

# Devon Branch

[www.devon-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.devon-butterflies.org.uk)



Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*  
Gary Watson  
Loxhore  
15/01/2024

## Newsletter



Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Issue Number 119  
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## Butterfly Conservation



## Devon Branch Newsletter

The Newsletter of Butterfly Conservation Devon Branch published three times a year.

Copy dates: late December, late April, late August for publication in February, June, and October in each year.

Send articles and images to the Editor (contact details back of newsletter).

The Editor may correct errors in, adjust, or shorten articles if necessary, for the sake of accuracy, presentation and space available. Offerings may occasionally be held over for a later newsletter if space is short.

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or of Butterfly Conservation either locally or nationally.

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## Help to save Exmoor's High Brown Fritillaries by Ellie Wyatt

Hello! I am Ellie Wyatt, Butterfly Conservation's project officer for the 'Reviving Heddon Valley's Fritillaries' project which is funded by a Natural England Species Recovery Grant. We are partnering with the National Trust to restore Heddon Valley and increase the resilience of the High Brown Fritillary population. The High Brown Fritillary is one of the UK's most threatened butterflies.

Following a devastating 61% loss of colonies, Heddon Valley, Exmoor, stands as one of only three

locations in England supporting the High Brown. We are creating new areas for the High Brown to expand onto, creating bigger, better, more joined habitats to create a sustainable future for the High Brown. We are achieving this through woodland management, scrub management, innovative grazing and planting more of the



Clearing scrub on a work party volunteer day.



High Brown Fritillary nectaring  
Paul Dunn,  
Butterfly Conservation volunteer

caterpillar's food plant, the Common Dog-Violet. Woodland management includes pollarding and coppicing to create more breeding habitat as well as increasing connectivity throughout the valley. This management paired with conservation grazing will lead to a sustainable future for the High Brown as it will keep the sites open and allow the Common Dog-Violet abundance to increase and support the butterfly's population. We will be running several work party days to implement scrub clearance to keep the bracken height down and improve the habitat conditions for the High Brown. We will also be running butterfly identification days and survey training.

Everyone is welcome to come along and help us save this threatened butterfly. This is an ambitious and vital project to save the High Brown in the South West. If you would like to get involved, please contact me at [ewyatt@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:ewyatt@butterfly-conservation.org) to find out more information and ways to get involved.

# DEVON BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION FIELD EVENTS 2024

Welcome to our Field Events in 2024, whatever your level of interest or experience, we would like you to join us, to help our butterflies and moths. You do not have to be a member to join our friendly organised walks, accompanied children are welcome. Please always come prepared for our changeable weather and varied terrain.

## Field Trip Safety Points

There are important responsibilities laid upon us to do what we can to ensure your safety while on field trips and work parties conducted under the auspices of Butterfly Conservation. Here are a few guidelines we would like you to consider and act upon before joining our events.

- Wear footwear appropriate to the conditions and terrain.
- Wear clothing suitable for the environment taking into account potentially adverse weather conditions and countryside hazards, e.g., wet weather, ticks, adders, rocky slopes, rabbit holes, thorns etc.
- Children under 16 must be adequately supervised by an adult
- Dogs must be kept on a lead.
- Carefully listen to any instructions given by the field trip leader.
- Inform the leader if you are going to leave the trip early.
- Please observe the countryside code at all times.

Site specific hazards will be outlined by the field trip leader at the beginning of the field trip. Contact numbers are given for each event. If the weather casts doubt, or any other queries please contact the event leader and check the website.

Moth trapping events take place in the dark and there are a few things that you will need to bring so that you have a safe and comfortable evening.

- torch
- clothing (even if it is a hot day, it can get chilly after dark)
- Suitable footwear (please ask if you are unsure what is suitable for a particular event)
- Something to drink and perhaps a snack to eat
- Insect repellent (mosquitoes can be a pest sometimes)

- Dark glasses (you may wish to bring these as the light from the moth traps is very bright)
- Please try to arrive at the advertised time, take care of your own personal safety and listen to the short introductory briefing by the event organiser, about any hazards in the area such as electric cables, slippery paths etc. Children are most welcome but must be accompanied by a parent or guardian if under 16.

Postcodes are provided but may not be as accurate as a 6 figure grid reference or what 3 Words.

[www.gridreferencefinder.com](http://www.gridreferencefinder.com) [www.what3words.com](http://www.what3words.com)

Please check our website and social media prior to each trip in case of cancellation.

[Devon Branch | Butterfly Conservation \(butterfly-conservation.org\)](http://Devon Branch | Butterfly Conservation (butterfly-conservation.org))

## **Field Events 2024**

### **KIDDENS HILL PLANTATION, HALDON**

**Date:** Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May @ 11am

**Grid ref:** SX871848

Meet on the forestry track where the overhead pylon wires are.

