



Butterfly
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

The Suffolk Argus

The Newsletter of the **Suffolk** Branch of Butterfly Conservation



Brimstone by Matt Berry

Purdis Heath



Silver-studded Blue
Photo Matt Berry



Common or Viviparous Lizard
Photo Matt Berry

Six-belted Clearwings on Vegetated Shingle and Larvae of Small Ranunculus Found in Suffolk

See page 11



Six-belted Clearwing
Photo Tony Prichard



Small Ranunculus larva
Photo Tony Prichard

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Editorial

Peter Maddison

The day of the AGM was the copy day for this issue of the newsletter, so it was with excited anticipation that I entered the hall, arms outstretched for the written pieces that would be thrust towards me. I wasn't disappointed. Three articles were placed in my hands and promises were made for further pieces of writing. The newsletter has taken shape. My thanks to all who have offered literary and artistic work during the past year and, most importantly, I look forward to receiving your contributions in 2012!

The Brimstones and Buckthorn project is a major undertaking for us in the coming winter months and at the AGM the Chairman, in his opening remarks, outlined the preparatory work that has been completed. Within these pages Julian Dowding writes about how in the coming months all of us can be involved in the project. Enclosed with the newsletter is a project poster that you are encouraged to display. The Brimstone is recorded less frequently in the east of the county, where Buckthorn is sparse, so any plantings in the

following under populated areas would help: TM 58 Covehive, TM48 west of Wrentham, TM45 Iken-Sudbourne, TM44 Orford, TM34 Ramsholt – Alderton, TM33 inland from Bawdsey and TM23 Felixstowe - the most notable town with few records.

Mike Dean reported that the initial habitat work at Purdis Heath was completed according to expectations and that this summer a slightly increased number of Silver-studded Blues was recorded. Hurray! Matt Berry writes about plans for the coming winter months. Work parties have been arranged for the 2nd Saturday in each month starting in November and there will be the annual Megabash at the beginning of the new year. You are welcome to join the fun!

The spread of the Silver-washed Fritillary caused a stir in 2010 and eager recorders visited woodland glades this year in the hope of finding the butterfly. Mike spoke of his quest to record this species, which he could remember in the county when his family moved to Suffolk 53 years ago. This summer a visit to a West Suffolk wood brought him success as two fritillaries crossed his path. In an instant the thrill of earlier years returned to him, but on this day a price was paid, Mike departed from the wood with a tick bite on his ankle. A few days later a red rosette appeared around the bite mark, so a visit was made hastily to the GP's surgery. The result of a blood test indicated Lyme Disease, so a course of antibiotics was prescribed. Happily, Mike's recovery was swift and he was in his usual jovial form as he directed the AGM proceedings. We who tramp forest and heathland paths need to be aware of this debilitating, tick-borne disease, so within

this issue I have included an article about the disease, the precautions that can be taken and a reference to where further information may be obtained.

A keen walker of Suffolk footpaths is Stella Wolfe who, together with Roger, leads many of our field events, usually to new and under recorded areas of the county. Stella has been a stalwart member of the Committee for the last ten years and at the AGM her retirement was marked with grateful thanks and the presentation of a book token.

Field events in the last year took place throughout East and West Suffolk, and out of county too, and were well attended. On these occasions it is good to meet new members who are always very welcome. Our membership this year has risen by 21%, a superb increase which takes us to approximately 300 member households. Our Field Events for 2012 will be published with the Spring issue of the newsletter but prior to that, early in the new year, they will be posted on the website. Members new and old do note the dates in your diaries and join us if you can.



New Members

We welcome the following new members who have joined the Branch and we look forward to meeting them at our events this year.

Mrs M & Mr J Becher & Family	Clare
Mrs E & Mr F Blackstock & Family	Bury St. Edmunds
Dr S R L Bolt & Family	Bury St. Edmunds
Miss G Braidwood	Beccles
Ms P Chard	Ipswich
Mrs P Chilvers	Lowestoft
Miss M Davies & Mr Oliver Power	Sudbury
Ms C Eoche-Duval & Mr D Brown	Bury St Edmunds
Miss L Flockhart	Sudbury
Mr D Garrett	Bungay
Mr H G Godfray	Sudbury
Mrs P M Gondris	Ipswich
Mr S P S Grainger	Sudbury
Miss N Harding	Bulmer
Mr P G Hobbs	Sudbury
Dr M R Horsham & Miss H Saxby	Newmarket
Mrs J F Jenkins	Bury St. Edmunds
Mr R Lovejoy	Beccles
Mrs J V Maltpress	Newmarket
Mrs J M Mann	Saxmundham
Mrs A E Marley	Ipswich
Mr A J Mercer	Stowmarket
Mrs K S & Mr N Owen & Family	Fornham, St. Martin
Mr M Reeve	Ipswich
Mrs S Renshaw	Ipswich
Mr M J Rogers	Bury St. Edmunds
Mr J & Mrs J Rolfe	Bury St. Edmunds
Mr T Shipp	Stowmarket
Mr A Smith	Beccles
Mr A Stansfield & Ms J Matthews	Woodbridge
Mr G A & Mrs J Sweetman	Bury St. Edmunds
Mr E Wanner & Ms P Sallows	Ipswich
Ms R Wharrier	Lowestoft
Mr M M Woolnough	Ipswich

Editorial copy date

Contributions for the Spring edition of our newsletter are very welcome and should be sent to the Editor, Peter Maddison, no later than Saturday 14th January, 2012.

Any piece of writing considered to be of interest will be published and we also welcome line drawings, prints and photographs.

Contributions (preferably electronic) can be sent to the address on page 29 or by email to: prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

2011 Butterfly Conservation Report

Rob Parker gives an overview of the butterfly season, presented at the AGM.

The mixed weather resulted in variable fortunes of our butterflies. In essence, it was a poor season for most common species, but quite a good one for several of our scarce ones. The snow before Christmas and the frosts of January and February made it a harsher winter than most recent years. Spring was only a few days early, but it was exceptionally hot and dry. As a result, some summer butterflies emerged very early, and new records for Suffolk's earliest ever emergences were set.

Dingy Skipper was found in and around its main breeding area near the archery area of the King's Forest and further north around Chalk Lane. However, none was found in the recently widened Wordwell rides; it seem that it will take several seasons before the benefit of the habitat improvement will be seen. Importantly, there was none at Center Parcs or RAF Barnham, and it may be that the Dingy Skipper has been lost at these sites. Happily though, a hitherto undetected colony was flying nearby on Barnham Heath. A nature reserve managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust for Stone Curlew, Barnham Heath has not been checked previously due to access restrictions.

This year, the SWT **Silver-studded Blue** had its most advanced season ever. Larvae and pupae were found in May with ants in attendance and the first adult was on the wing by 30th May at Aldringham Walks. The annual count reached a total just over 4000, which amounts to 75% of the 2006

datum in respect of the main sites. The colony translocated to Blaxhall Common in 2007 had its best year ever, with up to 45 adults flying over a nine week period. This fourth year breeding success is very encouraging.

Several other UK BAP species had also done well; **White Admiral** and **White-letter Hairstreak** had again reached some new locations, and **Grayling** had been seen at several sites from which it had been feared lost.

Purple Emperors at Theberton had another successful season and singles were also sighted at Minsmere and North Warren.

Unusual aberrations of **Comma** and **Common Blue** turned up at Mildenhall and Theberton.

The **Silver-washed Fritillary** was a particular highlight. It continued its colonisation of Suffolk and has bred successfully in several woods and was seen in new woods too.

Sadly, there were losers amongst the common species and two protracted gaps in the season when almost nothing was to be seen. **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Peacock** numbers were very low, whilst **Meadow Brown** and **Common Blue** both had very poor seasons.

It had been a poor summer for migrants, although **Painted Lady** was putting in an

autumn appearance, along with a few **Clouded Yellows**. The fine weather of the Indian summer, which brought record high temperatures in the last weeks of September and early days of October seemed like a missed opportunity for butterflies, as very few took advantage of the late sunshine.

