

No 94

Autumn/Winter 2018

# ON THE WING

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**Butterfly  
Conservation**

50th Anniversary

The newsletter of  
**Bedfordshire & Northamptonshire Butterfly Conservation**

Welcome to the Winter newsletter. The front cover of this edition shows a Clouded Yellow of the Helice form, a beautiful light colour variation of a normal female and as I write is one of at least three Helice that has been spotted at Sywell Country Park in Northants. This really is the icing on the cake of an extraordinary butterfly year!

This year has been one of the busiest branch years for a long time, not only for the butterflies and moths but also the two national projects that are running simultaneously in our region, the Back to the Brink project and the Woodlands Wings project. The Chequered Skipper re-introduction as part of the Back to the Brink has given our branch national status with media coverage running across the television, papers, and the web. We just have to now wait and see if the butterflies play their part and emerge next spring! As part of the Back to the Brink project a post for a PhD graduate was made, especially to work on the CS re-introduction. This post has been filled by local lad Jamie Wildman. We wish him well in his new role. Jamie will have big boots to fill as our former BC Chief Executive Martin Warren also started down the same route with a PhD on the Wood White butterfly. No pressure Jamie!

A big thank you goes to all the contributors in this issue, without them I would not be able to produce a newsletter. Finding enough material can prove a real struggle and more input from members is needed. We really need some more of you to put pen to paper and tell us what you have been up to. Any snippets or pictures, it doesn't matter how big or small can make interesting reading for the rest of us.

The inside back page gives details of Winter Work parties. Please have a look at these and try and make an effort to come along and have a go. It can make a real difference to some of our butterflies and moths.

Andy



A very rare occurrence appeared at Twywell Hills & Dales on 18th August. A Grizzled Skipper! These butterflies normally only appear in April, May and June and so this almost certainly makes it a second brood butterfly. All due to the very hot summer we have had. Well done to Paul Fisher for finding it and especially to be able to get an excellent photograph!

*Elephant Hawkmoth*

At this year's Branch A.G.M. we were paid a compliment by the guest speaker Tom Brereton of Butterfly Conservation. He said that our Branch differed from many others in that those of us who were interested in butterflies associated freely with those members who had moth interests. In some other branches the groups kept apart, their interests were followed separately. I agree with Tom as I have had the benefit of the company of members who are fine naturalists in the broadest sense, enthusing about butterflies, moths, birds, dragonflies, plants and any other wildlife to be seen on field trips. I learn something each time I am in their company. Moths though, are slightly different in that apart from some day- flyers, they are mostly active in the dark. This means that sadly we usually only see them on the pages of publications or websites. This is a shame, as seeing them at close quarters in daylight

reveals wonderful insects, marvels of beauty and camouflage.

I gained an interest in moths a couple of years ago through the enthusiasm of Tim Pridmore, the Wildlife Trust Volunteer Warden, at Farthinghoe Nature Reserve. Tim gives talks on his favourite subject and illustrates them with slides of specimens he has trapped. Some examples were quite spectacular in colour, shape and camouflage. My interest took on a new dimension when two years ago I was given a moth trap as a Christmas gift. Now I could catch my own moths to observe and release having been encouraged to identify and record them.

Now with butterflies we only have 59 species to learn. With moths there are over 2,500 recorded UK species and many look very much alike. Fortunately, we are able to take digital ID photos and send them via email to mentors such as Tim,

or Mark Hammond the County Recorder for verification.

Other colleagues with a moth interest are usually only too happy to help with ID.

Trapping is fun. My own trap, purchased from Watkins and Doncaster Ltd, is like a bucket with bits of egg boxes placed inside, and a funnel in the lid. A small actinic bulb is perched on top of that. The bulb is lit by an old 12v car battery. Simply, at night moths are attracted to the light, drop through the funnel and settle in the egg boxes until morning when they can be inspected and released. Be aware though, resident garden birds soon learn where and when the moths are released and wait patiently. You have to make sure you release the moths where they can quickly hide from predators. Also, it is good

practice not to trap in the same place two nights running as the same moths might be caught again and not have a chance to feed. A good tip I was given is to purchase a portable pop-up habitat / tent, and place the trap in the tent before opening it. This helps prevent escapes and losses. There is of course a great sense of anticipation when opening the trap. Is there something I haven't seen before? or is there anything in there at all as moths are not very active in moonlit conditions, they prefer cloudy skies.