**Postcode:** for SAT NAV EX67QX will take you to forestry track with nearby house. Go down track and park near pylons. Alternative fee paying parking is available at Buller's Hill where you can follow the way-marked butterfly trail to meeting place, approximately half an hour and steep in places.

**Target species:** Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

**Leader:** Nikki Gardiner 01647 252600 or 07813 349061

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### **DWT MEETH QUARRY**

**Date:** Saturday 1st June @1:30pm

**Grid ref:** SS539084

**Postcode:** EX20 3QD

Meet in the main car park at the far end of the entrance road off the A386 at Meeth.

**Target species:** Wood White and Dingy Skipper.

Approximately 90-minute walk.

**Leader:** Kevin New

**Email:** kevin.new32@gmail.com

## UNDERCLIFFS NNR, SEATON

**Date:** Saturday June 15th @ 10:30am

**Grid ref:** SY306911

Meet at Whitlands Grid Ref SY 306911 just off the A3052 past Rousden towards Lyme Regis. Enter the driveway (Avenue of old Beech trees) and bear right at the first junction where you will be met in order to park to maximise the space. There is room for up to 6 cars so car sharing is recommended and booking is essential. Bring packed lunch, drinks, suncream and sun hat as it is a full day with the option of spending more time in the afternoon.

**Target species:** Wood White, Brown Argus, Wall, Green Hairstreak and Dark-green Fritillary. Martin Drake is an authority on flies and there is a huge variety of bees and other insects as well as several orchid species.

This is a joint walk with AVDCS and BC to explore the unique landscape that is the Undercliffs NNR. We will walk along some narrow, rough paths so stout footwear is essential. We will spend about 30 mins in calcereous grassland to a series of south facing glades with distinct geology and flora that have been created by Natural England and local volunteers to the benefit of wildlife. Ticks are prevalent so please wear long trousers and socks.

**Leaders:** Paul Butter and Martin Drake

**Phone:** Paul 07807 680455 or Martin 01460 220650

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## JONEY'S CROSS NEWTON POPPLEFORD

**Date:** Thursday 27th June @ 1:30pm

**Grid ref:** SY057897

**what3words:**champions.receiving.classics

Meet at Joney's Cross Car Park near Newton Poppleford just south of A3052. Entrance on minor road, signposted Hawkerland.

**Target species:** Small Heath, Grayling, Large Skipper, Meadow Brown, Green Hairstreak, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and possibly a few Silver-studded Blues. Common moths, possibly Heath Potter Wasps, Stonechat and Dartford Warbler if lucky.

Approximately 1-2 hours about a 2 mile walk easy walking on firm paths with some gentle slopes.

Sorry no dogs.

**Leader:** Lesley Kerry

**Email:** lesleymkerry@gmail.com

## **BILLACOMBE FIELDS PLYMSTOCK**

**Date:** Saturday 6th July @ 10:30am

**Grid Ref:** SX517538

Meet at old railway bridge, just up track from Billacombe Road (A379).

**Target species:** Marbled White, Clouded Yellow, Common Blue, Ringlet, Large and Small Skipper and if lucky the White-letter Hairstreak.

Approximately 3 hours 2-3km walk – moderately steep hills, majority on grass paths.

Restricted parking on the main road, local streets can be used.

**Leaders:** Kev & Jacki Solman

**Email:** hydrology@btinternet.com

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## **ASHCLYST FOREST NEAR KILLERTON**

**Date:** Sunday 7th July @ 10:30am - 2:30pm

**Grid ref:** SX999995

Meet at Forest Gate car park.

**Target species:** White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary, Scarlet Tiger and many other butterflies.

Moderately level but tracks can get muddy from recent rain.

**Leaders:** Pete Hurst and Malcolm Jarvis

email pete-hurst@outlook.com

**Phone:** 01626 854182

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## **BYSTOCK POOLS RESERVE**

**Date:** Saturday 13th July @ 11:00 am

**Grid ref:** SY034843

Meet at DWT Bystock Pools nature reserve, reservoir entrance. Car parking is roadside at the reservoir entrance but is limited. There is parking at Squabmoor, 0.3 mile further east along the road.

**Target species:** White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Heath, Marbled White, Grayling, also Small Red Damselfly, Keeled Skimmer and Firecrest. Please note that there is no reliable mobile coverage whilst on the reserve. 1.5 Hour walk minimum.

**Leaders:** Rog & Liz Hamling

**Phone:** 01395 274766 or 07733 078043

# Save the date!

Annual Member's Day  
Saturday October 19th 2024

We would love to see you there!

Please watch out for a 'future members day' survey that should be arriving in your inbox soon. We would love to hear your thoughts. If a survey isn't for you, then please get in touch with Devon Branch and share your views on what we can do to make Members Day even more successful in future.

Contact details on page 15.

## Red Admirals and fruit

On 5th November  
2023 Anthony  
Sherwood took this  
photo of Red  
Admirals enjoying a  
tasty fruit platter.



Word must have got  
out as the following day he counted 18 Red Admirals.

Butterflies have a fondness for overripe fruit, while we usually see them sipping nectar from flowers, when flowers are scarce butterflies seek alternative food sources.

Leave fallen fruit under trees and bushes and in late summer as the fruit ripens and begins to rot, the pulp breaks down into a liquid, this transformation makes it easier for butterflies to feed.

Alternatively next time you spot a sad looking piece of fruit in your fruit bowl do as Anthony has done and create a butterfly feeder by placing the overripe food on a plate or bowl and leaving it outside in a sunny spot to share with your local butterflies.



## Record late Holly Blue

### Pete Hurst

A record late Holly Blue was seen on 2nd December 2023 by Amanda Hunter at Roundham, Paignton. The day had begun with a hard frost in many areas, though Amanda saw her butterfly in a sunny sheltered coastal site.

This represents the first December record for the species in Devon. Holly Blue had an excellent spring and summer in 2023 with some people saying they had seen higher numbers

than ever before. Autumn, overall, was mild and the first proper cold spell only arrived in the last few days of November. Amanda's butterfly would have emerged earlier in the month during milder temperatures.



Holly Blue (m)  
Wembury Point  
07/04/2023  
Dave Gregory

Prior to 2016, there had only been a handful or so of November records in the database, all in the first half of the month. During that year, however, November also remained mild almost to the month end. Tor Elm sent in a record of three Holly Blues at Plymouth Hoe on 12/11/23. Two more were seen by him at the same locality on 16th which then became the latest ever reported. Tor kept visiting the site and logged a further two on 24th and one on 25th. Finally, two were again seen at the Hoe on 28th and Tor also saw a singleton at West Hoe Park. These last sightings were the latest records for Holly Blue until 2023.

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### A message from your Devon Branch committee,

We would like to recruit a member from North Devon. There hasn't been anyone from this area on the committee for some time and we feel it would be beneficial to have all areas of the county represented. This will lead to a better understanding of the issues facing the county as a whole and more effective decision making, resulting in improved outcomes for the butterflies and moths of Devon. Please get in touch if you think you could fill this role. Contact details on page15.

## A Wild Space in action

In August last year Amy, our branch secretary, discovered a clutch of Buff-tip moth eggs on a Willow tree in her garden. Female Buff-tip moths lay tiny eggs, in clusters, on the underside of the leaves of trees like oaks, willows, Hawthorn and Blackthorn. It wasn't long before Amy noticed tiny caterpillars emerging, which usually happens after 14 to 21 days. She was fascinated to watch the life cycle taking place in such a visible location.

The caterpillars are gregarious, preferring to hang out together, they also have a hearty appetite and soon began feasting on the Willow leaves managing to defoliate entire branches almost before Amy's eyes! They munched their way through a good portion of the Willow, growing quickly through four instars and became a distinctive sight with a striking pattern of black stripes on a yellow body and very 'hairy.'



Buff-tip caterpillars take about 30 days to reach their full size, which can be up to 75mm (about 3inches) long.

Amy takes great pleasure in gardening for wildlife. She has a small garden in the middle of a semi-rural village of Abbotskerswell, where she works hard to create and maintain a range of habitats to support biodiversity.

It's not over for these super munchers yet though, they are about to become a tasty treat for another garden guest.

On a sunny afternoon in August, when the caterpillars were almost at their largest, Amy noticed an unusual visitor. A Cuckoo had decided to drop in for a pre-flight meal. The Cuckoo spent the afternoon knocking the caterpillars down from the tree and eating them on the lawn. Let's hope a few of the caterpillars



survived!

Most Cuckoos leave during June for the long flight back to Africa, where they spend winter. Amy's Cuckoo was more likely to have been a juvenile as they tend to leave later on, once they're fully fledged. Cuckoos are a Red List species due to a recent population decline. They have the highest conservation priority and need all the help they can get.



It is more important than ever that we do all we can to help nature and provide wild spaces, such as Amy's garden, that allow life cycles and food chains such as this to happen.

The Cuckoo comes in April  
He sings his song in May  
In the middle of June  
He changes his tune  
And then he flies away

## Roger Bristow Memorial Walks

You are now able to download the first of what will become a series of short walks around the county. The Devon Butterfly Walks are in remembrance of a much respected and highly regarded member of Butterfly Conservation, Roger Bristow, who sadly passed away in September 2020. Roger was one of the founding members of the Devon Branch and he played a huge role in improving the knowledge of Devon's butterflies.

