

## Research project

**Project title:** Marsh fritillary butterfly reintroduction

**Approximate duration:** TBC

**Dates:** TBC – late 2024- 2025 start

**Suitable for:** PhD or possibly MSc project, or both

**Paid/voluntary:** Unpaid – we would be happy to look into funding opportunities with you and a university supervisor

This is part of a wider project looking at bringing back the marsh fritillary butterfly to the St Davids peninsula. More information on the background to the project can be found at:

<https://www.thebugfarm.co.uk/research-farm/marsh-fritillary-project/> and <https://www.thebugfarm.co.uk/research-farm/connecting-the-commons/> and <https://www.thebugfarm.co.uk/research-farm/common-connections/>

We would like to develop a programme of research around a potential marsh fritillary butterfly reintroduction to the St Davids peninsula in 2025. While we would encourage students to develop their own programme of research around the project, we are especially interested in questions related to metapopulation dynamics. During captive rearing, we are keen to learn more about the ecology of the parasitic wasp that uses the butterfly caterpillar as its host. Post-release, we are interested in how the butterflies move across the landscape (the North West Pembrokeshire Commons Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and surrounding land) post-release, the success of the reintroduction and the effects of habitat management for the marsh fritillary butterfly on other SAC feature species and habitats. We are interested how livestock grazing creates good marsh fritillary habitat (grazing data from GPS cattle/pony collars can be made available). There is a significant body of wider ecological survey/monitoring data available as a result of previous projects.

This position will be in collaboration with the Initiative for Nature Conservation Cymru and so there will be the potential to increase the scope of the project to include other marsh fritillary metapopulations and species reinforcement programmes across Wales.

### Skills required

- An interest in invertebrate ecology and/or metapopulation dynamics.
- Good data analysis skills.
- Self-motivated, practical and well-organised.
- Happy to assist with day-to-day captive butterfly, caterpillar and foodplant care.
- Confident to work long hours, outdoors, alone and in all weather conditions (unless more than one person is interested in the position, where there will be a possibility of sharing it).
- Confident to survey physically demanding terrain, often carrying bulky fieldwork equipment.

### Additional useful skills

- Good GIS skills.
- Experience in carrying out fieldwork/applied conservation.
- An interest in sustainability, nature recovery and wildlife conservation.
- University supervisor already identified.