Transect walks confirmed generally low indices, with 2011 equating to 2006 as the worst equal season of the past decade.

Major habitat restoration work at Purdis Heath was executed as planned, and

preliminary work on a new Brimstones and Buckthorn project has been done. Matt Berry reported both these projects in separate briefings.

On the administrative side, letters were sent to Suffolk County Council concerning the plans to dispose of their country parks (several of which contain BAP butterfly and moth species), and to Ipswich Borough Council objecting to a planning proposal concerning the Ransomes County Wildlife Site (where there is a colony of Silver-studded Blue).



White Admiral
by Beryl Johnson

Christmas is coming Gift Membership

Half price gift membership for Christmas will be available on the BC website from Monday 14th November. Gift membership has been promoted in *Butterfly* magazine and for the first time BC is planning to email current members sending them a direct link to the join page on the website.

Half price gift membership is great value at only £14 for single membership. Joint, Family and Young Person Membership are available also. The welcome pack can be

sent direct to the recipient with a personalised message or to the purchaser to give as a gift on Christmas Day.

To purchase gift membership please visit the BC website or contact Catherine Levett by email clevett@butterfly-conservation.org or telephone 01929 406015.

Orders for Christmas must be received by Friday 9th December and for new members only.

Brimstones & Buckthorn

Julian Dowding encourages us to take part in this winter's important project.

Following the successful launch event at Jimmy's Farm earlier in the year, when 3 buckthorns were planted by TV personalities Jimmy Docherty, Steve Backshall and our own super celebrity, Rob Parker, we will soon begin sending out packs of **FREE** Buckthorns. Each pack will contain two Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus* (formerly *Rhamnus frangula*) and two Common Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*. These will help attract Brimstone butterflies into target areas of Suffolk, particularly the east of the county.

Bushes will be sent by Royal Mail to your door, so we will need you to provide contact details. If you can't accommodate four bushes in your garden, then some could be passed to friends and neighbours, but please send in their planting location details too, if you can.

For anybody wondering what this initiative is all about, Buckthorn is the larval food plant of the bright yellow Brimstone butterfly (see cover). This lovely butterfly has an incredible ability to home in on bushes from afar to lay eggs. Thus, by planting the bush in gardens or allotments where the butterfly is perhaps under recorded or not present, Brimstones should turn up after only a few years and reward the gardener with sightings of this beautiful insect close at hand from early spring onwards. In fact, we have often discovered Brimstone activity on freshly planted Buckthorns within the same season and the chances of them using the bush are high. Bushes will thrive in ordinary garden soils and can be grown to practically any height (4-12 ft) and shape, to fit in with your garden

requirements. They also yield berries for winter birds and the flowers and leaves attract a diversity of other insects throughout the spring and summer.

Of course, the more bushes planted, the better the chances of seeing Brimstones, but those chances really are pretty good since the initiative builds upon a successful campaign in the late '90's which resulted in some fairly good core populations of Brimstones in Suffolk. Further to this, throughout the summer we have been steadily compiling a list of eager participants for this latest round of planting. Thus, it is hoped that such bushes will provide stepping stones onto others, and fill in some gaps in the recording map and make the Brimstone more widespread within the county.

The initiative is open to anybody in the county, but we are particularly interested in building up better coverage in the Felixstowe and other coastal areas. All packs will come with planting information.

If you would like to take part and receive a **FREE** pack of up to four Buckthorns for planting in your garden or allotment this winter, please contact us:

Julian, Telephone: **01473 436096**

Alternatively we can be reached by email: **brimstones@suffolkbutterflies.org.uk**

The Suffolk Branch of BC is grateful to the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, Ipswich Borough Council and to an anonymous donor who have kindly helped to sponsor this project.

Purdis Heath - Was it a 'Blue' summer?

Matt Berry

In the spring issue of the *Argus* we explained plans and summarised outcomes for some urgent habitat management, with the primary aim being to try and save the ailing population of Silver-studded Blue. A huge amount of sterling work was undertaken by a small army of volunteers throughout the winter months of 2010/11. Most of the heavy tools were put away for the spring and summer season and a keen eye and camera were employed instead to help record wildlife, in particular, of course, the Silver-studded Blue.

The very warm and dry spring resulted in the Bell Heather suffering and, bearing in mind the Silver-studded Blues strong reliance on it for nectar during the flight season, it was a worrying time. The prolonged warmth also meant many species emerged early and the Silver-studded Blue was no exception. The first one recorded in Suffolk was on 30th May at Aldringham Walks, by Rob Macklin. The first one seen at Purdis Heath was on 1st June by myself and Julian Dowding, a male (see photo). Both of these sightings broke the record for the earliest ever sighting of the species in Suffolk, which was 7th June 2007. To witness a freshly emerged male at Purdis was a defining moment, mixed with excitement to know that they were at least still present and hope, but also fear, for how they would do this season. Volunteers were alerted and the task of monitoring the butterflies using a transect walk began. The highest count was on 23rd June when 6 males and 4 females were seen by Julian Dowding and George Millins. It is true to say that 10 is still a low number but I take the optimistic view in that they are still there. We must be thankful for that and look to next year with fresh hope for a greater number to be seen.

Most of the Silver-studded Blues seen this year were close to the 2010 flight area. However, significantly, several were also seen in the central areas of the heath and close to where we had cleared lots of the Gorse and cut the wide strip of Heather. The habitat work completed last winter will require time to develop before it becomes prime Silver-studded Blue territory, but the signs are already encouraging that the butterfly will spread back into more of the heath in time, once the habitat is right for them.

Target species aside there was plenty of other wildlife seen during spring and summer. The Green Hairstreaks were out in good numbers, with up to a dozen seen on one occasion. Purple Hairstreaks also did well, with plenty being seen throughout July and into August. On one particular sunny afternoon I was treated to a show of between 30-50 individuals dancing over the canopy of a single Oak tree. As well as these casual and personal observations, two wildlife walks were arranged in conjunction with Suffolk Naturalists' Society. The event in August proved particularly rewarding due to the sighting of a Grayling, the first recorded on the site since 2006. It seemed that the 15 pairs of beady eyes proved too much, even for this accomplished cryptically camouflaged expert, to hide from! Those same beady eyes were of benefit again when Julian found Purple Hairstreak ova between the clusters of terminal buds on the Oaks and a Small Copper was also observed laying her eggs on Sheep's Sorrel.

In addition to the scale-winged creatures (Lepidoptera) those with more 'traditional' scales, Reptiles, were also surveyed for throughout the spring and summer months

and both Slow-worm and Viviparous Lizard were recorded. It's amazing how easy it is to overlook the Viviparous Lizard when out walking on the heath, especially when eyes are trained elsewhere to look for butterflies or birds. On a number of occasions whilst out with our reptile expert, George, I found I was able to observe his methods and style of careful movements and static scanning to look for the lizards and I soon became reasonably proficient in spotting plenty of them. I deployed my new found stealth to creep up on one particular individual as it basked on a log and was able, with patience and care, to get within inches of it with the camera (see photo page 2).

It's important to remember that the heath is home to much more wildlife than the Silver-studded Blue. It is our aim to care for all wildlife, by identifying and recording as much wildlife as we can and by managing the site to maximise diversity in habitat type and structure. One simple method for doing this is by building habitat piles from scrub (Gorse, Oak and Birch) that are removed from parts of the open heath. These provide shelter for the aforementioned reptiles and also small mammals, birds and a multitude of invertebrates and other species. I even noted that Rabbits had created burrows beneath one pile, providing a secure home for these beneficial graziers.

