



## Silver-Studded Blue (*Plebejus argus*)



The Silver-studded Blue is a characteristic butterfly of English lowland heath. It is a nationally scarce species which has declined substantially through much of its former range, but which is still locally abundant on heathlands in southern England. Prees Heath Common is the only site remaining for this species in the Midlands area and therefore this site is of regional and national importance.

The Silver-studded Blue requires larval foodplants growing alongside patches of open soil or in short turf. It also needs the presence of one or two key species of ants with which it has a relationship at all stages of its life cycle.

### **1 Objectives and Targets**

#### **1.1 Objectives**

- A. Protect and enhance the existing population of Silver-studded Blues at Prees Heath Common by acquiring at least part of the site as a nature reserve.
- B. Increase the amount of suitable habitat available to the Silver-studded Blue at Prees Heath Common as well as encouraging appropriate management on other nearby sites.
- C. Raise awareness of the status and needs of the Silver-studded Blue through communication and education.

#### **1.2 Targets**

- To double the available habitat for Silver-studded Blue at Prees Heath from 3 ha to 6 ha by 2015
- To achieve and maintain a medium population (between 400 and 4,000 individuals) of Silver-studded Blue at Prees Heath until 2015.
- To extend the population of Silver-studded Blue to 2 new sites within the local area by 2015.

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## 2 Current Status

### 2.1 Importance

The Silver-studded Blue is widespread across temperate Europe and Asia to Japan. Its range appears to be stable in much of Europe but declines have been reported in some central and western European countries. In Britain, the Silver-studded Blue is a nationally scarce species which shows no evidence of recovery from its rapid decline in the twentieth century.

### 2.2 Trends

The national decline of the Silver-studded Blue was estimated to be 71% since 1800 (at the 10km square level) in 2001. Prees Heath Common is the only site for the Silver-studded Blue remaining in the West Midlands region.

### 2.3 Population and Distribution

The main centres of population for this species in Britain are the heaths of southern and south-west England, coastal Wales and parts of East Anglia. The population at Prees Heath Common is large despite only a small amount of habitat available at present.

## 3 Current Factors Affecting the Species

Nationally this species has suffered losses to:

- Continuing destruction of heathland
- Absence of suitable management
- Inappropriate heathland management
- Changes in rabbit populations
- Site isolation and heathland fragmentation
- Increased quarrying activities

## 4 Current Action

### 4.1 Policy and Protection

- The Silver-studded Blue is currently listed on Schedule 5 of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (for sale only).
- It is also listed under the following category:
  - UKBAP Priority Species (1998)
  - A species action plan for the Silver-studded Blue was published in 1996 by Butterfly Conservation.
- Prees Heath is partly SSSI and County Wildlife Site.

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## 4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- Prees Heath Common and the Intervention Grain Store have been managed by agreements through EN.
- Numbers of Silver-studded Blues at Prees Heath Common and the Intervention Grain Store have been regularly monitored by a peak flight transect since 1991.

## 5 Key Habitat

- Open ground with bare soil or short vegetation within lowland heathland and colonised by ants.

## 6 Complementary Plans

UK Silver-studded Blue SAP  
Shropshire Lowland Heath HAP



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### 7 Action Plan

Habitat / Species	Action code	Action text	Location of action	Start date	End date	Lead	Assisting
Lowland Heath	SHR HEA HS 03	Double the amount of lowland heathland habitat for Silver Studded Blue at Prees Heath from 3ha to 6ha by 2015.	Prees Heath Common	2008	2015	BC	NE, SC, SWT
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB CA 01	Run at least one training day for new volunteers assisting with the monitoring of the Silver-studded Blue and its habitat by 2010.	Prees Heath Common	2008	2010	BC	
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB CP 01	Produce at least 20 press releases on the Silver-studded Blue at Prees Heath, habitat and conservation needs of the species by 2010.	Prees Heath Common	2008	2010	BC	
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB FR 01	Recruit at least 5 more volunteers to survey for Silver-studded Blue by 2010.	Prees Heath Common	2008	2010	BC	
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB FR 02	Investigate the possibility of funding for a landscape scale heathland project at Prees Heath aiming to purchase and bring into appropriate management land which could potentially be suitable for Silver-studded Blue by 2015.	North Shropshire	2008	2015	SWT	BC, NE, SC
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB HS 01	Bring 2 sites close to Prees Heath and suitable for Silver-studded Blue habitat creation or restoration into suitable management for the species by 2015.	North Shropshire	2006	2007	BC	NE, SC-ORS
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB SP 01	Investigate opportunities to further protect and enhance the Silver-studded Blue population at Prees Heath Common by acquiring an extension of the current nature reserve by 2015.	Press Heath Common	2008	2015	SWT, SC	BC, NE
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB SP 02	Designate the new Silver-studded Blue population at site near to Prees Heath as County Wildlife Site by 2010.	North Shropshire	2008	2010	BC, SWT	BC
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB SU 01	Approach 2 local organisations or land managers per year to investigate any scope for increasing the amount of heathland habitat on sites close to Prees Heath until 2010.	North Shropshire	2008	2015	BC	NE, SC-ORS

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Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSSB SU 02	Carry out habitat quality assessments at Prees Heath Common at least once every three years until 2015.	Prees Heath Common	2008	2015	BC	NE, SWT
Silver-studded Blue	SHR SSB SU 03	Maintain the annual Silver-studded Blue monitoring programme at Prees Heath as a single species transect supplemented by timed counts until 2015.	Prees Heath Common	2008	2015	BC	

### Key to organisations

BC	Butterfly Conservation
FC	Forestry Commission
NE	Natural England
SC	Shropshire Council
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
SBP	Shropshire Biodiversity Partnership
SC-ORS	Shropshire Council Outdoor Recreation Service

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**Plan last revised:** May 208 by Fran Lancaster, Biodiversity Support Officer, Shropshire Council.

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# **Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan**