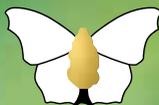


No 93

Spring/Summer 2018

ON THE WING

www.bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk



**Butterfly
Conservation**
50th Anniversary

The newsletter of
Bedfordshire & Northamptonshire Butterfly Conservation

Branch Field Trips 2018

Sunday, May 20th Fermyn Woods Country Park Moth and Butterfly Day Meet Skylark café at 9 a.m. to look at moths caught in the traps by Mark Hammond. Breakfast provided from 9.30 if pre-booked - please contact Douglas Goddard by email or phone 01604 408670. Car parking fees apply. From 10.30 a.m. a visit to see how our winter conservation work has helped Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreaks and other spring species in the park. A further walk will begin at 2.00 p.m

Sunday 20th May Bison Hill, Whipsnade With the local Wildlife Trust to seek out Duke of Burgundy and many other butterfly species. Meet in the National Trust Car Park, TL000184, at 11am. Leader: Greg Herbert

Sunday June 3rd Moth and Butterfly Morning at Pitsford Reservoir A repeat of our successful event last year. A joint event between the Beds and Northants Branch of Butterfly Conservation and the Wildlife Trusts BCN to celebrate the moths and butterflies at Pitsford Reservoir. We will be meeting at 9 a.m. at the Fishing Lodge ready to open the moth trap with an expert from the Wildlife Trust. After this we will be given a short presentation about the moths at Pitsford Reservoir and then the opportunity to have a walk around the reserve to look for butterflies for the rest of the morning. Due to limited spaces booking is essential. Please contact Mischa Cross on mischa.cross@wildlifebcn.org

Sunday June 24th Glaphorn Cow Pasture Open Day We will be on hand from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to search for the elusive Black Hairstreak. Park in the lane opposite the wood entrance, Grid Ref. TL006903 and join us in the wood from 10 a.m. The local Wildlife Trust will be on site in the afternoon. Leaders: Douglas Goddard, Dave James and Andy Wyldes

Wednesday 27th June Yelnow Wood Sharnbrook Visit to Yelnow Wood for plants and butterflies. Park and meet at the Colworth Sports field car park (along Yelnow lane) SP978598, at 11.00am. Leader: Ian Kimsey

Saturday 30th June Sharpenhoe Clappers Bedfordshire Target species Dark Green Fritillary and other early summer butterflies such as the Marbled White. Meet in the NT car park at 10.30am. Grid Ref. TL064296
Leader: David Chandler

Sunday July 1st Twywell Hills and Dales when we will be showing members round the nature reserve, our main target species the Marbled White with other grassland species. Park in the main car park, Grid Ref. SP938772 at 10 a.m. Leaders: Douglas Goddard, David James and Andy Wyldes

July 10th An evening walk 6 - 8 p.m. at **Mill Park Reserve in Long Buckby**, near Daventry to survey for Marbled Whites and other grassland species. Leader: Douglas Goddard

Sunday July 15th Fineshade Wood, a good site for Silver-washed Fritillary and White-letter Hairstreak, plus White Admiral, Purple Hairstreak and possibly Purple Emperor, seen here for the first time in 2015. Meet in the courtyard of Top Lodge, Fineshade, Grid Ref. SP981983 (Postcode NN17 3BB) at 10.30 a.m. Car Park fee payable.
Leader: Douglas Goddard

Sunday 22nd July Chicksands Wood Morning birding and looking for some interesting butterflies in Chicksands Wood. Park and meet at the entrance to the wood, TL106411 at 9.30am. Leaders: Kevin Sharpe for birds and Peter Glenister for butterflies

Sunday 29th July Totternhoe Visit to Totternhoe Knolls Wildlife trust reserve for butterfly species. Park and meet in the Totternhoe picnic site car park, SP986217, look for the brown sign for Totternhoe Knolls near the bus stop, meet at 11am. Leader: Greg Herbert

In Spring 2017 whilst looking (I think) at the Bedfordshire web page for butterfly sightings, I noted the request for volunteers to survey various areas for specific species where reports of anything were absent for many years.

Living at Wollaston, Northants, I am close to the Bedfordshire border – as indeed I was when growing up in the southern end of Rushden – so I took an interest in the request. Several of the OS squares listed were close to here - but closer to where I grew up and one included an area where we used to occasionally picnic, get train numbers and catch newts! (Fifty years ago the large pond there had dozens of both common and great crested newts; sadly, said pond has been dry now for decades).

On a cool grey day, I set out from Irchester with a friend to walk and view the area to see if it was still as I recalled it. Crossing under the railway lines, a farm at Knuston came into view and John explained that he used to live next door to one of the family. Amazingly that neighbour's sister had lived next door to my mum! It was pleasing to see the wide field margins the farming family was leaving for wildlife. Anyway, pressing on we found that the area needing surveying for Grizzled Skippers was largely unchanged in all those years, so on May 25th with the sun shining strongly I headed back. Fairly soon along the footpath to the western side of the railway tracks I saw a (somewhat tatty) Grizzled Skipper! But hang on, consulting the map it was clear that I was still in Northants and not the Bedfordshire square required!

Pressing on towards Wymington, the passenger and goods tracks separate and not far short of where there are individual bridges under these tracks (and very definitely in Bedfordshire!) I found another Grizzled Skipper – at a muddy puddle, and for a few seconds it shared it with a Green-veined White whilst a Brimstone flew past. Crossing under the passenger line, I soon found a third Grizzled Skipper (along with my first Brown Argus of the year) and after passing under the goods line to the area of the dried up pond, no four was soon noted.

In each of the three Bedfordshire locations, I stayed for around ten minutes hoping additional Grizzled Skippers would show up but had no such joy. On returning to the goods line bridge, one (I have to assume no. four) did fly past me, stopping briefly on the bare path but then amazed me with the speed it ascended and flew over the very high bridge. But this also might mean that nos. two, three and four were all in fact the same insect! Whilst this search was successful, another near Podington wasn't and I ran out of time/weather to investigate Wymington Meadow or the Toft Manor area of Sharnbrook. So roll on Spring 2018!



Above: The Northants Grizzled. All photos Keith Cheasman

Right: Both Bedfordshire Grizzled Skippers!

As a young child born in the 1950's, my childhood was spent in the once beautiful countryside of South Ruislip which was mainly dairy farms. During the spring and summer months when not at school, my friends and I roamed the country lanes and fields from dawn till dusk. We made camps, climbed trees, spotted birds, and caught newts with a worm attached to cotton on the end of a stick. The various insects seen always fascinated me and my friends. We chased each other through wildflower meadows full of enchanting butterflies flitting here and there in the warmth of spring and summer. I usually returned home just in time for tea covered in mud with my legs and sandals splattered in cow dung. I loved jumping in nearly dry cow pats, great fun! Since my childhood my love of nature has never diminished.

In the 1980's my parents retired to the Isle of Wight. For many years my father accompanied by my mother undertook a Butterfly Transect on parts of Brading Down.

When visiting my parents on the island for my spring and summer holiday, I would accompany them on their Transect and butterfly walks, learning so much as I went along. I saw many butterflies that I would never see where I live in Wellingborough. To name but a few - Adonis Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Clouded Yellow, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Glanville Fritillary and Purple Emperor.



Glanville Fritillary

Last year I became what many call a Senior Citizen. At last the time to commit to a Butterfly Transect. My route is near to where I live, being a small part of the river Ise, two small areas of waste ground and a large field. Unfortunately the field has often proved hard to walk, very uneven and often waterlogged. With walking boots on, clipboard in hand, bottle of water and walking stick at the ready, I set off.

I began my Transect on March 25th, a week early as the weather was OK. I recorded 19 Small Tortoiseshells, 1 Comma and a Brimstone, awake from their winter slumber, a promising start that continued during April. Fresh from their long sleep recording 117 Small Tortoiseshells, 6 Commas and 14 Brimstones.

I was amazed to record on April 3rd 53 Small Tortoiseshells all sunbathing low down on nettles, it was a beautiful sight. The Small Tortoiseshell has always done well near to where I have lived for 17 years, plenty of nettles and brambles.

The first brood of this vibrant butterfly began to appear from June 1st through to the first week of July, recording 158 on my transect. Although June 25th was quite a breezy day with the sun in and out of cloud, I was surprised to record 50 Small Tortoiseshells all low down on nettles. The Meadow brown numbered 45 and I saw my first and only Ringlet that day, recording 10 species of butterfly totalling 110 in all. Orange tips had started to brighten spring, appearing in mid April. By May I had recorded 74 mainly female Orange tips. I spotted my first Gatekeeper lying in all its glory for me to photograph on May 25th, quite an early sighting I thought. A few more weeks were to pass before 2 more Gatekeepers were seen on the transect. As the bramble flowers blossomed and Ragwort flowered in August I recorded 233 Gatekeepers. A second brood of Small Tortoiseshells began fluttering here and there or often lazing about sunbathing or feeding in August when I recorded 44. I hope their hibernation goes well! I live in hope of one day seeing a Large

Tortoiseshell. The graceful Small White seemed to do well in August through to September where recorded were 169 mainly on the wing. The magnificent Red Admirals fed and sun bathed on butterfly bushes, valerian and Ivy for me to admire them, all were in perfect condition. I recorded 64 Red Admirals, 37 of them seen in September. On September 12th I saw the largest Comma with the deepest colour I have ever seen, quite a sight to behold.

My most exciting sightings were 3 Painted ladies. The Painted Lady seen in June could possibly have been one released from a nearby school. The other two were recorded in July and September and were feeding on Valerian. I was thrilled to record a Marbled White, not a rare sight for some people but I have never seen one along



Painted Lady

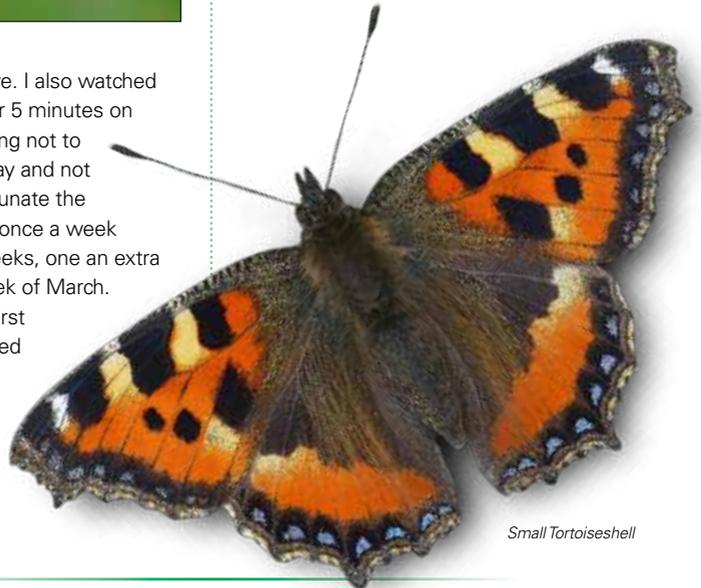


Marbled White

the River Ise near to where I live. I also watched a Humming bird Hawk moth for 5 minutes on August 13th. It was disappointing not to record any Brimstones after May and not to see any Peacocks. I was fortunate the weather was often kind on my once a week transect route. I covered 27 weeks, one an extra week as I began in the last week of March. I have thoroughly enjoyed my first butterfly transect. I feel privileged to have seen and recorded 20 different species of butterflies that grace our world with their beauty; my top recorded butterfly was the colourful

Small Tortoiseshell. My walking boots have been given a good clean ready to go in spring 2018. I hope to add a further transect in 2018 being parts of Rushden Lakes.

I am very grateful to David James (Northants butterfly recorder) for his advice and also his kindness and patience in transferring my hand written records onto a computer for the UKBMS records as I am not very good with computers!



Small Tortoiseshell

For over twenty years now, I have been privileged to be part of a conservation group which records the wildlife of Yardley Chase, part of a private estate owned by the Marquess of Northampton. Given the title of *The Wild Bunch* by Conservation Officer Tony Richardson, this comprises the county recorders of most taxonomic groups as well as other naturalists. Some are experts of national renown in their particular fields. Each week the group meets in a different section of the estate, covering each a few times a year. These ad hoc visits to particular sections do not always coincide with the flight periods of the key butterfly species and for various reasons individual searches outside the organised group activity have become more problematic. With this in mind during 2017 we decided to target some key species.

First of these was the **Black Hairstreak**. This had not been seen on the estate for at least a decade, before which it was recorded annually in the MOD compound by Andy Patmore, the former head forester. Its elusive habits and lack of searches at the right time had contributed to this, so we agreed to concentrate our visits in this area during the flight period in June. Jeff Blincow has done extensive research here on most aspects of the wildlife and was particularly keen to find it again. Much suitable habitat remains and Jeff found a single specimen on a sheltered hedge near one of the bunkers on 14th



MOD Black Hairstreak

June and further searching by members of the group two days later managed four more. We hope to unearth further colonies by targeting the extensive areas of blackthorn close to this colony in June next year.

Our second targeted 'prey' was the **White-letter Hairstreak**. I and other members of the group had recorded this in three different sections of the estate in the past and in one of these I found a fully grown larva on 18th May. It had never been recorded in the MOD area and I suggested to Jeff that it was worth searching bramble blossom in the vicinity of elms. This methodology led to his discovery of three White-letters nectaring on a large clump of bramble in a large open clearing adjacent to some very tall elms



White-letter Hairstreak



The fully grown White-letter Hairstreak larva

on 13th July. I and Bob Bullock were able to join him four days later and in spite of less favourable conditions we found two in the same area. Other stands of elm have been charted around the MOD compound and we hope to find other colonies next year.

During my time with this conservation group, I have now seen all of the county's species on the estate, including rare vagrant Dark Green Fritillaries and Chalkhill Blues and, in the past, Wall Browns, but with the exception of the (now extinct) Small Blue. The estate is of importance both locally and nationally for the **Wood White**, which is found in four of the woodland areas as



Wood White

well as in the MOD compound. The colony in the MOD is particularly strong along the line of the disused rail track which circumvents the site. 62 were counted there on 1st June and a record number for the estate of ten second brood specimens on 17th July, when we were looking for the White-letters.



The comparatively recent colonisation of the estate woods by the **Purple Emperor** and in particular **Silver-washed Fritillary** continues apace. 117 Silver-washed were counted in the MOD by Jeff Blincow on 7th July, a day after the first *Valezina* form of the female was noted for the first time on the estate in Old Pastures which lies next to the main Bedford Road. Purple Emperors were not so much in evidence this year with only two sightings.

Dingy Skipper has not been recorded for a number of years now but the **Grizzled Skipper** still survives in the MOD area and was found in two locations there on 1st June. More extensive searching may reward us with further colonies. After several poor seasons the **White Admiral** benefited from some warm weather in the spring, with six the maximum count on 6th July, though this species is rarely numerous in the estate woodlands.

Targeted species recording this year has paid benefits and provided a platform to develop future fieldwork and make further important discoveries. The MOD compound has large lengths of blackthorn hedges and we may even find the Brown Hairstreak in due course as it is being recorded even closer to our county borders year on year. Jeff regularly meets the Military and Natural England and advises on the management of the site emphasising the value of our fieldwork.

With particular thanks to Jeff Blincow.



Above: Part of the MOD site

All photos D Goddard

Left: Valezina form of the Silver-washed Fritillary

Many of us enjoy finding butterflies wherever we happen to be, but as Branch members we are often prompted to send in records of what we have found. This helps to build a picture of what is happening with the butterflies in our area, including if species are doing well or not, or even if they are expanding or declining in their range. Since I took a keen interest in butterflies a few years ago I have had the benefit of fine mentoring by Branch members, initially via email by the Northants County Recorder (Our own Doug Goddard at that time, and now David James) who as well as increasing my knowledge quite rapidly, made sure my findings were properly logged. There were a few places I would visit regularly, including Bucknell Woods, just a few miles from where I live in Brackley. This is a site which is highly significant in the effort to create and maintain suitable woodland habitat for the Wood White, a threatened and vulnerable species. It is also a site where we are witnessing an increase in numbers of Silver-washed Fritillary as it expands its range northward. A few years ago, I found a butterfly I didn't recognise immediately, though I thought I had seen it in reference books. I sent a photo to Doug, asking if this might be a *Valezina*, a colour variant of Silver-washed Fritillary females. Doug replied immediately asking where it had been located, and it transpired that he had found it there the previous day. This was the first ever record of a *Valezina* in the County and I joked with my wife that I was nearly famous. These little events help to increase our enthusiasm and enjoyment.