As I write this we are experiencing a late and intense heat wave, 29° Celsius in October! However, it is time to look ahead to the winter now and the next phase of habitat management. Our overarching aim for this year is to consolidate the work in the areas we worked in last winter. Where areas of Gorse were removed stumps and a thick layer of needle litter remains. This will be scraped off to create areas of bare soil – to encourage Bell Heather seed germination and future ant colonisation. We'll also be

removing more scrub from off the Heather, namely Silver Birch and small to medium sized Oak trees. A lot of the logs and branch wood will be used to extend linear habitat piles along the edge of the open heath. As described, this will benefit lots of wildlife, whilst being located far enough from the main Heather areas not to cause a problem to heathland flora. Finally, more areas of mature to over-mature Heather will be cut to add to the diversity in age and structure of both Bell Heather and Ling. The aim is to increase areas of younger pioneer growth in an open sward, whilst retaining areas of mature plants in which the Silver-studded Blues like to roost.

How will we achieve all the work that needs to be done? The partnership between Butterfly Conservation, Greenways Countryside Project, Suffolk Amphibians & Reptile Group and Ipswich Wildlife Group (supported by Natural England and Suffolk Naturalists' Society) means we have a wealth of knowledgeable people and enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers to make this all happen.

When will this all take place? Monthly volunteer work parties are being set up for the second Saturday of every month throughout the winter, beginning in November. Plus, the Greenways Project will once again be hosting the annual 'Megabash' event in January 2012 (date to be confirmed).

If you are interested in getting involved please contact us using any of the methods below.

Matt – 07736826064 or matt.berry1@sky.com
Julian – 01473 436096 or
julian.dowding@ntlworld.com

Moth Notes

New locations are found for two intriguing species of Suffolk moths.

Larvae of Small Ranunculus Found in Suffolk

Tony Prichard

The Small Ranunculus moth *Hecatera dysodea* was a resident in Britain until the early part of the 20th century, having been a pest on lettuce seed crops with the caterpillar feeding on the seeds of lettuce and related plants. Since the late 1990's the moth appears to have become re-established in parts of Britain and locally has been found at Felixstowe, Trimley and the southern outskirts of Ipswich.

On the 12th August a few of the moth group were searching for larvae on vegetated shingle beach at Landguard when Neil Sherman spotted Small Ranunculus larvae on rather diminutive plants of Prickly Lettuce. Although it has been assumed that

the moth must be resident in the county, based on the records from light traps, finding larvae in the wild is a useful confirmation that the moth has settled here. The foodplant, Prickly Lettuce, is quite prevalent along the A14 and it is thought the moth has moved along this corridor from Felixstowe to Trimley and then to Ipswich, and possibly beyond – not all wildlife corridors need to be hedgerows! I searched for the larvae on the following day and found it alongside the A14 at Trimley and at Ravenswood on the outskirts of Ipswich. The larvae are probably waiting to be found in other nearby sites, although searches will now need to wait until next year.

Six-belted Clearwings on Vegetated Shingle

Tony Prichard

The Six-belted Clearwing *Bembecia ichneumoniformis* is an elusive day-flying species of moth with a larva no less elusive as it feeds in the roots of Bird's-foot Trefoil and Kidney Vetch. The increasing use of pheromone lures for finding the clearwing moths has greatly increased our understanding of the distribution of this group of moths and, although the Six-belted Clearwing comes readily to lure, until recently it has been known from only one site in Little Blakenham. In the last few years it has been found at other sites in south Suffolk including Hadleigh, Tattingstone and Flatford. At a meeting of the Norfolk Moth Group Ken Saul mentioned that they

had found the moth in vegetated shingle habitats, not a habitat that had been checked in Suffolk, as far as I am aware. This summer I searched Aldeburgh and Sizewell beaches for the moth and very quickly found it at Aldeburgh, although none came to lure at Sizewell. A little later in the season Neil Sherman tried his lures at Landguard Common and found the moth there too. There are other potential sites where the moth could be found on vegetated shingle along the coast, so we will be checking these at a future date. A species that I considered quite scarce in the county a few years ago now appears significantly more widespread.

2011 – A Personal Response

Richard Stewart

It wasn't a vintage year for butterflies but it will be recalled by many of us for one reason – early emergence. I am sure Rob Parker will cover this in more detail but my own year of 'earliest ever' butterflies started with two male Orange-tips in the Fynn valley on the 9th April, followed by a rush of species when Marie, Alan and Beryl Johnson and myself had a pre-meeting visit to Cotley Hill, Wiltshire on the 24th May. Despite blustery weather we found sunlit, sheltered hollows full of butterflies and I recorded eight 'first for the year' species, with earliest ever dates for Large Skipper, Small Blue and Marsh Fritillary. The next was a Meadow Brown on the 25th May at nearby Upton Cow Down.

Going into June my earliest ever Ringlet was in Thrift Wood, Essex on the 11th June, the warden telling me the Heath Fritillaries had emerged very early. This comment was repeated for Swallowtails, by warden David Nobbs at Wheatfen in Norfolk. By the time we had our Branch meeting at Brampton Wood on the 19th June the Black Hairstreak

peak of emergence was well over, the butterfly having first been recorded on the 25th May. Even so the two distant specimens observed were my earliest, though I have only seen it on three previous occasions. My attempt to see a White-letter Hairstreak in June was foiled by heavy rain at Rushmere Heath but a visit to Bentley Old Hall Wood on the 20th June produced two pristine White Admirals then, on the same day, three Purple Hairstreaks at nearby Wherstead Wood. A week later I added White Admirals from both Tunstall and Tangham, both earliest site records for me. Finally, Paul Johnson and I both speculated that the single second brood Adonis Blue on a hillside near Box Hill was our first before July. My records subsequently verified this.

So in 2011 I saw 42 of the 59 species normally seen each year in the British Isles, with 10 being 'earliest ever' personal records. That made it a memorable year, especially as many of these early emergers were in very good condition.

Interesting Behaviour: Female Common Blue Repelling Male

Steve Goddard

On 30th May this year I was recording at Hollesley Marshes RSPB Reserve when I came across butterfly behaviour I had not witnessed before. A female Common Blue was resting upon a nettle leaf in a sunny, sheltered spot out of the wind when a male approached. Her tail was raised instantly but rather than this posture being used to attract the male as I was expecting, she also began to rub her rear legs vigorously whereupon the male fled instantly although staying in close proximity. The female remained rested with wings

closed whilst the male continued to linger close by but their brief encounter seemed to be at an end.

I have referred to 15 books in my collection with the only reference anywhere relating to rapid leg movement being that of the drumming of fore-legs in search of, or upon the food-plant. This behaviour however, was not drumming nor was it on the food-plant.

Has anyone else come across this behaviour either by personal observation or published?

Butterflies in Ipswich

Richard Stewart

The sight of a Red Admiral flying through the market traffic in the middle of Ipswich on 2nd September reminded me that almost every species likely to be seen in Suffolk during a normal year can be located within the town boundaries.

My recent article about Piper's Vale listed 27 different species and a footnote from Matt Berry added White-letter Hairstreak, now probably at a minimum of five sites in Ipswich. The much rarer Camberwell beauty has been recorded in Ipswich and although Swallowtails have been bred and released on several occasions, some over the years would have been genuine migrants, flying inland following the course of the Orwell. Silver-studded Blues still retain

small colonies on the Ransomes/Purdis edge of Ipswich and though the few White Admirals seen were almost certain to have been released, its spread towards Ipswich in recent years suggests it could be here soon. The Silver-washed Fritillary could follow a similar route into the town, but we will probably have to wait longer for genuine Marbled Whites to arrive. Grayling are present at several sites within the town boundaries, but conversely we may have lost the Wall.

However it's an impressive total. In fact the only species on the current Suffolk BC recording list that is most unlikely to be seen is the Dingy Skipper.

White-letter Hairstreak at Pipers Vale

Published in 'Local Wildlife News', the events and news magazine of conservation groups in the Ipswich area, Matt Berry reports on the finding of a new colony of White-letter Hairstreak.