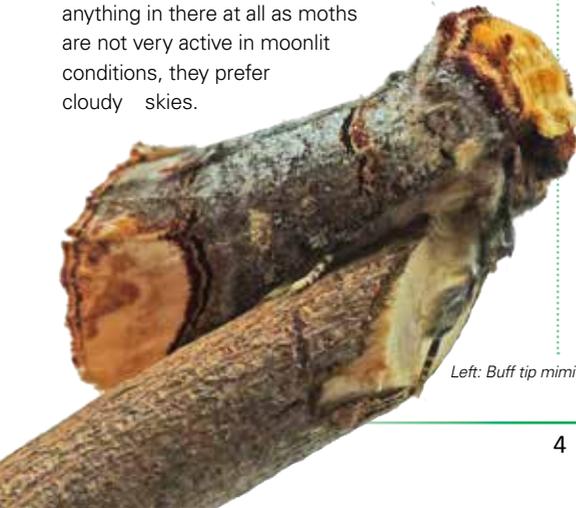


*Green Silver-lines*

There is a feeling of achievement if you catch something which is scarce in the County such as the Tansy Plume I caught earlier this year. Then there are the exotics like Elephant Hawkmoth and tiny Chinese Character, the brilliantly camouflaged Pale Prominent and Buff Tip and the frantic Large Yellow Underwing. This year we have had the good fortune to have an officer of Butterfly Conservation appointed to work within our Branch to lead the 'Woodland Wings' project. This is a Butterfly Conservation initiative in conjunction with Forestry Commission, funded by a Heritage Lottery grant and our own Branch. Leader of the 'Woodland Wings' project, Caz Temple has

specific responsibility for promoting interest in, and improving the environment for particular species in South Northants / Whittlewood Forest area. They are Black Hairstreak and Wood White butterflies, Heart Moth, False Mocha, Scarce Prominent and Concolorous Moth.

Caz has organised several community events to raise the profile of these species. One of these was held in Silverstone on June 9th, where the local Gardening Club members were asked to have some moth traps overnight in a few of their gardens. The traps would be opened and species noted and recorded in the Church Hall next day. I had offered to help as I admit I have a boyish enthusiasm to see what is inside when the traps are opened. Our Chairman Doug Goddard attended in support too. Having been well publicised the event was very well attended. Many locals came along and were very keen to observe, asking many questions which we endeavoured to answer. It was clear too we had



*Left: Buff tip mimics a broken twig*



*Identifying the moths in Silverstone Church Hall*



*One of the youngsters at work*

some serious young enthusiasts there who were very knowledgeable. Great fun was had opening the traps and catching the specimens to identify them. I think one or two may have escaped in the process but we didn't say too much about that.

The other big event Caz organised was a Moth Night at Bucknell Woods. This was a more serious event attended by Mark Hammond, County Recorder along with other accomplished moth enthusiasts. Conditions were favourable, as this would be an overnight event using powerful Mercury Vapour light traps run off generators. I had previously asked Tim if I should obtain one of these and he said I could, if I was prepared to cope with several hundred moths at a time! Several of these were placed at strategic locations in the woods and run through the night, attended by group members. Some of us who lived nearby came home for the night, to return in the morning and examine the moths caught. This was a most exciting and enjoyable experience as many of the more rare and exotic species such

as Lobster Moth, Swallow Prominent, Scalloped Shell and Eyed Hawkmoth were on display either in collecting pots or retained for viewing in the trap boxes. The event was judged to be a great success and there is great enthusiasm to have a repeat of the event next year. Moths are certainly fascinating creatures, the larvae and adults providing food for our birds and bats. They have many strategies for defence, dropping like a stone to the ground when they sense the presence of bats, adopting camouflage to mimic bird droppings or broken twigs and larvae such as Cinnabar Moth, showing in bold black and yellow colouring that they carry toxins to render themselves unpalatable. Moths also pollinate many of our flowers and foodplants on their nocturnal forays.

I can recommend their study, proving science is fun, to anyone who thinks they might consider obtaining a trap and a reference book. The internet is also a great store of images and information.



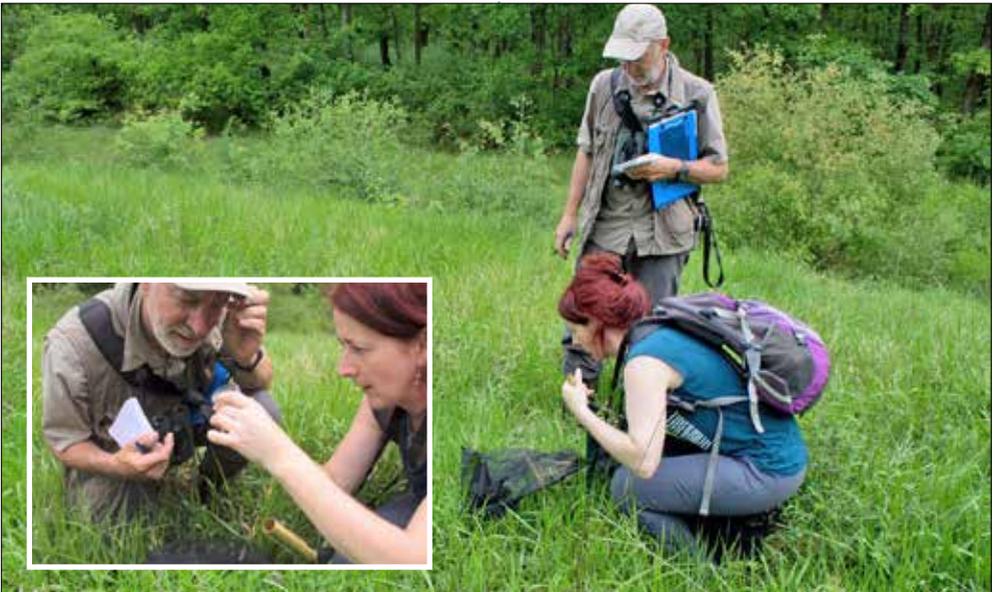
*Checking the traps in Bucknell Wood*

*All photos Dennis McQuillan*

My, what a year it has been so far! After a winter of relative uncertainty as to what capacity I would be involved with the Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*) butterfly project (if I was fortunate enough to be at all), my optimism and patience held out, and I was rewarded with an invitation to join Butterfly Conservation on their trip to Belgium to collect *C. palaemon* for translocation to Rockingham Forest. After a whirlwind expedition to the Continent, often times with a camera in hand, but very occasionally a butterfly net, I returned to Rockingham Forest with the BC team to oversee the release of the Belgian *C. palaemon* stock early in the morning of



Thursday, May 24th. After the Springwatch crew had departed and the butterflies taken flight, I spent the remainder of the day in the company of John Moore (who wrote his PhD thesis on the reintroduction of *C. palaemon* to Bardney Limewoods in Lincolnshire) and countless other experts scouring the rides for the adult (imago) butterflies. What a magnificent sight those butterflies made on the wing in England, knowing those very same specimens had been fluttering in Belgium only a day or two prior! I felt, and still feel, incredibly fortunate to be in the position I am presently in, and to have played even a small part in such a historic occasion.



Philippe Goffart & Susannah O'Riordan collecting Chequered Skippers in Belgium

Photos Jamie Wildman

I returned home to Kettering that evening, and spent Friday packing for the next stage of the reintroduction. On Saturday 26th May, I began two weeks of fieldwork to study the imago on the wing in their new English home, and to undertake vegetation and habitat surveys at the release site, which will help inform my PhD research in the years to come. I am extremely grateful to the owners of New Lodge Farm at which I stayed, as Simon and Sarah Silverman were compassionate enough to allow me to pitch my tent at their campsite for free, with full use of the excellent range of facilities available at no additional charge. This not only demonstrates the kindness of strangers, but also how sympathetic certain factions are toward nature and worthwhile causes such as the reintroduction of an extinct species to the English countryside. In the years to come, if *C. palaemon* is successfully re-established at Rockingham Forest, I can honestly think of no better base for a week's worth of butterfly spotting in north Northamptonshire. I cycled to the release site and back each day, my backpack laden with a notebook, camera, binoculars, a few scientific tools, and a hastily-packed lunch which never survived past the first hour! I had a fantastic time in the company of Prof Jeff Ollerton (my primary supervisor at the University of Northampton), Dr Duncan McCollin (Head of Studies at UoN), and Prof Tom Brereton (Head of Research at BC and visiting professor



Left to Right: Dr Duncan McCollin, Jamie Wildman,  
Prof Tom Brereton, Prof Jeff Ollerton      Photo Jeff Ollerton

at UoN) during my first weekend at the site, and learnt an extraordinary amount about the native flora and fauna thanks to them. The beauty of research such as mine is, not only does one engage with the primary species (in this case *C. palaemon*) to understand its behavior, nectar and foodplant preferences, but one also gains an unquantifiable amount of peripheral knowledge along the way: I have inadvertently learnt about dozens of flowering plants, other pollinators and invertebrates that, in many cases, bear no direct relation to the task at hand, yet this base of knowledge will surely grow exponentially in tandem with my *C. palaemon*-focused studies. For someone who loves to learn, this perpetual bombardment is nothing but a delight to experience. There are so many advantages to applying oneself to a vocation such as this, and it is a pleasure to have the assistance of so many deeply knowledgeable people, all of whom have been endlessly kind and generous with their time to both inform and assist me. I am incredibly grateful for the support BC HQ, the Beds & Northants and Cambs & Essex branches of BC, and other affiliated partners have offered me so far.

It took me quite some time to organise all the notes I made and data I collected after I returned home. Since then, I have spent the summer reading up on *C. palaemon* in preparation for the start of my course in late September, interspersed with a few visits to Rockingham Forest to search for larval signs! At the time of writing, I am cannot wait to set foot on the UoN's new Waterside campus, and officially start my Environmental Science doctorate. By the time you read is, I will be officially enrolled at Northampton, and my studies will formally be underway. Perhaps my role in the historic 'Back from the Brink' project will finally seem 'real', and a daydream no longer! It's given me a jolly good buzz getting to this stage, but I'm sure there are countless untold wonders and great discoveries waiting for me out in the field, and thousands of pages of enlightening research to parse in the years to come. I can't wait.

# Branch Photographic Competition 2018

*Judged by our guest speaker Tom Brereton, Head of Monitoring at Butterfly Conservation*



## Chairman's Shield

Winner of Best British Butterfly: Andy Wylde and a Small Heath.

Runner up: Wall Brown by Mark Hallsworth.

## Don Askew Memorial Shield

Winner of Branch Activities: Twywell Field Trip by Dennis McQuillan.

Runner up: Judith Barnard with Salcey Field Trip.



## Butterfly Conservation Shield

Winner of Best Early Stages: Dennis McQuillan with an unusual find, a Scarlet Tiger caterpillar.  
Runner up: Chris Colles with a Pale Tussock moth caterpillar.

## Best British Moth Shield

Winner: Chris Colles and a very cryptic Oak Beauty Moth.  
Runner up: Dennis McQuillan and Herald Moth.

*We can look back on a very successful series of field trips in Northamptonshire this year. We enjoyed fine warm conditions throughout the programme and all were well attended. In all cases, the target species were seen and we also enjoyed some welcome surprises.*

We started in the spring on 20th May at **Fermyn Woods Country Park** joining forces with *Back from the Brink* and *The Northants Moth Group* for a Moth and Butterfly Day. We started early looking at the overnight moth catch and, a very popular decision, provided bacon rolls, croissants and coffee before a small group searched the park for spring butterflies. A range of moths were on show for the party to study, including Peach Blossom, Chocolate tip, Green Silver Lines and Poplar Hawkmoth. There had been some concern the previous year over the state of the habitat here for butterflies, but as we surveyed the open grassy areas, the key species appeared in excellent numbers with 74 **Dingy Skippers**, 30 **Grizzled Skippers** and 13 **Green Hairstreaks** being counted alongside the more common Orange-tips. We held a second walk after lunch looking at these again.



Mark Hammond with the nights catch at Fermyn

Many thanks to Mark Hammond and Susannah O'Riordan for their support on this occasion.



Poplar Hawkmoth from the Fermyn haul

On 3rd June, we held a second Moth and Butterfly event at **Pitsford Reservoir**, a repeat of a similar event last year. Grateful thanks are due to Mischa Cross who provided a presentation as an introduction to moths and opened the moth



Plenty of Hawkmoths at Pitsford



trap to show us a good array of species – Green Silver Lines, Emerald, Elephant, Poplar, Lime, Eyed Hawkmoths and a splendid Cockchafer being among their number. Butterflies were harder to find during the *June Gap* but we counted 7 Speckled Woods, 3 Large Skippers and singles of Brown Argus, Common Blue, Red Admiral, Peacock and, best of all, a fresh Small Copper.

During June, several visits were made to **Salcey Forest** to monitor **Black Hairstreaks** and **Wood Whites** as part of the Woodland Wings Project. The former had an exceptional year, never before



*Julie Williams (front) & Sandra Muldoon visit Salcey*

has it been possible to show it to the public so easily. Our CEO Julie Williams and Publicity Officer Sandra Muldoon visited and enjoyed the unique courtship ritual of the Wood Whites. A group from *Greenwings* also experienced a memorable day watching these two important species and a man in his eighties completed his list of 59 British Butterflies when he saw his first Wood White, a moment which will live with all of those present.



