

**Name:** **Heath fritillary butterfly**

*Melitaea athalia*

**UK status:** [UK BAP Priority](#). Rare, RDB2 (Shirt, 1987). Severe historic decline.

**London status:** Recently introduced to 1 site.

**Protected status:**

- W&CA, Schedule 5 (full protection)  
'Species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England' (CRoW Act, 2000)

**Relevant London HAPs:** Woodland

**Citation:**

The heath fritillary was until recently considered the UK's most endangered butterfly, although this dubious title now has further contenders. At one time it was reduced to just a handful of sites in east Kent and the West Country, although determined conservation action has halted the decline and even modestly expanded this beautifully-marked little butterfly's national range. In Greater London the heath fritillary has recently been introduced to Ruislip Woods National Nature Reserve (LB Hillingdon), under a conservation licence issued by English Nature. This



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was considered an ideal introduction site as it supports a large and thriving colony of common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*, the species' main larval foodplant. At present it is too early to state the success of the introduction in terms of the butterfly maintaining a self-sustaining population here. Managing authority; Hillingdon Borough Council/Ruislip & District Natural History Society

**Conservation priorities:**

- Continue optimum management at Ruislip Woods NNR for *Melitaea athalia*
- Monitor establishment from introduced stock within Ruislip Woods NNR

**References:**

[Butterfly Conservation, species data account](#)

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Plant C W (1987). *The butterflies of the London Area*. (London Natural History Society)

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