This year the Wildlife Ranger team has been surveying some of the Parks & Open Spaces in Ipswich for, amongst other things, White-letter Hairstreak. I am pleased to report that a reasonable number have been recorded in the Gainsborough Lane part of Piper's Vale, aloft the numerous Elms that line this historic track down to Pond Hall Farm. On one visit in the last week of June I counted approximately 20. This addition to Richard

Stewart's list makes a total of 28 species for the site. At the time of writing (first week in July) further surveys have revealed the presence of the butterfly in a number of other locations too - Holywells Park, Landseer Park and Bramford Lane Allotments.

Swallowtail Open Day at the Ted Ellis Nature Reserve, Wheatfen, Norfolk

Sunday 12th June 2011

Richard Stewart

This is now an annual event, well organised and publicised by warden David Nobbs, his team of volunteers and the Norfolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation. This is just my report, as visitors are put into groups then taken to the main Swallowtail area. The forecast was for rain late morning but we reached the Swallowtail area in time to see at least six adults, many exhibiting that graceful, gliding flight that enhances their beauty. An egg was found on Milk Parsley growing close to the path and nearby a 'first' for me, a Swallowtail caterpillar coloured black with a white smudge, resembling a bird dropping. Other butterflies seen included Speckled Wood, Large Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Comma. The marsh flora was impressive, including Yellow Flag, the main nectar source for the Swallowtails we saw, Ragged Robin, Marsh Valerian, Marsh Pea, Water Forget-me-not and emerging Marsh Sowthistle.

Dragonflies included Large Red and Azure Damselflies plus the Scarce Chaser, often settling at Wheatfen on the cut piles of grass deliberately left by the side of paths. The rich birdlife included a pair of Marsh Harriers, loud calls from Cetti's Warblers, two Herons, Reed Warblers, the distant call of a Cuckoo, two Hobbies, Whitethroat, a male Reed Bunting, plus a Mute Swan nesting at Penguin Dyke, which we were

told was a good spot for seeing Otters. Linnets were flying across the car park.

As Marie observed, the walk to see the Swallowtails is some distance from the reserve entrance, and gives visitors plenty of time to absorb the special Wheatfen atmosphere. This event also attracts a much wider cross-section of people, compared to those normally visiting the reserve. The newly constructed Reception building hosted its first large event with what at Wheatfen is a real luxury, flushing toilets. The actual cottage is being renovated and we were told a granddaughter of Ted Ellis, with her two children, will soon be living there. My memory goes back to when Ted and Phyllis lived there, with their extended family, and it is good that this well-loved cottage will once again have human occupants.



Swallowtail
by Beryl Johnson

Hadleigh Railway Walk

Saturday 2nd July 2011

Jon King

Hadleigh Railway Walk is a local nature reserve which runs from the outskirts of the town to the old Raydon Station two miles away. A dozen people met at the Raydon end of the Railway Walk in good weather consisting of warm, sunny spells and brief interludes of cloud. Our target species of the day was White Admiral. I had been in Raydon Wood the previous Sunday but had not seen any. Luckily my fears were allayed when a member of our team, who had arrived earlier, emerged from the wood already with a photo of a grounded White Admiral.

We proceeded along the track into the wood with the ubiquitous Meadow Browns and Ringlets fluttering beside us. Rob Parker was the first to spot a White Admiral, albeit a fleeting glimpse as it disappeared over a tree. Further on during a sunny spell we finally got good views of two more that were toing and froing close to the ground, though neither would settle for photos. Unfortunately there was no sign of the aberrant 'all black' form *obliterae*, which I had photographed the previous year. Good numbers of Speckled Wood were now also evident as well as the odd Red Admiral and Comma. Here Tony Prichard found a Peacock larva.

Emerging from the other side of the wood the track became more open and sunny where Small and Large Skippers were more numerous. A Purple Hairstreak suddenly landed fairly low down but was off again straight away. A pair of Bank Voles and

several very small Toads moving through the undergrowth provided further interest. Two Holly Blue were nectaring on Bramble blossom and then, reaching an Oak tree, we realised that several Purple Hairstreak were flying around it. One individual was obliging enough to descend onto a Blackthorn branch and pose for several minutes, allowing the photographers amongst us to get some good close-up shots.

Moving on we reached an area where a small stand of Elms was growing. I had seen single White-letter Hairstreak here in the past but none since 2006. We spent some time searching and it was Rob (again!) who got lucky with one on a Bramble bush on the opposite side of the track. This individual wouldn't keep still however and was hard to follow as it flitted from bush to bush.

Our walk ended at a grassy embankment with plentiful amounts of Scabious growing. This proved fruitful for the Skippers, Meadow Browns and Ringlets. We then retraced our steps to Raydon hoping to see more White Admirals, but by now cloud had thickened and no more were to be seen.

Species seen were Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Comma, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and Ringlet.

Walk around Eyke (Tetrad TM 3250)

Wednesday 13th July 2011

Stella Wolfe

This was a repeat of the walk on 9th June 2010, this time to search for Purple Hairstreak butterflies.

Once again we had overcast skies. The playing field, bright with encroaching yellow Ragwort and blue Viper's Bugloss, was windswept, and despite our small party spreading out across it, no insects were found.

The path led into the plantation with broadleaf margins full in summer leaf and casting gloom about. Odd clearings into which butterflies would have been enticed on a sunny day were cool and high with Bracken. Honeysuckle-entwined trunks failed to produce White Admirals. Not even a Speckled Wood. It seemed to be one of those butterfly days that might have been.

Taking the sheltered track to the road Ringlets began to be seen, notably on a tall patch of Heath Groundsel. Further on in the lee of a garden hedge a wild flower strip provided shelter to a Large Skipper resting on some bright purple *Lychmis*, and a white butterfly flew up. Our route was along an oak-lined road where Purple Hairstreaks had been seen a fortnight earlier but not on this occasion. We spread out between the two grassy verges and the field edge, finding Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, a Silver Y moth and yet more Ringlets. Richard examined a sheltered corner with long grass where he found both Essex and Small Skipper at rest together with a Green-veined White and our first Gatekeeper of the afternoon. Our track passed more Oaks (still no Purple Hairstreaks), and then followed a wide field edge with Creeping Thistle giving off a faint honey scent, but only Ringlets

were enjoying it.

Reaching the reservoir Marie identified Common and Azure Damselflies. Once again Ringlets were in attendance. The party stopped for a rest for refreshment and the sun briefly broke through the cloud causing the resting butterflies to become active. Resuming the path along the reservoir we passed a spike of Mullein that on closer examination proved to be host to a couple of Sloe Shieldbugs.

At last on looking up high into the Oaks we saw half a dozen Purple Hairstreak butterflies silhouetted against the sky. Such sun as there was vanished.

It was dark through the forestry area. We emerged into the light at a grassy open place and found more butterflies resting. We wandered in an adjacent lightly wooded corner, our eye caught by pale Foxgloves among the Ragwort. We encountered more Oaks on the return road, but by now it was too cool for insect activity.

Back in the forest we noted several sheltered sites where on a warmer day butterflies would have been nectaring on the abundant Bramble flowers. This walk may well have seemed an afternoon of missed opportunities, but we did see our target species, the Purple Hairstreak, the Ringlets turned up trumps and members of our party were keen to repeat the walk another time.

Species seen were Small, Essex and Large Skipper, Small and Green-veined White, Red Admiral, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, and finally Purple Hairstreak. Also Silver Y moth, Sloe Shieldbug.

Black Holes Bash

6th & 7th August 2011

Rob Parker

The field meeting of 6th August 2011 was aimed at eliminating the 'black holes' around Stradbroke by visiting a selection of poorly recorded tetrads to catch a good selection of common species. Seven members assembled under grey skies with a light drizzle and split into two carloads going east or west of Stradbroke. Our first hour was unproductive, with no sun and almost nothing flying. After that, the weather improved slightly and by lunchtime we had visited 7 tetrads but recorded only 11 species. We rendezvoused in the pub and re-organised for a second foray, taking in one new tetrad on foot, and then reversing our west-east split to re-visit the least successful squares. Peter Maddison made an independent visit to an adjacent square, bringing our cover for the day to 8 tetrads. The area is mainly agricultural, but the blame for the low counts was more down to gloomy weather than to lack of habitat. We were too late for Ringlets or decent numbers of skippers, and most

Vanessids were taking a rest.

