



REPORT

Green Foundation Ireland
invites you to an evening online TALK by
butterfly expert, **Jesmond Harding**

Gardening for Butterflies



*Photo: Small Copper Butterfly
by JESMOND HARDING of Butterfly Conservation Ireland*

Venue: by Zoom (details given after registration)

Friday 21 May 2021 – 19:00 to 20:00

Admission to this event is **FREE** but you **MUST** register beforehand.
You can do so through our website at www.greenfoundationireland.ie

*This event is part of the National Biodiversity Week 2021
organised by Irish Environmental Network*

Gardening for Butterflies

THEME

This talk looked into how we should protect butterflies, as well as what we should be growing in our gardens to help them survive as a species. We also had a virtual tour of Jesmond's garden to see his work in action.

This event was part of the [National Biodiversity Week 2021](#) organised by [Irish Environmental Network](#).

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Jesmond Harding: Jesmond is an educator, and Founder Member, Director and Conservation Officer of Butterfly Conservation Ireland, which was formed in 2008 by a group of dedicated naturalists following the alarming decline of most of our butterfly species.

Jesmond is author of the award-winning book "*Discovering Irish Butterflies and their Habitats*", as well as papers for scientific publications, and articles for newspapers, periodicals and magazines. He has appeared in the TV series *Living the Wildlife* produced by Colin Stafford-Johnson, and in the recent Burren documentary broadcast on RTÉ in April 2021. Jesmond is Ireland's leading butterfly expert.

You can find out [more about Butterfly Conservation Ireland here](#).

ABOUT OUR CHAIR AND OUR MODERATOR

Donna Mullen: Chair of Green Foundation Ireland, Donna is an environmentalist and works as an ecologist, drawing up nature trails and sustainability plans. Her work involves spending many happy hours surveying buildings for bats, and she helped draw up the guidelines on bat surveys for the Heritage Council (Traditional Farm Building Scheme). She is a founder member of both Bat Conservation Ireland and the Irish Environmental Network, and has also served on the board of the Irish Wildlife Trust.

Claire Downey: Claire, who is a Director of Green Foundation Ireland, is Executive with Community Reuse Network Ireland (CRNI), an all-Ireland umbrella body funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that represents community based organisations involved in reuse and recycling. In this role she is responsible for the promotion of reuse, support for members to overcome barriers to reuse, communication and policy input, networking and research.

Donna Mullen welcomed everyone to our event and introduced **Jesmond Harding** from Butterfly Conservation Ireland, who opened his inspiring talk with a tour of his front garden where, despite traffic noises, he showed small wildflowers growing around the edges, such as Herb Robert and Cowslips, much loved by butterflies – they also love Oxeye Daisies and Violets. Comfrey likes damp shady corners as does Red Campion and Bugle.

We soon moved to the rear, away from traffic and heard only birdsong from then on. Jesmond explored various hedgerows, cautioning us to avoid Leylandi for hedging at all costs, as it is useless for butterflies. Ireland needs more native hedging beloved by butterflies, such as Hazel and Whitethorn and Blackthorn, even Crab Apple which he had in his hedge. Jesmond was full of tips to encourage wildlife as he walked his garden, such as cutting hedges into an A shape so as to give thicker cover at the base.

Jesmond talked eloquently about various plants which have special affinities with Irish butterfly species, always underlining that native moths and butterflies need native species of plants to survive, for example Kidney Vetch, Common Knapweed, Violets, and Primrose. He touched on the seasonality of plants and butterflies, telling us of the importance of St. John's Wort at midsummer and also Devil's-Bit and Bird's-Foot Trefoil on which the larvae of several butterflies feed. Herbs such as Marjoram are also important.

He continued to speak interestingly about propagating Kidney Vetch He also cautioned against buying wildflower seeds which were usually imported, and talked about how he collected seeds himself, such as Bloody Crane's-Bill. The problem with some of the garden centre plants is they are so cultivated they have very little pollen content. Our listeners contributed several suggestions, mentioning www.wildflowers.ie which supplied truly native seed, and www.caherhurleynursery.com an organic nursery in County Clare that sells many native plants.

Jesmond then moved into a small woodland area at the back of the property which was populated by Birch, Alder and Buckthorn and Wild Cherry, and he waxed lyrical about Rowan. The birdsong was almost deafening and we could see for ourselves the beautiful wildlife habitat it was. Nettles were spotted which also are useful to wildlife.

Jesmond emphasised about importance of a number of species, including Grey Willow and even Oak and Ivy, which he said was most useful both as cover and as food. Flowering Ivy is vital for bees in late October. Please do not cut then.

There were enthusiastic questions from the almost 70 participants who attended about the particular plants touched on and how to gather wild seeds. Many good suggestions were made and information exchanged. Everyone thanked Jesmond for a really practical, interesting and inspiring talk.