*Doug Goddard shows a gentleman his 59th species on the Greenwings tour of Salcey*



*A White Admiral poses nicely on a picnic table in Salcey*

Later in August, Sharon Hearle, Caz Temple and I were joined by Dan Hoare and South of England Project Officer Steve Wheatley to observe second brood Wood Whites in Bucknell Wood, a good total of nine being recorded.

Our scheduled programme resumed on 24th June with our annual Open Day at **Glaphorn Cow Pastures**. The **Black Hairstreak** had been on the wing since 3rd June and during the intervening period record counts had been made. A stream of visitors were still able to see it in reasonable conditions as it had a prolonged flight period this year. The first Silver-washed Fritillary of the year visited the brambles and numbers of the more common species were beginning to build – 17 Large Skippers, 16 Meadow Browns, 26 Ringlets.



The "hotspot" at Glaphorn

On 1st July, a small group attended a walk round **Twywell Hills and Dales** for our target species the **Marbled White**. Andy Wyldes had counted over 400 a few days before on the transect route but they had dispersed by this time. There were still good numbers present but they were very difficult to photograph as they were very active in the heat, though we found two mating pairs which provided an opportunity to study and compare the different markings of male and female.



Hot conditions at Twywell

On the evening of 10th July, Dave James, Clare Topping and I met with a group of local enthusiasts for a rare venture to the west of the county to the **Mill Park Reserve in Long Buckby**. This is a charming and picturesque reserve, a credit to a committed group of volunteers who manage and maintain it. On a lovely, warm evening eleven species were recorded – 1 Large Skipper, 3 Small Skippers, 5 Large Whites, Small White, 11 Green-veined Whites, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, 3 Commas, 3 Gatekeepers, 14 Meadow Browns, 6 Ringlets.



Mill Park Reserve

Our final walk took us to **Fineshade Wood** on 15th July, a repeat of successful visits in previous years. I conducted a preliminary survey the week before in which I recorded 21 species including Purple Emperors and newly colonising Dark Green Fritillaries and with some notable absentees so all boded well for this field trip. A dozen of us quickly observed a good showing of the three common Whites, Ringlets and Meadow Browns. The sharper-eyed among us noticed a couple of **White-letter Hairstreaks** among the ride side vegetation while **Purple Hairstreaks** flitted around at a higher level. The **Silver-washed Fritillaries** were very active in the heat but were not as numerous as in the previous year as they were well into their flight period. We sighted newly hatched Peacock, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Brimstones. As we reached the large clearing at the end of the planned route, we ventured into a grassy ride where I had seen the **Dark Green Fritillary** the previous week and, to the delight of



*Dark Green Fritillary in Fineshade*

the group, one suddenly appeared, patrolling the area in characteristic strong flight but frequently alighting on thistles to allow photographic opportunities. This was a first for a Northants field trip. We continued along the main ride, where I had seen three **Purple Emperors** flying over the canopy a week earlier, but they did not oblige on this occasion. However this omission was rectified when one flew overhead when we paused by the bridge over the main road. Another White-letter was seen here homing in on the elms used for breeding.



*Fineshade keeps getting better for butterflies!*

The number of species was growing as we crossed the road in to the waste ground in the field to the south. Brown Argus was numerous here and there were a number of Common Blues and the last of the season's Marbled Whites. A Small Tortoiseshell nectared on the patches of thistles. The species list had grown to 21. A fresh **Painted Lady** was quickly spotted in the distance, quickly joined by another...number 22. Finally, Andy Wyldes found a newly emerged **Small Copper** ....23 species the best count ever made on a Northants field trip. Three more Dark Green Fritillaries bombed around this area, one flying into the grassy bank where there are violets present, suggesting that this species is finally colonising north Northants from the large colonies which have become established in Rutland and Lincolnshire.

*The full list for Fineshade read:*

*8 Large Skipper, 8 Large White, 12 Small White, 16 Green-veined White, 2 Brimstone, 12 Purple Hairstreak, 4 White-letter Hairstreak, 7 Common Blue, 12 Brown Argus, 1 Small Copper, 1 Purple Emperor, 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Peacock, 1 Comma, 1 Red Admiral, 2 Painted Ladies, 23 Silver-washed Fritillary, 4 Dark Green Fritillary, 3 Marbled White, 1 Speckled Wood, 24 Meadow Brown, 9 Gatekeeper, 40 Ringlet.*

This has been my most memorable season since I started studying the butterflies of the county over thirty years ago. It has been a real pleasure this year to show our flagship species to a range of different people and receive their appreciation. We have a number of 'regulars' who come on most of our field trips which has generated a strong social aspect and it is good to catch up with them and share anecdotes about our sightings. Thanks to Dave James and Andy Wyldes who have co-led our visits ensuring a lively banter which has led to us being dubbed 'The Last of the Summer Wine'. Next year, if you have not been before, why not join the party?