As my visits to Bucknell Woods became more regular I was sending in records of sightings frequently. It was then that Doug suggested I now file my records online with the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. This would involve walking a designated route once a week taking an hour or so during the flight season, and noting species seen and their numbers.

This would be more valuable as useful scientific data, and for the last two seasons I have been doing this, missing recording on only one week during that time. Initially I was a bit nervous of my rookie status, but was assured that while it was not an exact science, this recording was a really useful scientific tool. This gave me a little more confidence because for example, I had found that in flight a brief glance at Silver Washed Fritillary or Comma could be inconclusive as both species have similar colouring and rapid flight characteristics. Also early in the season I would be looking at ground level for Wood Whites, and then later in the season forget to look up and miss higher fliers like White Admiral and Purple Emperor. So while it had been a bit of a steep learning curve in recognition and fieldcraft, I was assured that my recording was still of value and would of course improve with practice. At that time our branch was badly missing the regular recording previously done in the Silverstone Woods by Andy Patmore, a Forestry Commission employee, and of course this area is of major importance for monitoring the recovery efforts for the threatened Wood White. So I decided I would record weekly at Bucknell, and with Doug's help mapped out a transect route in ten stages. Quite simply you note species seen and their numbers in each section. The advice sheets tell you not to record when the wind is too strong or temperature too low. We also note



Wood White on Meadow Vetchling, it's main larval food plant in Bucknell Wood

time, wind strength and amount of sunshine, then when I get home I transfer my notes on to the recording sheet. I keep this as hard copy, then transfer the information to the UKBMS website. Quite an easy process, but so valuable to those in our organisation gathering statistics to use in discussions with partner organisations like Forestry Commission or government departments.

Over a few years at Bucknell we have noted all of the more common species in good numbers during their flight season. Those species of greater current interest are carefully noted such as Wood White, Silver Washed Fritillary, Purple Emperor and White Admiral. In addition there are now a few White Letter Hairstreaks being noted by some of our fine naturalists, and there are also good numbers of Purple Hairstreak. These though are more easily found in numbers in the evening, appearing to be very active at the top of some favoured oak trees later in the day. It is quite satisfying to meet fellow enthusiasts and have a chat while out in the woods, especially when I find they have come to Bucknell Woods from outside our Branch area on the strength of these and other records published on our Branch Website by the County Recorder. Bucknell Woods has become very popular with visitors over the last few years as a reliable site for Silver-washed Fritillary and *Valezina*.

The analysis of these last two years data is very interesting. The numbers of Wood White are currently holding up well, numbers peaking late May to early June in the first brood, with 257 sightings in 2016 and 262 sightings in 2017. This is despite concern over radical timber extraction activity by Forestry Commission, and the effect this may have on Ride edges where timber is stacked and where the Wood White caterpillar food plant, Meadow Vetchling is found. Over both years the Wood White has been the most abundant butterfly in Bucknell Woods by a clear margin. Speckled Wood had one more sighting (258) in 2016 though it's numbers fell back to 160 in 2017. Our officers are diligently interacting with

Forestry Commission to create and preserve vital habitat for the Wood White. A 'Woodland Wings' officer, Caroline Temple has now been appointed by Butterfly Conservation to work in the South Northants area with a specific interest in Wood White and Black Hairstreak species.

Purple Emperor is found here, though never numerous at this site with fewer than 5 sightings by me in each year. Encouragingly White Admiral sightings have increased from 12 to 42 sightings, and the Silver-washed Fritillary numbers have increased greatly from 116 to 241 in the same period. They have a single brood appearing late June, through until the end of August. Brimstone have also increased from 38 to 74 sightings. It is personally very interesting to see these annual differences at the site, and to feel a part of an important ongoing study. I would encourage anyone to take on a transect and gain the same amount of pleasure for so little effort. Even the daily dog walk could become your own transect, and any of the Branch officers would offer the same help and encouragement as they have given me in getting started. At the time of writing we would all like to see how butterflies are presently faring at Hazelborough Forest, another key site for vulnerable and important species where there is only casual recording at present. It promises great personal reward for anyone willing to take it on, and would be a great help to our new 'Woodland Wings' project.



Male Silver-washed Fritillary in Bucknell Pics by Dennis McQuillan

Weather wise 2017 proved to be a mixed bag and started with a nice spring which caused many butterflies to emerge early, in fact some of the spring butterfly species emerged two weeks earlier than they had the year before. Unfortunately despite the year being one of the warmest on record the weather took a serious turn for the worst during late June when high winds hit the county and then unsettled conditions dominated as the storms battering the USA made their way across the Atlantic to us. Despite this rough weather during the summer the Northamptonshire butterfly season went fairly well for our butterflies and with the exception of the Purple Emperor all key species showed an increase from 2016.

As always a huge thank you needs to go to all our recorders out there as without their valuable contribution none of these species analysis could take place. In all we received just over 16,000 records during 2017 which amounts to approximately 56,000 individual butterflies added to our database. As well as the the supply of casual records, UKBMS, WCBS, Garden Butterfly Survey and Big Butterfly Count records the use of iRecord to record butterflies has been a fantastic success. The iRecord website makes data entry easy for our people doing the counts and also (most importantly for me) makes the verification and importing data into our recording software process very easy too so it's certainly worth having a look at if you're not using it already. If you do decide to take up iRecord please still email me your records as you're seeing them so I can update the sightings page of the website but state clearly that you've added them to it so I don't add them to our system too and we get repetition in the records later in the year.

