



Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

**Butterfly
Conservation**

**PRESS
RELEASE**

BARBERRY BOOST

Conservationists have released hundreds of caterpillars in a bid to boost the numbers of one of the UK's rarest moths.

Around 2,000 Barberry Carpet moth larvae have been introduced to the organically managed Cholderton Estate on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border.

The Barberry Carpet moth is extremely rare and is restricted to just a handful of sites across the UK.

Wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation timed the release to take place in the evening, giving the larvae a better chance of avoiding predators such as wasps and birds.

The cryptically coloured grey and brown moth gets its name from its association with barberry, a plant that has suffered extensive persecution in the past.

During the 1970s the Barberry Carpet suffered a dramatic decline when the plant was widely eradicated to prevent it from acting as a host for wheat rust fungus.

But, by the time scientists developed rust-resistant varieties of wheat the barberry plant had almost disappeared, spelling disaster for the Barberry Carpet.

Now steps are underway to reintroduce the moth to parts of its former range.

It is hoped the caterpillars released on the Cholderton Estate will go on to form a viable breeding colony.

The fully organic Cholderton Estate will provide an ideal home for the new colony of moths as it is managed with an emphasis on nature conservation.

The site boasts a number of established barberry plants including one bush that is believed to be the oldest in the UK.

More than 450 species of moth have been recorded on site and 34 species of butterfly are thought to breed on the Estate

Butterfly Conservation's Moth Conservation Officer Tony Davis explained: "The Cholderton estate is superbly managed for wildlife and we hope that it will provide a secure home for this extremely rare moth."

The Barberry Carpet is limited to a few small sites, mainly in Wiltshire, with colonies also in Gloucestershire, Dorset and introduced colonies elsewhere. A further colony has also recently been discovered in Oxfordshire.

CONTACTS

For further information and images call the Butterfly Conservation Press Office on 01929 406005 or email news@butterfly-conservation.org

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Barberry Carpet moth is a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The moth larvae were sourced as part of the Barberry Carpet Moth Species Recovery Programme.

Butterfly Conservation is the largest charity of its type in the world. Our aim is the conservation of butterflies, moths and their habitats. We run conservation programmes on more than 100 threatened species of butterfly and moths and manage over 30 nature reserves. www.butterfly-conservation.org