*Photos: Doug Goddard & Andy Wyldes*

The Spring and Summer months have whizzed by in a whirlwind of surveys and workshops, with the Chequered Skipper reintroduction taking centre stage. In May, we set off on our whistle-stop trip to Belgium to collect the butterflies which was a fantastic experience. Apart from the excitement of getting to see my first Chequered Skipper, it was also really useful to see the habitats the butterflies were using and to learn how the sites were being managed. The Skippers preference for spreading throughout the landscape soon became apparent when we started trying to locate and catch them – it took a team of 10 of us a day and a half to catch 42 butterflies (10 male and 32 females), and we had a close encounter with some wild boar as well as some stormy downpours to contend with in the process! A lot of media organisations were present to cover the release once we got back to Rockingham Forest, although the rather chilly morning meant that the butterflies didn't move for quite some time after the nets were removed – not quite what the cameras were expecting!



But it did mean that everyone got a chance to take some great photos. The butterflies eventually started taking flight late morning and we had an amazing bunch of volunteers on hand (who'd been there since dawn) to follow the butterflies and try and monitor where they were going and their behaviour. The weather in the two weeks following the release was not ideal, being quite cool and damp on many of the days, which made finding and following the butterflies more challenging. But volunteers were still on site every day and collected valuable data which allowed us to see how far the Chequered Skippers had dispersed from their release points. We don't know as yet what impact the cool weather after the release followed by the hot dry summer might have had on the success of the larvae, although it has been heartening to see plenty of healthy looking foodplants along the rides. We have been out a couple of times searching for larvae, but the sheer amount of vegetation has made this very challenging. The plus side is that we are now very good at finding and identifying Large Skipper





*Looking for signs of Chequered Skipper caterpillars*

larvae as they produce similar feeding signs and tubes to the Chequered Skipper!

It's not all been about the Chequered Skipper though, as there has been a lot of work going on for the other project species. Another incredible highlight of the year for me was finding Wood



*Large Skipper caterpillar and grass tube  
Right: Moth trapping in Southwick Wood.  
Photo Susannah O'Riordan*

White in one of the Boughton Estate woodlands near Geddington. Being a private site with limited public access, the butterflies might have been hanging on there for some time – but it was very exciting to find them, and they seemed to be there in good numbers. I'll be going back next year to do a timed count so we can start to get a better idea of population size and whether we need to do any management to support them. On



*Wood Whites found near Geddington Photo Susannah O'Riordan*

the butterfly front we also recorded good numbers of Dingy & Grizzled Skipper in some areas where previously there had only been sporadic records, so we will be looking at doing some timed counts for them next year as well as checking out some other sites with potential. Any offers of help would be welcome.

The Concolorous moth has also been on the agenda this summer, with an amazing effort by Ron Follows to comprehensively survey Fineshade yielding 297 individuals over 9 trapping sessions throughout the wood. Our bat & moth nights, and moth breakfasts have been popular and we had a great night of moth trapping at Southwick Wood, recording 165 species in a wood that only had a handful of previous records. Thanks to Mark Hammond and all the moth-ers for their help, support and cheery night-time banter.



This summer we have also run several workshops and survey sessions focusing on our reptile, plant and bat species. Volunteers have been out scouring the north of the county for adders, but Fineshade is still the only project site where they have been seen – although they are present there in very good numbers. Because of the hot weather and timing of our workshops we were a bit late to undertake much monitoring of our priority plant species, Fly Orchid & Basil Thyme, but we will be out next year monitoring known populations and checking historic sites. Our bat surveys have got off to a good start with volunteers collecting data on 6 of our 11 main woodland sites. Initial reports are encouraging, with 3 of the sites recording Barbastelle so far, with lots of data still to analyse. We've also recorded Brown Long-eared on some of our surveys, although these are much harder to pick up on detectors because they have very quiet echolocation calls – hence their nickname 'the whispering bat'.

After the busy summer survey season I am now concentrating on our programme of winter habitat management works and working with relevant landowners to plan these and get contractors in place. I'll soon be starting our volunteer work parties as well and would love some helping pairs of hands, so please keep an eye on the events page at [www.naturebftb.co.uk](http://www.naturebftb.co.uk) for dates and locations if you'd like to get involved.