As for 2018, it's an exciting time for Northants with two big national projects taking place within the county. The Woodland Wings project has started

with the aim of conserving the Wood White and Black Hairstreak populations in Yardley Chase, Salcey Forest, Bucknell Wood and Hazelborough and of course the Back From The Brink Project looking to reintroduce the Chequered Skipper back into our woodlands in the Rockingham Forest area.



Chequered Skipper

The uptake in recording is very encouraging as none of the below could happen if it wasn't for your help. It's also superb to see the amount of people willing to record the commoner butterflies too as well as the scarce as quite often it's the Whites, Peacocks, Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells etc. that tell the true story about how well our butterflies are doing. We're all guilty of overlooking species when they're considered common and even seasoned butterfly recorders often let Whites etc. go when they shoot past and they go unidentifiable unless a chase is ensued. It is worth trying to record as many of the commoner species as possible though, even the ones in your garden, so we can build the best picture we can of the county's butterflies.

A full account of the records can be found at:

<http://www.davidjameswildlifediary.com/2018/02/the-butterflies-of-northamptonshire-in.html>
or click on the link on our branch website

2017 Northants Butterfly species trends in comparison to 2016

Small Skipper	+47%
Essex Skipper	+525%
Large Skipper	+6.9%
Dingy Skipper	+13%
Grizzled Skipper	+109%
Wood White	+3%
Clouded Yellow	+128%
Brimstone	+25%
Large White	-5%
Small White	-4%
Green-veined White	-37%
Orange-tip	+36%
Green Hairstreak	+79%
Purple Hairstreak	+98%
Black Hairstreak	+87%
White-letter Hairstreak	+29%
Small Copper	+139%
Brown Argus	+25%
Common Blue	+63%
Chalkhill Blue	-----
Holly Blue	-57%
White Admiral	+143%
Purple Emperor	-29%
Red Admiral	+97%
Painted Lady	+26%
Small Tortoiseshell	+55%
Peacock	+26%
Comma	+87%
Dark Green Fritillary	-----
Silver-washed Fritillary	+107%
Speckled Wood	+10%
Marbled White	-8%
Gatekeeper	+64%
Meadow Brown	+39%
Ringlet	-73%
Small Heath	+219%

----- denotes species not recorded in one or both years UK BAP species in red



A bad year for the Green-veined White



Holding on - the Dingy Skipper

All pictures by David James

Escapees/Releases and Unusual Records

I did receive a couple of interesting records during 2017 which are no doubt due to accidental releases or escapees from rearing. The first was a Monarch which was seen twice in Brixworth during early July and the other was a Long-tailed Blue seen and photographed in a Clipston garden on the 22nd of September. Another unusual record was a Brown Hairstreak reported at Jack's Green on the 27th of July. This seemed a bit more plausible as a genuine record so soon after Doug Goddard and I had a look and although we couldn't confirm the presence of any Brown Hairstreaks we did find lots of very suitable habitat so who knows, perhaps there's a secret colony of these tucked away somewhere in the county too!

SALCEY FOREST JULY 9th 2017

What a difference a year makes! Last year this field trip was too early for the emergence of Purple Emperor and Silver-washed Fritillary and Black Hairstreaks were still on the wing. In 2017, Purple Emperor had been on the wing for some three weeks, illustrating the unpredictability of butterfly watching year on year. One thing that had not changed was the popularity of the venue. The total of 36 participants last year was eclipsed by a record turnout of 51 on this occasion. We welcomed a number of members from Upper Thames branch with whom we had arranged a joint visit and others came from further afield. As we gathered in the car park, a Purple Emperor made a brief sortie around the top of an oak, Purple Hairstreaks flitted round an ash tree and a Silver-washed Fritillary appeared, though not everyone saw these. We eventually set off in a long procession into the wood, making way for cyclists, horse riders and dog walkers as we went. As we proceeded down the main track, White Admirals could be seen closely, coming down to brambles and settling occasionally on the lower branches of the trees. We were too late for the Black Hairstreaks and the Brown butterflies were in short supply, though we recorded a number of Ringlets, a couple of Meadow Browns, Speckled Wood and Gatekeeper during the course of a rather cloudy morning. We reached the ranger's cottage and explored the clearing around the large pond. In the loading bay a little further along we were



able to identify both Small and Essex Skipper to add to the Large Skippers we had seen along the main track.

Purple Hairstreaks have had a good year in 2017 and we had excellent views of one which settled on a small oak at the side of the track. This provided one of the few photographic opportunities of the morning, though a little out of range. As the day brightened and warmed up a little, different groups within the party, which had become a little strewn out by now, had occasional glimpses of Purple Emperors flying round the top of the long line of oaks. By the time we reached the end of this part of the track, it was getting towards lunchtime so we decided to head back. We told members of the party where to find the Marbled White colony for them to explore after lunch if they wished.