The following day, Stella and Roger Wolfe had better weather for their assault on two more squares, bringing our overall cover for the weekend to a block of 10 tetrads.

When the results of a quick spring recce are added (an Orange-tip in 5 tetrads) the black hole is no longer evident. Each of these squares finished with a count from 3 at the worst to 10 at the best. This can be counted as a mission achieved, although a pessimistic County Recorder will still be considering it as an under-recorded area. Derek and Valerie Soper live close by and will be re-visiting in the next few weeks. If you want to take another bite at the cherry, the thinnest tetrads are TM2074 and TM2674, where Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper will all be flying until October, along with Commas and Peacocks, both of which were hard to find on our 'bash'. Better still, why not look for Purple Hairstreaks in 2012?

Eastern Region Breckland Workparty

Sunday 4th December 2011

Sharon Hearle (Regional Officer, Eastern Region) has organised a Conservation Work Party on Sunday 4th December 2011 at Foulden Common, Norfolk. This work party is a collaborative effort between the three East Anglian BC Branches focused on habitat management (i.e. scrub bashing) in the Breckland, reinforcing the project currently being undertaken by Sharon Hearle in the Norfolk Brecks ('Heathland Restoration for Threatened Butterflies and Moths').

Meet at Foulden Village Hall TL768990 (Postcode IP26 5AB for satnav users) at 10.00am.

Please bring work gloves, hot drink, packed lunch, bow-saw / loppers if you have them - the Cambs & Essex Branch will bring plenty of tools.

Please contact Sharon Hearle on 01638 731648 (leave a message) or email: shearle@butterfly-conservation.org for further information.

West of Our Border

Mervyn Crawford

In recent years the close proximity of the Chalkhill Blue and Marbled White to the Suffolk border at the Devil's Dyke has prompted rather optimistic searches in neighbouring tetrads in the hope that westerly winds might lead to a few stray insects crossing the border. However, so far the county boundary has proved something of an invisible barrier in spite of the occasional sighting of a Marbled White in places like Fordham, Burwell and Soham.

Rather more frustrating is the regular occurrence at nearby Cambridgeshire sites of some species we are in danger of losing from Suffolk. I turned up an old Argus article that I wrote back in 1999 on 'Eggars, Lackeys and Emperors'. It came as something of a shock to realise that in the intervening twelve years I had hardly come across any of the early stages of the species I had then described as being 'easy to find'.

So I set out this year to see if I had lost my knack of successfully searching the hedgerows or whether numbers had indeed suffered serious declines. I was rewarded by finding a few larvae of most species around Mildenhall with the exception of the Pale Eggar, Lackey and the Lappet. This latter species causes real concern as it is a most handsome and showy insect in its stages. With a typical schoolboy's inquisitiveness, in the late fifties I used to find the huge brown larvae in the spring on almost any suitable stretch of thorn hedgerow. My father would irritate me as he recounted dislodging them with sticks when they became something of a pest in the orchards at Brome Hall where he was a gardener just before the last war. Up until writing my article I could discover them in far lesser numbers by beating in the autumn

before they hibernated.

With a daughter who has recently moved to Wicken, I am sometimes called upon to walk her small Cairn Terrier. There are one or two very pleasant footpaths between Wicken and Soham and on one of these I was just looking down at the number of green damsons that had presumably dropped early because of the very dry spring. Some large caterpillar droppings were also very evident and my heart skipped the proverbial beat, because to me this could only mean one thing! Needless to say, within minutes I had found three fully grown Lappet larvae as big as medium cigars. I was compelled to return later in the day, this time with my camera. A day or two later two more were found just on the Cambridgeshire side of Isleham marina on a riverside Sallow bush.



From my garden in Mildenhall, when lopping my tall *Leylandii* hedges, I can see the Soham water tower about six miles away as the crow flies. So they really are that close!

Even more of a heartache has been the single-species survey done on the Wall butterfly this year. For the past two seasons I have drawn a complete blank in those fenland areas to the north-west of Mildenhall where even as recently as eight years ago it was numerous, and I have to sadly agree with our County Recorder's emailed comment that we appear to be monitoring a sudden and catastrophic decline of this species in Suffolk. It is almost

hurtful to recall when this was a common species everywhere, especially on roadside verges and even in town gardens where it would accompany *Vanessids* on *Buddleia*, *Michaelmas Daisies* and *Sedum*. It was also the first 'Brown' to appear in the spring before *Speckled Woods* spread to Suffolk.

However, on the previously mentioned walk some six weeks later, I recorded three Walls. The strange thing is that here the best



description of the habitat would be 'arable field margins', something from which it has long been virtually extinct in Suffolk. It is still to be found in smallish numbers in E. Cambs, and, thankfully it is still a species of all habitats just across the Channel into France.

I am just old enough to recall the similar swift and unexplained demise of the Large Tortoiseshell in the late Forties. The plight of the Wall is worryingly similar. Obviously, the Walls decline is less marked elsewhere in the UK and it could be one of those species that is expanding its range northwards. All of which is small comfort to those of us who wish to remain living in our lovely county of Suffolk.

Illustrations by Mervyn Crawford

Butterflies name change

From Richard Fox, BC Survey Manager

We are lucky in the UK to have long-established and stable vernacular names for butterflies. As a result, our day to day interest in butterflies is not complicated by taxonomic rearrangements and changes in scientific nomenclature. Nevertheless, scientific names are important and there has been a recent, comprehensive revision of the taxonomy of European butterflies, carried out by the Butterfly Conservation Europe Taxonomy Group. This has been adopted by Butterfly Conservation.

Only six changes, all at genus level, affect species that breed regularly in the UK. Three

species are placed into different genera (*Purple Hairstreak* becomes *Favonius quercus*, *Large Blue* *Phengaris arion* and *Peacock* *Aglais io*), while the other three revert to genera that will be familiar already (*Silver-studded Blue* moves back to *Plebejus argus*, while *Brown Argus* and *Northern Brown Argus* revert to the genus *Aricia*). An appeal has been lodged against the change of genus for *Large Blue*, but for now the new taxonomy is correct.

The listing is available on the Fauna Europaea website www.faunaeur.org.

State of UK Butterflies report

This report, which covers changes in the abundance and distribution of butterflies over the last 10 years, is now almost ready for printing. BC plans to launch with a press release by early December.

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne infectious disease in Europe. People who spend time in woodland or heath areas are more at risk of developing Lyme disease because these areas are where tick-carrying animals, such as deer, live. Tick bites often go unnoticed and the tick can remain feeding for several days before dropping off. The longer the tick is in place, the higher the risk of it passing on the infection.

If you do find a tick on your skin remove it by gently gripping it as close to the skin as possible, preferably using a special tick removal device or fine-toothed tweezers.

The earliest and most common symptom of Lyme disease is a pink or red circular rash that develops around the area of the bite, three to 30 days after someone is bitten. The rash is often described as looking like a 'bull's-eye'. If you get a rash photograph it for a record.

Flu-like symptoms, such as tiredness, headaches and muscle or joint pain may develop. If Lyme disease is left untreated, further symptoms may develop months or even years later and can include: muscle pain, joint pain and swelling of the joints, and neurological symptoms, such as temporary paralysis of the facial muscles.

Unless in its early stages when a rash is present, diagnosing Lyme disease is often difficult as many of the symptoms are similar to those of other conditions. Blood tests are useful but don't always confirm diagnosis.

Diagnosed cases of Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics.

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) estimates that there are up to 3,000 cases of Lyme disease in England and Wales each year, and that about 15%-20% of cases occur while people are abroad.

