff to the CABB team in 2020.

Much work has been delivered at our Montiags Moss site with a view to bringing the land into good condition for marsh fritillary butterflies. Grazing, mechanical cutting of the grassland, fencing and scrub clearance have all been overseen by our Project Manager Cathryn Cochrane. Along with Butterfly Conservation and volunteers she has also been monitoring webs and adult butterflies. The Montiags CAP has also been presented to NIEA.



Bog pools on Pettigoe Plateau, the largest bog pool complex in NI.
Credit: Amy Burns

At Lough Erne, our new cot, the 'Joe Magee', has arrived on the lough and has already been transferring livestock to the islands in order to get the sward into great condition for the 2020 breeding season for waders.

RSPB Scotland

RSPB Scotland has appointed a second project manager to assist Clive Walton, who has been looking after CABB conservation work in a part-time capacity. Stephen Inglis, who has previous experience as an RSPB field survey volunteer, was appointed in October. With CABB-funded fencing work on Airds-Moss now completed to a high standard, the focus has now moved to undertaking peatland restoration works on private land. Negotiations have been taking place with landowners and several sites were in the frame before settling on one or two which we hope to take forward.



A very wet CABB-team visit to Muirkirk
Credit: Rachel O'Loan

The first phase of restoration works at Tardoes Farm in East Ayrshire was completed last March, and this extensive area (330 hectares) of upland blanket bog is now an active and valuable demonstration site for Scottish National Heritage (SNH). Procurement for another 400 hectares was undertaken and peatland restoration work commenced in September.

RSPB Scotland hosted the latest CABB board meeting and information sharing trip to Muirkirk at the beginning of September. Delegates from across the project took part in the trip, combining the business of the board with a tour of the CABB-funded plantation to bog restoration groundworks at Shiel Farm. Here they saw the revegetation process which is already underway. Non-board members participating in the trip also had the chance to visit Tardoes Farm on day two of the trip.

Weather and ground conditions were appropriately soggy for both expeditions! Colleagues also benefited from the opportunity to share knowledge and progress through spotlight talks and informal catch-ups. A big thank you to CABB Project Manager Clive Walton and Dave Beaumont from RSPB Scotland for hosting the group.