We saw a number of Commas, a Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admirals and a Brimstone as we walked back but the highlight for many was a Wood White, probably the last of this year's

first brood, in the loading bay just down from the car park, spotted by the keen eyes of a younger member of the party. I personally felt a little disappointed by the numbers of the butterflies on this occasion, but we had clocked up twenty species in the

The final tally compiled by Dave James:
 3 Small Skipper, 1 Essex Skipper, 7 Large Skipper, 1 Wood White, 1 Brimstone, 3 Large White, 1 Small White, 1 Green-veined White, 9 Purple Hairstreak, 6 White Admiral, 4 Purple Emperor, 4 Red Admiral, 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Peacock, 7 Comma, 4 Silver-washed Fritillary, 1 Speckled Wood, 1 Gatekeeper, 2 Meadow Brown and 13 Ringlet.

morning and most of the participants felt it had been a worthwhile experience and it was good to see so many turning out to show an interest in our butterflies.

FINESHADE WOOD JULY 30th 2017

We were blessed with a warm sunny morning for a repeat of our successful field trip to Fineshade the previous year. Twenty participants comprised local branch members, one from Peterborough, Trish and Barrie Galpin from the Friends of Fineshade, and we were delighted to welcome Susannah O'Riordan, newly appointed *Back from the Brink Project*

Officer who will be based at Fineshade. We started in the old car park area, and immediately saw a Silver-washed Fritillary, Small White, Meadow Brown and Comma. We continued down the track into the wood past the caravan site.

Here we soon added Red Admirals, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper and Large Skippers, being able to point out the differences between male and female. We came to a clearing where Dave James found some Silver-washed Fritillary eggs to show the group and we were able to explain how this species is breeding so well in Fineshade. He also pointed out a Spotted Flycatcher in the canopy. We scanned the large oaks alongside this main ride and eventually a couple of Purple Hairstreaks flitted around the upper branches for all to see. Silver-washed Fritillaries were a continual presence as we walked along, nectaring and resting to provide photo opportunities, though most were past their best. Eventually we reached the large clearing where previously we had found the more common grassland species. Two Common Blues, a fresh

Brown Argus and a couple of Small Skippers were found, but the real surprise was the discovery by one of the party of a *Valezina* female Silver-washed Fritillary which was seen by everyone as it nectared continually on the numerous knapweed flowers here. This was a first record of this form in Fineshade, making the day particularly memorable.

A couple of Brimstones appeared and a fresh Painted Lady was found basking on some wood chippings, making this clearing a particularly profitable area for butterfly watching. We made our way back towards Top Lodge, Two Peacocks, few in number this year, were seen, and I noticed a White-letter Hairstreak nectaring on a thistle projecting above the surrounding



vegetation. Everyone was able to view this closely. We looked for more on the elms from the bridge over the old railway line, but they did not appear there as they had done the previous year when we had seen egg-laying. From here, we crossed the road into the field where there was an abundance of ragwort and much bare ground, slightly different habitat which yielded a Small Heath to add to our list. A rather bedraggled Marbled White was also noted. We returned to Top Lodge having recorded twenty species to match the number of participants, acknowledged by all as a successful morning.

Species List compiled by Dave James:
2 Small Skipper, 12 Large Skipper, 2
Brimstone, 1 Large White, 3 Small White,
at least 2 Purple Hairstreak, 1 White-letter
Hairstreak, 1 Brown Argus, 2 Common
Blue, 5 Red Admiral, 1 Painted Lady, 2
Peacock, 2 Comma, 23 Silver-washed
Fritillary 4 Speckled Wood, 1 Marbled
White, 7 Gatekeeper, 5 Meadow Brown, 5
Ringlet and 1 Small Heath

Hello, I'd like to introduce myself as the new(ish!) Woodland Wings Project officer. I started at the end of last year and will be working on the project for two days a week for the next 3 years. I've worked in the conservation sector for over 15 years (mainly for various Wildlife Trusts). On a professionally and personal level, Lepidoptera has always been my favourite taxa, so I'm thrilled to be working for Butterfly Conservation.



So, what is the Woodland Wings project? The project area covers the landscape area known as the Yardley Whittlewood Ridge in Northamptonshire, with a focus on Salcey Forest, Yardley Chase, Bucknell Wood, Hazelborough Forest and Whistley Wood. The aim is highlight the threats facing butterflies and moths and offer



Bucknell Wood

people the chance to make a measurable and practical difference. Our three-year project will inspire and enable local people to conserve their precious natural heritage, demonstrating that local action can achieve real impact. By conserving the rare butterflies and moths of the area, Woodland Wings will help ensure current and future generations continue to enjoy the beauty and wonder of these fascinating insects. The key species we are targeting are: Wood White and Black Hairstreak, and rare moths including the



False Mocha

David Green

Heart Moth and False Mocha. Guided woodland walks, practical conservation days and public talks will be held throughout the projects duration, so members of the public are being invited to get involved. I will be co-ordinating and running a programme of conservation management work to maintain, enhance or create suitable Wood White and Black Hairstreak habitat. We also want to engage with the local community by organising and overseeing a number of public events and training workshops. Monitoring and Surveying will also factor heavily into the project. We are aiming to identify more areas of suitable habitat (e.g. by carrying out the "Blackthorn in flower" survey), so that we can target our survey efforts.



Heart Moth

David Green

If you need to get hold of me, then the best days are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but I try to pick up emails throughout the week. If you would like more information or to find out how to get involved, please contact:

Caroline (or Caz) Temple, Woodland Wings Project Officer.

Email: ctemple@butterfly-conservation.org or

Tel: 07483039326

A special thank you should also be given to the project funders as the Woodland Wings project is only possible thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Charitable trusts, and support from this Branch.



As well as targeting the rare species, it would also be fantastic to have one or two new transect routes running in the project area by the end of the project.

