

## Heath Fritillary (*Melitaea athalia*)

**Areas and status:** Very localised distribution within SW & SE England. Significant declines in distribution (-68%) and abundance (-87%) 1976-2014.

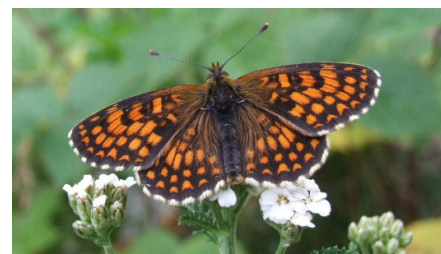
**Woodland type:** Lowland Broadleaved Woodland.

**Preferred habitat niches:** Coppice, rides, glades, edges and heathland valleys (Exmoor only). Breeds on Common Cow-wheat in woodlands; favours recently cut Sweet Chestnut or Hornbeam coppice on acid soils.

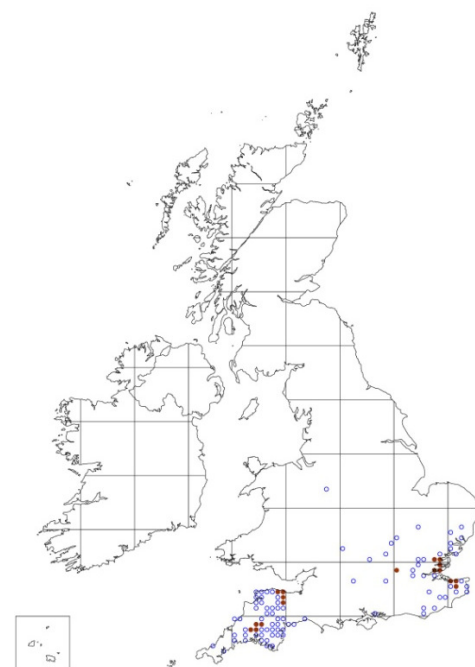
### Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Abandonment of coppicing and felling leading to loss of canopy gaps
- Lack of regular coppicing as coupes become unsuitable after 3-4 yrs once the canopy closes
- Overshading and scrubbing up of glades, rides and other open areas
- Habitat fragmentation and loss of connectivity leading to isolation of surviving populations

Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	Comment
Glades, Rides	Wide sunny rides are needed to enable colonisation of new coppiced habitat and they may also be used for breeding. Cut in 2/3 zones: 1 regularly for access, 2 on a 4-7 yr rotation & depending on the vigour of re-growth 3 on a 5-8 yr rotation. Widen and enlarge if necessary; width should be >1.5 times the height of nearby trees; scallop ride edges to create sheltered conditions. Creating new east-west rides and box junctions within woods provides valuable links to existing breeding areas.
Rotational coppice (<12yr rotation)	Coppice 60x60m to 140x140m coupes on short (<12 yrs) rotations, leaving less than 10-15% standards canopy cover (about 40 standards/ha). Plan coppice rotation to ensure that adjacent coupes are coppiced each winter to ensure a regular supply of newly coppiced habitat; if this is not possible, ensure that one winter's coupe is linked to the following winter's coupe by a ride/glade (the distance between these detached coupes should be <200m).
Grazing	Where deer are having a negative impact on coppice re-growth, erect deer-proof exclosures. Deer control will also be required if they are causing significant problems.
Connectivity	Manage woodlands on a landscape-scale by widening rides which connect clearings within woods and link up with rides/clearings in adjacent or nearby woods.



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○ Pre 2005  
● 2005 – 2014  
Source: Butterfly Conservation