Extinct Chequered Skipper butterfly returns to England

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The Chequered Skipper butterfly has been extinct in England for 40 years, but last week was reintroduced to Northamptonshire. Naturalist and broadcaster Chris Packham was on hand to witness this milestone of the landmark Back from the Brink project.

Wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation has released Chequered Skipper butterflies at a secret location in Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire. It is anticipated that these butterflies will mate and lay the foundations of a new English population of Chequered Skipper in the forest.

Extinct in England since 1976

The butterfly, although always scarce, became extinct in England in 1976. This was a result of habitat loss, due to changes in woodland management that saw a decline in coppicing and management of long, narrow tracks (rides) and an increase in conifer plantations.

Although the Chequered Skipper is found in parts of Scotland, conservationists always hoped to reintroduce it to England if suitable habitat conditions could be recreated.

Re-introducing the Chequered Skipper

The Back from the Brink project has enabled parts of the butterfly's former stronghold Rockingham Forest to be restored to ideal conditions with wide, flower-filled rides.

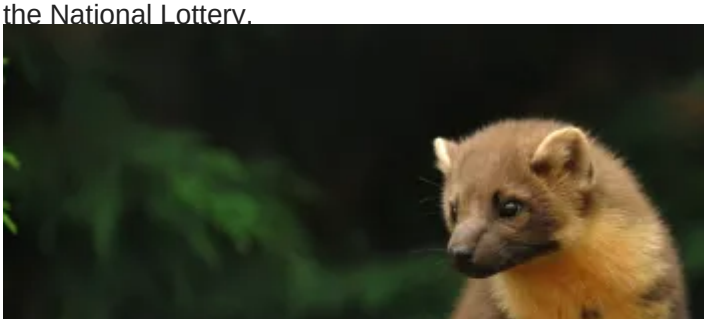
Earlier this week Butterfly Conservation ecologists travelled to Belgium to collect Chequered Skipper adults from the Fagne-Famenne region in the south of the country

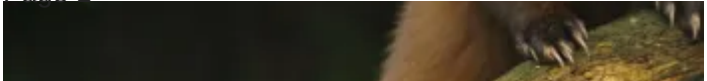
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The release follows four years of careful planning with partners and authorities in the UK and Belgium to agree techniques, secure permissions and ensure the right habitat management is in place to support the new population.

The project will be closely monitored to assess its success in the early stages, with the aim that in one or two years, once the population is secure, the public will be able to visit and enjoy seeing Chequered Skippers fly in England again.

Back from the Brink is one of the most ambitious conservation projects ever undertaken. Through 19 projects delivered across England, 20 UK species facing extinction will be brought back from the brink thanks to a £4.6million grant from the National Lottery.





The pine martin is just one species to benefit from the project Anne-Marie Kalus



e 20 threatened species

The endangered Ladybird spider Stephen Dalton

Native wildlife back from the brink