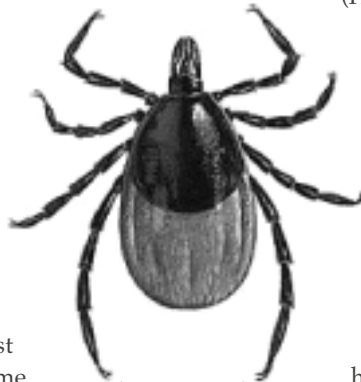
The best way of preventing Lyme disease is to avoid being bitten when you are in wooded or heath areas known to have a high tick population. The following precautions might help

to prevent Lyme disease:

- Tuck your trousers into your socks.
- Try not to brush against vegetation.
- Check yourself for ticks.

More detailed information is available from Lyme Disease Action at:

<http://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/about-lyme/faq/>



(Not life size!)

Butterfly Photography

Matt Berry shares his hints and tips on how to take macro shots. One of Matt's Brimstone photos appears on the cover of this newsletter and a Common Blue photo featured on the cover of the Summer edition of Butterfly magazine.

This article appeared in www.ephotozine.com

How do I get these shots?

I tend to keep things simple and use as little equipment as possible. For me the technicalities involved in taking a shot are just a necessary evil in that I have to know something about how the camera works, but I'm really only interested in the end result and in trying to make something that is appealing to myself and hopefully to others as well. However, everything is done in manual mode and shot in RAW as even though I don't like it I know it makes sense to use the cameras capabilities to maximise the potential quality of a shot.

With macro work the Tamron 90mm f2.8 SP DI macro lens I have tends to produce the most desirable results at between f/7.1 and f/11, providing good detail, balanced with reasonably clean backgrounds. To capture the subjects I shoot most (invertebrates) I use a mixture of shooting early (when subjects are less active) and field craft (to find, stalk and creep up on them). I also use luck! For example, sometimes an individual butterfly will seemingly want to be photographed and will sit still readily and for some time, whereas another of the same species and on the same day will fly the minute you even think about going near it! Some days the luck can be with you, on another you just want to throw in the towel and go home.

What interests you most about Macro photography?

I think primarily it's because it opens up a way of seeing things and in a level of detail that the human eye can't, without assistance. If you see a butterfly land on a flower you may see and enjoy its beauty, but only as far as the naked eye can see and only for a brief moment. However, a well captured macro shot can enable one to start seeing and studying far more. For example you may notice the colour of its eyes, length of its proboscis, intricate wing patterns and indeed see the individual wing scales. You can even see that butterflies are hairy, more so in some species than others.

Do you plan your shoots?

Yes and no. I enjoy photographing the natural world because the one thing you can be sure of with nature is that you can't actually be sure of anything and that a surprise can always be around the next corner. That makes it exciting. So sometimes I'll just go to a local nature reserve or park and see what happens. If I don't get a shot my philosophy is that I've still enjoyed a walk in a beautiful location and kept myself moderately fit at the same time! When it comes to planning a shoot, this is usually to find and photograph a particular species of plant or animal. Knowledge plays a large

part on the route to success, if you know where and when to look then you're already more than halfway there to achieving your goal.

Where do you shoot most of your work?

Anywhere outside is the simple answer! You can find nature almost anywhere and actually the countryside is often a bit of a green desert of agriculture. So even if you live in a town or city you will have access to a garden, a park, allotments or nature reserves, where an amazing array of wildlife can be found. I tend to spend most of my time in the parks & nature reserves end of that spectrum though, because I like to get as close to nature and gain as strong a sense of space and tranquillity as I can – it's a necessary break from the chaotic urban jungle for me.

Do you have anything you like to focus on? Cover more than anything else?

Although I do dabble a bit in plants, reptiles and nature inspired abstract, I tend to specialise in invertebrates - butterflies in particular. I'm an active member of the national charity Butterfly Conservation and since my childhood I've been fascinated with the metamorphosis process from caterpillar to adult, one of nature's many miracles! I also don't have the patience or equipment to get seriously into other areas, such as bird photography. I like the fact that I can carry just one or two fairly light lenses with me. I also like that with invertebrates I seek them out and don't have to wait, say in a hide for hours, for them to come to me. I put it down to having a mix of the hunter / gatherer instinct, albeit the animals I shoot walk (or fly) away afterwards unharmed

and the images I gather fuel only my hunger for more!

Do you have any tips or hints that you'd like to share?

My number one tip for nature photography is to get out there! As often as you can! It's obvious when you think about it but the more time spent in the field, the more chances you will have of finding and shooting something.

Know your subject. It doesn't matter if you like butterflies, birds or botany! The strategy of understanding and learning as much as you can about the subject you are interested in shooting will pay off in huge dividends.

Join local wildlife groups. They will have very knowledgeable members that are nearly always keen to share their knowledge. These groups also run events where you can learn where certain plants or animals live and when to see them.

Finally please respect the wildlife and the habitats in which they live. It can be easy to get over excited and lost in the moment of "getting the shot", but do remember that much of our wildlife and their habitats are very sensitive and under increasing pressures. You may also fall foul of the law if you disturb or damage certain protected wildlife, but my main message is not about enforcement, just a plea to look after what it is you are out there to photograph.

White-letter Hairstreaks

*Rob Parker presents two articles in tandem. **Hunting Hairstreaks** was first published in 2002. **Still Hunting Hairstreaks** is a continuation of that earlier article.*

Hunting Hairstreaks

Hairstreaks are not found by chance; it takes a good deal of patience, not to mention planning, and a bit of luck! Knowing that 5 years of Millennium survey had not unearthed any new colonies of White-letter Hairstreaks in Suffolk, I decided to look harder in 2000. All I accomplished was to identify a couple of spots where suitable elms were to be found in squares adjacent to known colonies. I spent a lot of bent neck time, though, without actually seeing any, despite correct timing, good weather, and patient observation.

2001, by contrast, brought success, and has been White-letter Hairstreak year. Either the butterflies have had a really good year, or I have got the knack of it! During July, I found 3 fresh sites myself, and I know of at least 5 more found by Richard Stewart and others. Here is how to go about finding some for yourself.

The first move is to visit a known site in perfect weather in order to see what they look like, and how they behave. Ideally, get a friend to show you, as the colonies are very precisely situated. Take binoculars and a folding chair, and go in the first days of July, to leave the rest of the month for the hunt.

The potential sites will need to be sorted out by looking at the elm growth in the general areas where they have been recorded in the past. Consult Howard Mendel's book for

pre 1986 records, and Richard Stewart's Millennium Atlas of Suffolk Butterflies for the sites recorded during 1995-99. [For a more recent map, see p.22 of the Summer 2009 Suffolk Argus].

The place you are looking for has good shelter, is probably off the road, and has Wych elm suckers growing to a height of about 15ft. It may be a site that used to have mature elms before Dutch elm disease struck, and the presence of some diseased elm growth does not rule it out. A clearing at the edge of a copse with plenty of elm regrowth is ideal, particularly if there is bramble in the undergrowth, as a source of nectar.

Look at your diary for July, and make as many dates available for the search as you can. Poor weather and other commitments can gobble up the opportunities all too quickly. Once you know that the WLH is on the wing, it is time to get around your potential sites. If a heatwave comes along, you must resist the temptation to lie at home in a deckchair, as the most successful days are the scorchers. The butterflies sit in the sun on leaves towards the top of the elms, sometimes resting, sometimes walking about in search of their principal refreshment, honeydew left by aphids, and fly only rarely. When disturbed, or in pursuit of another insect, they lift off into a short chase, particularly if they find another WLH. At this height, they are difficult to spot, and cannot be identified with certainty

unless they are obliging enough to settle where you can get the binoculars on them. In flight, they are rather drab, less noticeable than a Purple Hairstreak, and rather smaller than the smallest of the Ringlets that do quite often get up into trees. You may well see Speckled Woods and Holly Blues flying amongst the trees, and these need to be firmly identified, although once you have seen the real thing, you are unlikely to confuse WLH with these species. On the other hand, if you are near oaks, do beware of the Purple Hairstreaks, which do settle in elms, and have the same distinctive profile on a leaf.

