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Small pearl bordered fritillary butterfly

In recent decades, numbers of these two stunning butterfly species have trebled at DWT's Marsland nature reserve, a wooded valley on the Atlantic coast where Devon meets Cornwall. At the same time national populations have halved. Where has it all gone right for fritillaries at Marsland? These butterflies are habitat specialists, requiring just the right mixture of light and shade for both their larval food plant, violet, and their adult nectar sources such as bugle, to grow. That requires coppicing of woodland or sympathetic management of bracken to ensure flowers can grow, butterflies can lay eggs and caterpillars can eat – too much light or too much shade both pose a threat to this life cycle. Habitat management at Marsland every year ensures continued thriving generations of fritillaries here – an ongoing conservation success story.

Your donation will support all this work for wildlife.