I'd like to say a massive thankyou to all members of the local branch who, alongside members of Cambs & Essex branch gave up a significant amount of their time to help monitor the released Chequered Skippers (over 300 hours!) We will have lots of monitoring to do again next year, so there will be plenty more opportunities to get involved with this, if you're interested. And there might even be a prize for the first person to spot a Chequered Skipper on the wing!



*Bat surveying workshop*

*Photo Barry Galpin*



*Reptile survey training*

*Photo S. O'Riordan*



*Grass ID Workshop*

*Photo S. O'Riordan*



*Chequered Skipper Larval hunters!*

*Photo S. O'Riordan*

30th June 2018

As I ate my cheese topped brekky crumpets on Saturday 30th June at my pied-a-terre in Watford, I pondered how lucky it was that the long dry spell we were enjoying had continued to the end of the month and the prospect of many Dark Green Fritillaries making an appearance on the branch field trip to Sharpenhoe Clappers was becoming a reality. Excitedly, I set off up the M1 to the site and forty minutes later I arrived. It was shortly after 10 am and the car park was nearly full. Many of the cars were those of the people coming on the walk. In total thirty three people turned up, including a group from Essex who had enjoyed my Wall Walk at Canvey-wick in May so much that they came to hear my repertoire of butterfly stories all over again!

As there were so many people waiting around at 10.15am I conducted a pre-field trip experience for twenty or so members in the field next to the car park and we enjoyed the abundance of the Brown family butterflies present. Then, at 10.35, assisted by Mike Gitos and Peter Glenister, I took the party straight over the far side of the site. We went to the Dark Green Fritillary breeding area in the east-facing chalk-meadow meadow. Once there, we proceeded to walk slowly, up, down and along the chalk downland hillside in a zig-zag random walk. Being so hot, nearly thirty degrees, most of the butterflies were constantly on the wing and it proved almost impossible for any photography to be taken but, in contrast, everyone was able to see a spectacular display of lots of active butterflies in a chalk hay meadow in its finest condition.

Most of the Dark Green Fritillaries were males who were searching up and down the chalk down-land for emerging females. As we walked around the site watching Dark

Green Fritillaries other down-land butterflies appeared, mostly Brown family and Skippers, We found few of the blue family, mostly late-flying Common Blues. Unfortunately no Chalkhill Blues nor Small Blues.

We did see 115 Dark Green Fritillaries and in total 20 different species, The Meadow Browns, Marbles Whites and Ringlets were very numerous and seen in hundreds. The white family were seen in reasonable numbers too, Overall about 750 individual butterflies were seen on the day which is one of the finest daily totals seen on Sharpenhoe during the entire butterfly season.

### The twenty different butterfly species seen:

#### SKIPPERS:

Essex Skipper, Small Skipper and Large Skipper,

#### WHITES:

Brimstone, Large White, Small White, and Green Veined White,

#### BROWNS:

Meadow Brown, Marbled White, Small Heath, Speckled Wood, Ringlet and Gatekeeper.

#### NYMPHALIDS:

Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Dark Green Fritillary and Red Admiral.

#### BLUES:

Common Blue, Small Copper and Purple Hairstreak

After the field trip finished a few members remained and came into Moleskin to try and find an early Chalkhill Blue, but unlike last year we were not able to find one and I put this down to the cold wet spring months delaying the development of larval stages. There were also reports of Silver Washed Fritillary, White Admiral & Purple Emperor being seen from some of the members present, but I, unfortunately, was unable to corroborate any of these sightings.

## A Tiny Orange Gem

Bygone steam locomotive echoes in the tunnel night  
And deep within New Covert away from mortal eyes  
Born upon white wings tipped with orange surprise  
The male *Anthocardis cardamines* takes flight  
Spring awaking, mates a-taking, in the dappled light

Along the shaded woodland ride 'neath lofty Ash and Oak  
Dainty mauve flowers of Ladies' smock nestle in sward green  
Relics perhaps of days long gone when meadows graced the scene  
With rustic cot' and grazing sheep and simple country folk  
Rooks a-winging, Wren a-singing, at sunrise awoke

From hidden quiet coupling she flits on whiten wing  
Female of Orange-tip species those delicate blooms to find  
Alights the tip, selects a spot, and leaves one egg behind  
'Tis rib-bed and of an orange hue, a jewel to adorn a ring  
In the shade, singly laid - a wondrous little thing

The curious naturalist comes by recording what he sees  
The beauty of the Peacock shines, and Speckled Woods display  
A Large White too so easily seen without the sunshine's ray  
Though Orange-tip he fails to see adds to his list with ease  
Secretly laid, in dappled shade - beneath the woodland trees

He gently cups the Cuckoo-flower betwixt his thumb and finger  
To twist it then with practiced hand to view the exposed stem  
The Orange-tip breeds within this wood confirmed by the hidden gem  
Species recorded on the list, move on, no need to linger

Larvae appear, another year; to feed, pupate, emerge and mate  
A complete metamorphosis; Nature's wonder to relate.