Your best chance of a positive sighting comes when the WLH come down to take nectar, as a change from honeydew. This can occur as early as 10am on a hot day, unlike the Purple Hairstreaks, that usually leave it until tea-time. So, what you have to look for is bramble or privet, flowering in the sun, under the elms. Very often, this dictates which side of the copse or hedge line you have to search. This can put your feet amongst the nettles as you close in to search the bramble patch. And you will need to search quite methodically, as a bramble patch is an excellent hiding-place. First you will spot the Whites, and then any Peacocks, Red Admirals, or Commas. On closer inspection, you will begin to find the surprisingly large number of Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers moving from blossom to blossom. If you do not, then you have got the wrong bramble patch - the one you are looking for is usually very popular, in a sheltered glade, and catching the full sun. Keep looking until you have found all the Holly Blues and Skippers that were out of sight behind the blossoms, and then hunt down all the bumblebees and hoverflies and

malformed berries and twigs that can conceal the muted brown of the stationary head-on WLH just a yard from your face.

After that, it is a joy. The WLH will turn to get at another blossom, and you will get a broadside view of the hairstreak shape, the white line itself, and the orange markings above the tails. It may remain on the same blossom for 5 minutes, then fly six inches to the next flowerhead, and may still be there when you get back with the camera ten minutes later. If you find a decent colony, there will be more nearby. I found 6 in one glade near Cavenham, and 5 spread out along 400m of hedgerow, but there are accounts of other people finding 50 at one spot. Now is the time you get to see them flitting off to settle in the branches, and to become familiar with their "jizz"; after which it becomes easier to be confident about the next sighting. Most of their colonies are stable, so you can re-visit next year - on your way to the next prospective site, of course.

When you do your search for suitable-looking spots, why not go in May or June, at the time the larvae are feeding up. I'm told they are not too difficult to find by looking up through the leaves towards the sunlight. Part eaten leaves are a clue, but there are plenty of moths whose caterpillars feed on elm, so do not get too excited if they are long and thin, instead of the characteristic "slug" shape of the hairstreak caterpillars. Perhaps 2002 will be my year for finding WLH larvae!

Good Hunting!

Still Hunting Hairstreaks

The heat of July made 2010 into another White-letter Hairstreak year, and lots of Suffolk recorders found them in unexpected places, so this is a good time for an update. Expertise has increased recently, partly due to the three-year UK-wide *w-album* survey organised by the Herts. & Middx. Branch, which proved that this reclusive species can be found almost anywhere – provided sufficient dedication is put into the search. By allocating specific 1km squares for an elm search, followed up by well-timed hunts for eggs, larvae or adult butterflies, the survey found that there is a great deal more elm surviving than most people expect, and that much of it supports colonies of WLH.

My own participation was typical. In the allocated square south of Bury St Edmunds, I found a few unpromising bits of elm, but could not find any WLH in year one. Looking in the adjacent square the following year, I visited a taller tree and was delighted to see 3 or 4 WLH spiralling high up in the morning sun. I had learned by then, that it is easy to differentiate the flight of a group of Purple Hairstreaks from that of WLH. Whereas Purples “tumble” without gaining much height, WLH chase in a climbing spiral towards the treetops before peeling down low to start again. This summer, I had the satisfaction of seeing one close to the same tree at ground level. It was taking nectar from a clump of marjoram – an unusual choice in my experience; until this year, I had seen them mainly on bramble blossom or thistle heads. A week later, Brenda Hudson saw her first in the churchyard at Coddanham, and photographed it on scabious, another

unusual choice. I imagine that the heat was bringing them further out of their home canopies in search of moisture; certainly that was the case where one was found by Sheila Keeley on the grass at Bury Golf Club, which had been recently watered.

Re-visiting my two favourite sites at Cavenham, where I had failed to see any in 2009, I was rewarded with no less than 16, all taking nectar from bramble in one glade. By contrast, at the other site, admittedly on a cooler day, I saw none at all. This reflects their behaviour, and does not prove that they have abandoned the second site. On the other hand, the accumulation of blobs on the distribution map does not prove that they are breeding consistently at every location. In all probability, colonies move on when Dutch Elm Disease strikes – perhaps to the next tree, or perhaps to the next village. If we keep plotting them long enough, we may find dots all over the county, but WLH will continue to be an elusive quarry.

Talking of quarries, there is a small SWT reserve in Bloodhill Quarry near Little Blakenham, and this was the scene of a satisfying discovery recently. I was invited to inspect by Wendy Brown, the voluntary warden, and I was impressed by the number of mature elms around the quarry. Although I failed to find WLH, when Richard Stewart and Stella Wolfe returned a couple of days later, it was there for them, and Wendy was able to see one herself later. Confirming the presence of a Biodiversity Action Plan species on a SWT reserve is a helpful step in conserving the species.

Let's all keep looking.

Ragwort Hysteria

Reproduced (with consent) from Invertebrate Conservation News (ICN) No 65, June 2011, under the title: 'More on ragwort misinformation in the UK'

It is almost ten years since the debate for and against UK parliamentary bill to strengthen legal provisions for the control of ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, on the grounds that this native British plant was causing widespread poisoning of horses. The Ragwort Control Act (RCA) was passed in 2003, but with safeguards that recognised the need to avoid unnecessary destruction of a plant important to the survival of many invertebrate species, of which more than thirty would become extinct in its absence.

The safeguards that exist in RCA 2003 were won in the face of a concerted anti-ragwort campaign. The campaign had been based largely on statistics of cases where horses had been diagnosed as having liver damage, but there had generally been no tests to establish to whether ragwort was involved. The safeguards seem to have disappointed the anti-ragwort campaigners, who have continued to persuade landowners to eradicate ragwort in situations where the safeguards clearly show that there is no need to do so. Former Amateur Entomologists' Society (AES) Conservation Committee member Neil Jones has been running a campaign to identify instances of misinformation, some of which are mentioned below. The positive news is that some of the organisations involved in the unnecessary control of ragwort have changed their practices when supplied with accurate information.

Inaccurate representation of the law is one of the most frequent kinds of misinformation. Neil Jones has found an example in the website of Scarborough Council in Yorkshire. Together with various relatively minor inaccuracies, there is an incorrect statement that "it is an offence to allow the plant to proliferate on your land and spread to adjacent property". Neil found some similar misinformation in a

Florida-based blog called 'Dog Apparel', which stated incorrectly that ragwort is a "notifiable" weed in the UK (the correct designation is "injurious") and that anyone finding it should pull it up. Neil points out that one of the worst things to do is to pull up ragwort and then to leave it lying. The fresh plant is unpalatable to horses and is not usually a direct threat to them, unless they are very short of anything else to eat. When dry, after being pulled and left lying, or when carelessly incorporated into hay, it becomes more palatable and thus far more likely to cause poisoning. Neil also points out that it is unlawful to uproot any wild plant in the UK without the permission of the landowner or occupier.

In some cases, misinformation is disseminated by organisations that purport to be quoting official government guidance. The sources of such 'second-hand' inaccuracies can be difficult to trace. Neil Jones cites the website of a magazine called *Smallholder*, in which the Welsh Assembly Government is quoted as saying that it... "wishes to remind all landowner/occupiers, Local Authorities, Trunk Road Agencies and Network Rail that they have a statutory responsibility to prevent and control the spread of ragwort under the Weeds Act 1959." Neil points out that this is incorrect, since the Weeds Act does not impose any such duty automatically. He also refers to an inaccuracy on the part of Milton Keynes Council, which allegedly states that five specified weeds are controlled under the Weeds Act 1959. He suggests that the Council is thereby trying to justify an aggressive mowing policy of roadside verges. Neil points out that the law does not automatically require that ragwort is controlled; it only enables people to be ordered to control ragwort in certain defined situations.