I've already had the pleasure of meeting some of you and it's obvious to me that there is a wealth of knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm within the branch. I hope to be meeting more of you over the coming weeks and months, and look forward to seeing those of you attending the forthcoming AGM in April.

Details regarding specific events and activities will be added to the butterfly conservation website as and when they are confirmed.

Here are a couple of dates you may want to put in your diary now: National Moth Night at Bucknell Wood on Saturday 16th June at 8:30 (with a bat walk at approx. 9pm), followed by breakfast on Sunday 17th June at 8am. Woodland Butterfly Walk at Salcey Forest on Saturday 23rd June at 10:30am, where Doug will be leading (hopefully to see Wood white and/or Black Hairstreak).

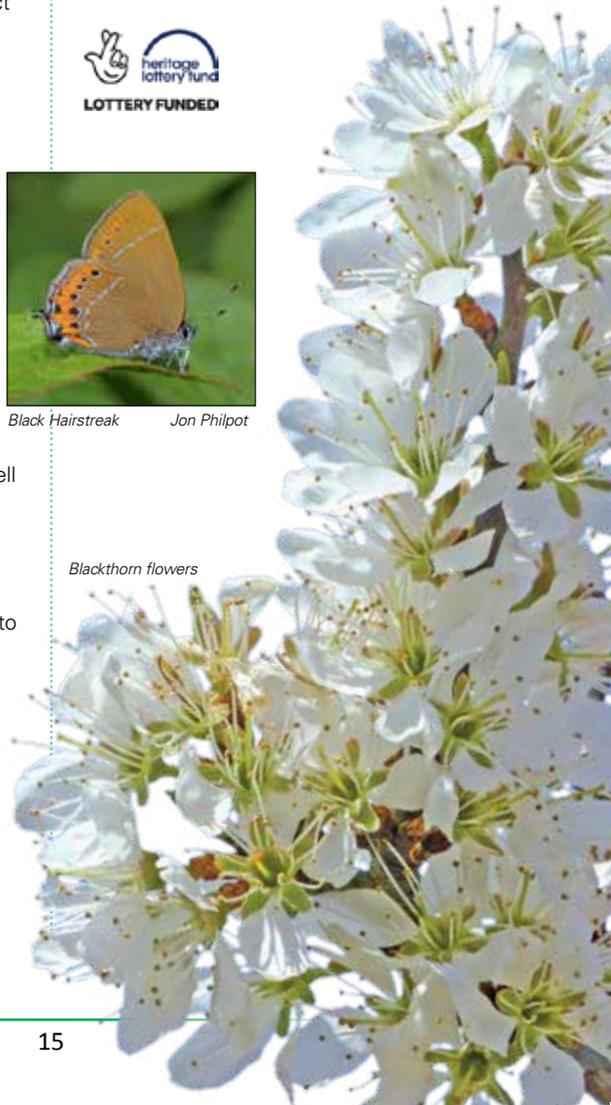


Black Hairstreak

Jon Philpot



Wood White



Blackthorn flowers

It’s been a busy few months on the Roots of Rockingham project, carrying out vegetation surveys, arranging habitat management work, and getting the survey programme underway.



were a few friendly faces from the local branch to make me feel at ease. There was a nice little write up of this in The Guardian by Matt Shardlow, CEO of Buglife, who was at the talk, which you can read here: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/23/country-diary-chequered-skipper-ashton-northamptonshire>

Our habitat management work has been a bit delayed due to a number of factors, including finalising locations of work, the slow cogs of Forestry Commission procedures and bureaucracy, and problems with contractors. This doesn’t mean we’ll have to reduce the amount of work we will do, but we will have a jam-packed programme of works next winter instead! We’ve had a lot more success with our practical conservation work parties, with local volunteers alongside those from BC’s Cambridgeshire and Essex Branch and the Langdyke Trust doing a fantastic job of widening one of the rides at Castor Hanglands. (below)



Next winter I’m hoping to run monthly work parties to enable us to carry out even more work so keep your eyes posted from September if you fancy a bit of a winter workout.

I’ve recently given several talks on the Roots of Rockingham project and the Chequered skipper reintroduction, including a very well attended one at the Chequered Skipper pub, where there

We’ve now got ARC (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust) and Plantlife on board to deliver the adder and plant elements of the project and I’m currently setting up site visits and arranging training days with them. I’ve been out and about with RSPB and BCT (Bat Conservation Trust) over the last couple of months learning more about the target bird and bat species and the habitats they require, and trying to look at the woods through bird and bat eyes – not just butterflies!



Female Adder in Fineshade woods

Our training workshops began in January with RSPB running two sessions on surveying for the primary target bird species (Willow Tit, Marsh Tit, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Spotted Flycatcher and Lesser Redpoll). Some of the challenges of a multi-species project were highlighted when

developing the bird survey methodology, as we are having to use three different types of survey to ensure we have the best chance of picking up the five different species. Volunteer surveyors have since been out and about in our primary woodlands, using playback surveys to record Willow Tits and looking and listening for Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. We've got lots more workshops coming up over the next few months including an Introduction to Bats in March, Reptile Identification and Surveying in April, Plant ID and Surveying in June, and Bat Surveying in July. If you're interested in finding out more about these details can be found under the News & Events section on our website <https://naturebftb.co.uk>

In February we had our first steering group meeting for the Chequered Skipper reintroduction.



