

# Chalkhill Blue Search 2021

Once again we are looking for help with the Chalkhill Blue Search. There has been an alarming decline in the numbers of Chalkhill Blues seen in Dorset in the past few years, particularly in the west of the county.

Between 1990 and 2004, Chalkhill Blues were recorded in 194 kilometre squares in Dorset. In the latest atlas period, 2005-2019 that had fallen to 160 km squares.

The Chalkhill Blue search was set up to establish the latest situation and look for answers.

The search started in 2018, and carried on through the flight period in 2019 and 2020. Bill Shreeves produced a list of all the sites where Chalkhill Blues have been seen in the past and categorised these into five different areas. A site like Badbury Rings which includes more than one kilometre square is treated as several different sites.

A database was set up to store the details of visits, so that all the visits made could be recorded, including those where no Chalkhill Blues were seen. Most of the recording systems cannot use zero sightings.

This year we want to re-visit the sites to look for Chalkhill Blues, but we are also carrying out habitat surveys at the sites, to try and understand the reasons behind the decline.

If you are interested in helping please get in touch with me (Robin) [rab.george@btinternet.com](mailto:rab.george@btinternet.com) and I will send you a copy of the habitat survey and can suggest sites for you to visit.

## Visits

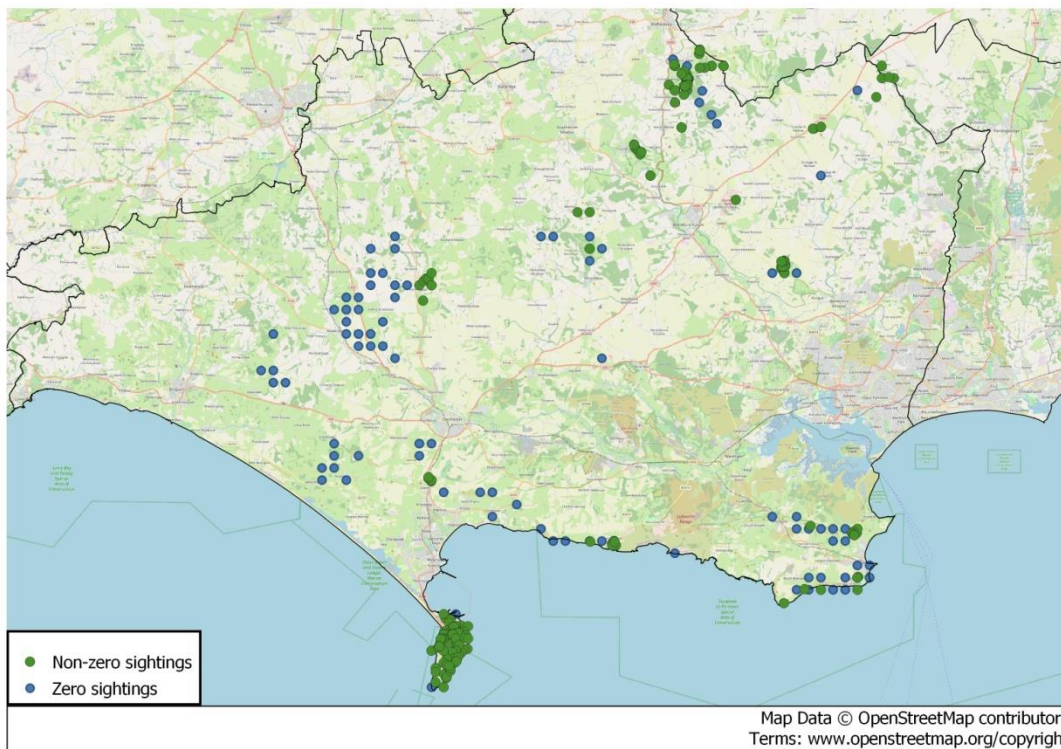
Note that some places were visited many times, not necessarily as part of the Chalkhill Blue search.

Area	No of Visits Chalkhills Seen	No of Visits None Seen
Central Dorset Chalkhill Blue Sites	3	30
North Dorset and Cranborne Chase Chalkhill Blue Sites	55	9
Portland Chalkhill Blue Sites (Part of South Dorset)	58	3
Purbeck and chalk east of Weymouth	8	24
South Dorset Chalkhill Blue Sites	1	4

## Sites

Area	No of Sites Chalkhills Seen	No of Sites None Seen
Central Dorset Chalkhill Blue Sites	5	28
North Dorset and Cranborne Chase Chalkhill Blue Sites	22	12
Portland Chalkhill Blue Sites (Part of South Dorset)	14	1
Purbeck and chalk east of Weymouth	6	22
South Dorset Chalkhill Blue Sites	1	5

Chalkhill Blue Search 2018-2020



The blue dots show where no Chalkhill Blues were recorded on a visit. The green dots show where sightings were made. You can see that there is a large set of blue dots particularly in the west of the county, near Cattistock and Maiden Newton and to the south-west of Dorchester where the Chalkhill Blues are no longer being found.

The situation on Portland is strong, and there are still plenty of sightings in the Fontmell Down area and at Badbury Rings, although there are km squares in both these areas where no Chalkhill Blues were seen.

In Purbeck, and along the coast between Weymouth and Purbeck there appear to be a lot of "zero squares"

So we have a good picture of the up to date situation.. We will keep the same search going in 2021 for anyone who wants to be involved, but repeatedly looking at sites where they have disappeared may not be very useful, and we would welcome any better ideas from anyone.

I can provide you with any information you may need on sites and areas and previous sightings - please do get in touch.

Sadly the Chalkhill Blue study that Butterfly Conservation were hoping to fund did not happen. We had high hopes that this might lead to a better understanding of what is happening to the Chalkhill Blues.

Since I wrote this, Martin Warren has kindly agreed to work with us this summer, and in addition to looking for butterflies again, we will be running a habitat survey, looking at the sites through the season to try and gain further understanding about what is happening. As before, we will be hoping for plenty of volunteers to help us, so that we can cover a good selection of the previous sites.