Neil also reminds his readers that efforts to control Common Ragwort, often driven by misinformation, can result in the mistaken destruction of other yellow-flowered plants, such as St. John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum* (a member of a different plant family), which are important in their own right as the foodplants of specialised invertebrates. There are also rare species of ragwort, such as the Hoary Ragwort *Senecio erucifolius*, which can be ignorantly destroyed in this way.

Misinformation is sometimes evident in reports of weed control work by various voluntary groups. While looking at Neil Jones' blog, former AES President Reg Fry noticed one such example, involving an ecologically important site in Somerset, SW England. Reg wrote to the group of volunteers who were helping to manage the site, attaching a copy of the official Code of Practice for implementing the law. According to the Code, ragwort should be controlled if it is growing within a certain distance from land used for grazing by horses and other animals or land used for feed/forage production. The distance is 100m when the ragwort is flowering or seeding, or otherwise 50m. At the site concerned, the distance was more than 240m. Having been made aware that the ragwort control was based on misinformation, the group spokesman responded to Reg Fry very positively, since he happened to be a keen entomologist and had been concerned about the loss of biodiversity that was being perpetrated.

Reg Fry has been in contact also with the Countryside Restoration Trust (CRT). In the latest e-newsletter of the CRT (2011), Rod Keble wrote as follows about the work of volunteers at a site designated for its wildlife value at Pierrepont Farm, near Millbridge in Surrey, SE England. ... "Meanwhile, the women (plus Ray Ashdown) collected nine sackfuls (sic) of Stinking Willie (as ragwort is known north of the border) from the Wey Meadow SSSI (site of special scientific

interest), with more to come next time. The ragwort has to be gathered and disposed of as it can be extremely harmful i.e. fatal to cattle and horses due to the toxins it contains causing liver failure". Although the report correctly states that ragwort is poisonous, it fails to state whether the circumstances made control necessary according to the Code of Practice. It also fails to say anything about the biodiversity value of ragwort, even though the site is an SSSI. This seems unfortunate and not entirely consistent with the CRT's statement that it is "committed to wildlife friendly farming and aims to protect and restore Britain's countryside". Reg Fry has, however, reported that the CRT has now sent all its members a copy of a guidance document published by Buglife (The Invertebrate Conservation Trust) at:

<http://www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/currentprojects/Habitats+Action/Ragwort/>

Tailpiece

A significant blow for conservation was struck in June 2011, as a result of a set of complaints sent by Neil Jones to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) about companies who were selling ragwort control using dodgy facts and falsehoods.

As a result, a load of misinformation was changed and taken down. This includes the awful leaflet that was produced by the British Horse Society and Warwickshire Council. There was no question of asking them in this case. The ASA just told them get rid of it!

References

More on ragwort misinformation in the UK, Invertebrate Conservation News No 65, 2011.

Defra Code of Practice:

archive.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/wildlife/management/weeds/index.htm

Neil Jones' blog: <http://ragwort-hysteria.blogspot.com/>

ASA complaint details can be seen at:

<http://www.swanseafcoe.org.uk/ragwort-and-the-advertising-standards-authority.html>

Butterfly Conservation Suffolk Branch
Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2011

	2010/11		2009/10	
INCOME	Restricted	General	Restricted	General
Membership Subscriptions	1	£1,311.00		£1,275.00
NFU		£78.89		
Natural England				£500.00
Bank Interest		£1.12		£1.12
Donations/General Fundraising		£827.50		£646.50
Suffolk CC				£500.00
Bank Charges (Refundable)		£25.00		
TOTAL INCOME	_____	<u><u>£2,246.01</u></u>	_____	<u><u>£4,122.62</u></u>
 EXPENDITURE				
Donations				£50.00
Newsletter/Programme		£1,208.35		£1,373.90
AGM - hire of hall		£25.00		£25.00
Office Expenses/Petty Cash		£245.13		£446.37
Insurance	1	£101.23		£102.69
To BC HQ re: Sharon Hearle				£1,000.00
SSB Translocation/Survey				£2,200.00
Purdis Heath Restoration		£603.86		
Bank Charge Refund		£25.00		
Travel expenses		£233.22		£103.90
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	_____	<u><u>£2,444.29</u></u>	_____	<u><u>£5,301.86</u></u>
SURPLUS/DEFICIT FOR YEAR	_____	<u><u>-£198.28</u></u>	_____	<u><u>-£1,179.24</u></u>
 1 Insurance costs of £101.23 (£102.69) deducted from subscriptions by head office				
Balance 1st April	£0.00	£1,407.02	£0.00	£2,586.26
Surplus (deficit) for yr	<u>£0.00</u>	<u>-£198.28</u>	<u>£0.00</u>	<u>-£1,179.24</u>
BALANCE 31st MARCH	<u><u>£0.00</u></u>	<u><u>£1,288.99</u></u>	<u><u>£0.00</u></u>	<u><u>£1,407.02</u></u>

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Butterfly Conservation

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Greek island odyssey

Matt Berry

Spring is one of the finest times to appreciate the beauty of Greece. At this time of year, the meadows, hillsides and olive groves are alive with insects, and birds, and full of many beautiful wild flowers.

The island of Rhodes is blessed with more days of sunshine than almost anywhere else in Europe, so its name 'The Isle of the Sun' is well justified. As readers may recall the island was featured in the Spring 2011 edition of the Suffolk Argus – 'A flavour of Rhodes'.

For 2012 we plan to host a week long guided tour of the island's diverse flora and fauna, culture, cuisine and history. We will stay right in the heart of the medieval old town (a World Heritage Site), in a charming and traditional Greek family owned and run hotel.

The exact itinerary for the holiday will be flexible and tailored to best meet the group's interests. Some of the places we intend to visit are as follows:

- Medieval old town & castle
- Filerimos monastery
- Monte Smith & temple of Apollo
- Efta puges (Seven springs)
- Mt. Profitas Ilias
- Picture postcard Symi Island
- Apolakia Lake
- Ancient town of Kamiros
- Lindos village and acropolis
- Akramatis forest
- Tsambika monastery & beach
- Rodini Park

There will be chances to see and photograph lots of flora and fauna, including Lesser Fiery Copper, Bee-eater, Golden Oriole, Scarce and European Swallowtail, Oertzen's Rock Lizard, Rhode's Dragon, Aegean Meadow Brown, Long-tailed Blue, Dragon Arum, King Ferdinand's Orchid and the rare and beautiful endemic Rhodes Peony.

We plan to start the adventure on **Wednesday 25th April** and reach journey's end on **Wednesday 2nd May**. The cost of the holiday (excluding flights) is £585. This includes accommodation, breakfast, all transport by minibus (including transfers) and any tickets or entrance fees. The maximum group size is seven, plus two leaders. Reasonably priced direct flights are readily available from carriers such as easyJet and Ryanair at both Gatwick and Stansted Airports.

10% of profits will be donated to Butterfly Conservation.

For further information please contact Matt Berry on 07599 243026 or matt.berry1@sky.com.



Lesser Fiery Copper *Lycaena thersamon*

A Greek Island Odyssey

Photos by Matt Berry



Lesser Fiery Copper



Oertzen's Rock Lizard



European Swallowtail



Jewel Beetle



Scarce Swallowtail



Lesser Fiery Copper

Butterfly aberrations photographed at Mildenhall and Thurston

Comma



Polygonia c-album ab obscura
Photo Mervyn Crawford

Common Blue



Polyommatus icarus ab radiata Courvoisier
Photo Trevor Goodfellow

Ragwort: proof of its worth!



Peacocks nectaring at Rendlesham
Photo Peter Maddison



Purple Hairstreak nectaring at
Martlesham Heath
Photo Steve Goddard

Walk around Eyke 13th June 2011



Essex Skipper
Photo Chris Pratt



Sloe Shieldbug
Photo Chris Pratt