Details of the walks can be found in the 'In Your Area' section of the Butterfly Conservation website

Walk 1—Orley Common, Ipplepen, Devon. Key species include: Marbled White, Brown Argus, Wall, Small Copper, Common Blue and Silver-washed Fritillary.

The walks are designed for you to be able to take at your leisure. If you have an idea for a walk that could be included please get in touch with your committee.

## Inspiring the next generation

### Emma Grice

I run a preschool for very young children, they usually start with us around the age of two and stay until they start school when they are 4-5 years old.



Children are by their very nature inquisitive, they love to investigate and explore, so whenever I bring some little beasts in for them to have a look at they are always interested. However the level of interest varies quite a lot.

Most will at least, come over to have a look, some immediately disappear in fright or disgust or a combination of both! Others will take a peek but have no real interest, they just see bugs, both reactions are okay and quite understandable. This is how a lot of people view invertebrates and therefore where children will pick this attitude up from.



There are those who show a passing interest and will ask questions and want to touch them, before quickly returning to the serious business of playing with their friends. They usually come back though and will dip in and out of any activity bugs or no bugs.



Then there are a few children who become really involved, looking carefully, getting



fearlessly stuck in and really understanding the importance of being quiet and careful, sustaining their own interest and wanting to know more.

I try to answer their questions and I can just about manage the basic questions most three year olds will ask like; what do they eat, where do they live, will it sting and more commonly than you might think, I love it can I keep it? I encourage the children to find the answers for themselves by looking in books and on the internet, this helps develop their independent learning, observation skills and critical thinking.



The children have seen moths and butterflies in all their stages from eggs and larvae, to the adults that they can hold in their hand or that fly away as soon as I open the trap. They have seen how the caterpillars change over time and have watched as they munch through a leaf.

I had some caterpillars who had pupated underground, I took the soil in for the children to inspect. The pictures below show they children exploring with very careful fingers, they were amazed to find pupae.



Whatever their level of interest it is all good learning. Whether it be learning about themselves, their likes and dislikes, learning not to be scared, learning to be curious, learning how to collaborate, to identify and classify through research, or above all learning to appreciate the world around them and to be fascinated by all it's wonderful little creatures.

# Shaldon Botanical Gardens Event for Children

## Wednesday 10th April 2024 @ 2-4pm

This years event features crafts and nature based activities, with lots to see and do in the wonderful surroundings of Shaldon Botanical Gardens. There will be refreshments and cake available and plenty to keep everyone entertained.

This year Devon Branch committee members will be helping out, so why not pop along to this free event and say hello!



The Gardens, once private, now belong to Teignbridge District Council and are open to the public free of charge 7 days a week. Located on a sloping hillside above the seaside village of Shaldon, the gardens have stunning views of the Teign estuary and across Lyme Bay towards Dorset. The arboretum includes some striking trees and features such as the castle folly, the Burma Star rose garden, a pond & rill and an Italianate garden make the Gardens an interesting place to explore.

Parking is in surrounding streets or at the Ness Car Park.

Torquay Rd, Shaldon, Teignmouth TQ14 0BH

Please check out their website: <https://shaldonbotanicalgardens.org>

Members of the Committee attend various events throughout the year, such as the one in Shaldon. By participating in events, we raise awareness, share knowledge, and inspire action to help Butterfly Conservation achieve the aims of its strategic plan, of species protection, landscape enhancement and community involvement.

This year you will find us at the The Garden House in Buckland Monachorum on Saturday 8th June [www.thegardenhouse.org](http://www.thegardenhouse.org)

Yealmpton Agricultural Show on Wednesday 31st July  
[www.yealmptonshow.co.uk](http://www.yealmptonshow.co.uk) The Kingsbridge Agricultural Show on  
Saturday 7th of September [www.kingsbridgeshow.co.uk](http://www.kingsbridgeshow.co.uk)

## Committee Members

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## Non-committee posts

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**Lesley Kerry**- Silver-studded Blue Co-ordinator 01395 567880

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**Amanda Hunter**- IYA and Twitter (web team) amanda.bc@clara.co.uk

**Bill Potter**- IYA (web team) w\_j\_potter@hotmail.com



Deaths-head Hawk-moth  
(larva) *Acherontia atropos*  
James Herbert  
19/07/2023



Long-tailed Blue (m) *Lampides boeticus*  
Anna Wheeler  
06/09/2023



White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*  
Dave Holloway  
02/07/2023



Silver-studded Blue (m) *Plebejus argus*  
Steph Murphey  
10/06/2023



Wood White (f) *Leptidea sinapis*  
Dennis Kalmer  
16/05/2023



Clouded Yellows (pr in cop) *Colias croceus*  
John Fiske  
29/06/2023