A Poem reflecting on a visit with Doug Goddard, former Northants Butterfly Recorder, to a woodland, New Covert on the Kelmarsh Estate, adjacent to the Brampton Valley Way Linear Country Park. formerly the Northampton/Leicester Steam railway line, with its twin tunnels.

*Nigel Lingley*

# Winter Work Parties 2018/19

## Fermyn Woods Country Park

Scrub clearance in the main park for Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreaks 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Park behind the Skylark Café (SP952848) Contact Doug Goddard 01604 408670.

**Sunday 14th October 2018**

**Sunday 2nd December 2018**

**Sunday 13th January 2019**

## Twywell Hills and Dales

Scrub clearance along the transect route for a range of grassland species 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Meet in the main car park (SP938772) Contact Doug Goddard 01604 408670.

**N.B.** The site is under new management and the dates below are subject to health and safety clearance being finalised.

**Sunday, 10th February 2019**

**Sunday 17th March 2019**

## Salcey Forest (Woodland Wings Project)

Removal of small scrub to enhance existing habitat and create new areas for Wood White and Black Hairstreak. Meet in the horsebox car park on Midshires Way, SP810508, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Please contact Caz Temple in advance by ringing 07483039326 or email [ctemple@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:ctemple@butterfly-conservation.org)

**Sunday 21st October 2018**

**Sunday 18th November 2018**

**Sunday 16th December 2018**

**Sunday 20th January 2018**

**Sunday 17th February 2018**

**\*\*\*\* Look out for further activities and volunteer tasks for Woodland Wings and Back from the Brink projects.**

**\*Please check the website and social media for any changes to events\***

# Beds & Northants Branch Committee

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Chairman                                  | Douglas Goddard<br>34 Ashley Way<br>Westone Northampton NN3 3DZ                   | 01604 408670<br><a href="mailto:chairman@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">chairman@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>                       |
| Branch Secretary<br>&<br>Branch Organiser | Martin Izzard<br>310C Newton Road<br>Rushden Northants NN10 0SY                   | 01933 355688<br><a href="mailto:branch-secretary@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">branch-secretary@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>       |
| Branch Liaison                            | David Chandler<br>110 Norbury Avenue<br>Watford Herts WD24 4PD                    | 01923 253793<br><a href="mailto:branch-liason@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">branch-liason@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>             |
| Northants Butterfly<br>Recorder           | David James<br>24 Villa Way<br>Wootton Northampton NN4 6JJ                        | 07838 113940<br><a href="mailto:northants-recorder@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">northants-recorder@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>   |
| Bedfordshire Butterfly<br>Recorders       | Keith Balmer<br>6 Salcome Close<br>Bedford Beds MK40 3BA                          | 01234 304741<br><a href="mailto:beds-recorder1@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">beds-recorder1@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>           |
|   | Peter Glenister<br>2 Sutton Gardens<br>Luton Beds LU3 3AF                         | 01582 524994<br><a href="mailto:beds-recorder2@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">beds-recorder2@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>           |
| Acting Treasurer                          | Ian Kimsey (Details below)  |  |
| Newsletter<br>Editor                      | Andy Wyldes<br>54 Polwell Lane<br>Barton Seagrave Kettering<br>Northants NN15 6UB | 01536 724100<br><a href="mailto:newsletter@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">newsletter@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>                   |
| Digital & Media Officer                   | Judith Barnard  | 01604 757537<br><a href="mailto:webmaster@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">webmaster@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>                     |
| Membership                                | Jonathan Philpot  | 01604 880779<br><a href="mailto:membership-secretary@bedsnorthantsbutterflies.org.uk">membership-secretary@bedsnorthantsbutterflies.org.uk</a> |
| Moth Officer                              | Andy Banthorpe<br>32 Long Close<br>Lower Stondon Beds SG16 6JS                    | 01462 850753<br><a href="mailto:mothsofficer@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">mothsofficer@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>               |
| Membership Activities<br>Co-ordinator     | Ian Kimsey<br>Redspring, Moor End Road<br>Radwell Beds MK43 7HY                   | 01234 781763   |
| Wider Countryside<br>Co-ordinator         | Clare Topping   | <a href="mailto:wcb@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk">wcb@bedsnorthants-butterflies.org.uk</a>   |