Along with presentations from key staff at BC, we found out more about the previous reintroduction attempt from John Moore, disease risk analysis from ZSL (Zoological Society of London), and climate modelling from Dirk Maes. The modelling has been used to determine that the Gaume/Lorraine region of the Ardennes in Belgium has the most similar conditions to Rockingham Forest (out of all the possible Belgium locations) and will therefore be the best place to source the adult butterflies from. There was also plenty of time for discussion, which largely focussed on the logistics of the reintroduction. We had some enlightening visits looking at some of the potential reintroduction sites, both with Dirk, who was able to look at them in comparison to the sites we

will be sourcing them from in Belgium, and the rest of the steering group, some of whom had knowledge of CS sites in France and Scotland. The logistics and first site for the reintroduction are yet to be decided, but we will hopefully have confirmed this by the end of the month. Once the reintroduction has taken place, we will need to monitor the butterfly. As well as their abundance, we are particularly interested in finding out which areas they are using, as this will help guide future reintroductions and management work. Depending on the public accessibility of the release site, having volunteers on hand may also be necessary to allow the public to see the butterflies whilst minimising disturbance and any unwelcome behaviour. We don't have exact timings for the reintroduction as yet (and it will be dependent on when they start emerging in Belgium) but is likely to be from early May to end of June. If you have some time available and would like to get involved in this please let me know. We're also keen to find people that would like to set up a transect in any of the project woodlands, so please get in touch if this interests you and I can provide you with a list of our sites.

There is a great deal of research potential associated with the reintroduction and BC are looking to raise some funding to be able to support a PhD student. Both Beds & Northants and Cambs & Essex branches have donated some money towards this, which is a fantastic help, so I will keep you posted on the outcome of this.

The next few months are going to be very exciting ones, with a host of surveys going on as well as the reintroduction. Fingers crossed for some lovely weather!

For further info or, if you would like to volunteer, please contact me at soriordan@butterfly-conservation.org or on 01780 444067



The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) is Butterfly Conservation's flagship survey and has been running since 2009. A number of squares in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire have been surveyed every year since then by the same fantastic volunteers. It is based on the BTO's breeding bird survey, and involves walking two 1km transects in randomly allocated squares (randomly allocated by Butterfly Conservation but we do try and match volunteers to the squares we are given). The random allocation of squares makes it a much more scientifically sound survey; results have been used to map the rise and decline of our most common species over the last nine years and have been included in a number of scientific papers.



Top of the charts were Meadow Browns (above),

However, unlike the BTO survey which requires you to get up early in the morning, the WCBS, like the butterflies being counted, needs warm sunshine, preferably in the afternoon. It differs from more traditional transect surveys which require 26 visits a year, by needing just two, in July and / or August (although you can do as many visits as you like). Another advantage of the survey is that the majority of species counted are our more common species so identification is not usually a problem.

In 2017 our amazing volunteers walked 144km surveying butterflies in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire for the WCBS and counted a total of 5414 butterflies finding 27 different species.

Vacant squares are available in both counties for anyone interested in taking part in this valuable survey. These include squares at Pitsford and Ravensthorpe, Adstone, Thrapston and Brookfield Plantation in Northants, Greatworth, Stevington, Oakley, Potton and Houghton Regis in Bedfordshire. All the vacant sites are listed on the website <http://www.bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk/wcbs.html>. For more information about the WCBS see the BC website <http://www.ukbms.org/wcbs.aspx> or email wcbs@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk.

with a total of 1668 seen, more than twice as many as the next most populous butterfly, the Ringlet. Small Whites were a close third. Good numbers of Large Whites, Small Tortoiseshell and Gatekeepers were also recorded whilst Marbled Whites appear to have one of their better years. 187 dragonflies and damselflies were also recorded, along with 18 day flying moths. The best site for number of butterflies was near Grafton Regis where 524 butterflies were counted (somehow!) in two visits. At the other end of the scale, was a site that had a total of two butterflies over the two visits - not many butterfly friendly flowers in that part of Northamptonshire!



United Kingdom
Butterfly Monitoring Scheme

BRANCH MEMBERS' DAY 2018

Saturday, 28th April, 2 – 6 p.m.

Maulden Village Hall, Flitwick Road, Maulden MK45 2DP
Easily accessible from M1 and A6

BRANCH AGM TO INCLUDE:

- A Review of Branch Activities and Conservation Work
- All the latest on Woodland Wings and Back from the Brink Projects from the project officers

GUEST SPEAKER

Tom Brereton

Head of Monitoring, Butterfly Conservation

Visiting Professor in Conservation Science at the University of Northampton
“Current Trends of British Butterflies”

- Refreshments

*** BRANCH PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION ***

Entries for the photographic competition (prints only) may be submitted in advance to any committee member (see back page) or brought on the day. Entry is open to all branch members.

There will be four categories:

- **The Chairman's Shield** The Best British Butterfly in the wild.
- **The Don Askew Memorial Shield** This includes Branch Activities, Field Trips, Winter Work parties, Sales Events, Members etc.
- **The Butterfly Conservation Shield** The Best Picture of a Butterfly or Moth in its early stages (egg, caterpillar, pupa etc)
- **Best British Moth Shield** Best Picture of a British Moth.

Rules for the photographic competition

- No more than 6 entries per category per entrant.
- All pictures to have been taken in the last year.
- An entry fee of £0.50p will be charged per picture entered and no larger than A4 in size.
- Every entry must show name/initials of entrant on the reverse.
- Digital images may be cropped but not enhanced by computer manipulation.
- Committee accepts no liability for loss or damage to entries.
- Winning entries are to be available for publication on the branch website and in the Branch Newsletter.



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