



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

The **Suffolk** *Argus*

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



Orange-tip by Matt Berry

Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds

Looking forward to summer.....

.....to butterflies of park and grassland



Gatekeeper



Green-veined White

Photos by Martin Rogers



See Fay Jones' transect article on Page 13

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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.

Mr D Andrews	Raydon	Mr B & Mrs S Nichols	Shotley Gate
Mrs N Andrews	Shotley Gate	Mrs C Paine	Bury St Edmunds
Miss C Ansell	Lawshall	Mrs Y Parker	Trimley St Mary
Mrs A Cooper	Ipswich	Mr C Rochford & Family	Witnesham
Ms V Flute	Little Waldingfield	Mr J & Mrs M Runnacles	Bucklesham
Mr T Goodfellow	Thurston	Mr P Smith	Worlingham
Miss A Greenacre	Pakefield	Mrs R Tunbridge	Stowmarket
Mr P Harrison	Barnham	Mr T Wade	Exning
Mrs R Kelsey	Monks Eleigh	Mrs J West	Southwold
Mrs C & Mr C Lucas	Saxmundham	Mr D White	Lakenheath
Ms A K Mccreadle	Woodbridge	Ms C Wilson	Ipswich
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Butterfly Conservation

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Editorial

Peter Maddison

The State of the UK's Butterflies 2011 Report, published in December made solemn reading. It seems that almost three quarters of UK butterflies have decreased in population during the last decade. I suppose we all had some inkling of that, but we also knew, and the report makes this clear, that where conservation takes place our butterflies can prosper. The reintroduction and success of the Large Blue is a national headline winner, but here in the east of the country we are having our successes too. The Silver-studded Blue reintroduced at Blaxhall in 2007 produced its largest population in 2011 and we are hopeful that the work carried out at Purdis Heath over the last two winters will encourage its fortunes there and that of other wildlife too. The careful management of our land is the key to abundant wildlife and we are fortunate to have numerous optimistic enthusiasts – yes, our Branch membership is growing, just look at the New Members list! – many of whom join work parties to tear out overgrown scrub, or plant 'Buckthorn for Brimstones' or make time to record our butterflies.

In this newsletter Matt Berry updates us on the work carried out at Purdis Heath, Julian Dowding writes about the superb uptake of

the Buckthorn for Brimstones project, Fay Jones enthuses about her new transect at Nowton Park in Bury St Edmunds and, hopefully, you will be enthused to record butterflies too! Recording is vital if we are to know how numbers are responding to environmental changes. Do send your records to the County Recorder. You will find Rob Parker's address on the Contacts page.

'Bamboozled by 2011's weird weather' ran the headline on the BC website news page, 'many species appeared earlier and later than in a typical year'. We would have to agree that was the case in Suffolk, and Rob Parker has updated the Earliest and Latest Table. There were eight new earliest records in 2011, mainly 'summer' species, some a whole week earlier than ever, with five new latest-ever, extending on to a Large White on Christmas Day. For the first time Purple Emperor and Silver-washed Fritillary have been added to the table.

What of our weather in 2012? Well, let's hope for a sunny and warm summer in which those struggling summer species emerge in abundance. That would be different, not weird but wonderful!

Editorial copy date

Contributions for the Summer edition of our newsletter are very welcome and should be sent to the Editor, Peter Maddison, no later than Saturday 19th May, 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 4 or by email to: prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

Notes For Butterfly Recorders

Rob Parker

2011 has been a disappointing year for our commoner species, with a few bright spots for some of the rarities, notably Silver-washed Fritillary. But this note is not about the butterflies as much as the team effort of recording butterflies in various different ways.

Now the year is over, and most records (13,157) have been sent in and entered into the "Levana" database, it is clear that we have had a busy and effective year. We have visited 657 tetrads out of the Suffolk total of 1089. Most years, we get records from about 500, and 657 is the best single-year count since the Millennium survey.

For those not used to submitting records, the basic details needed are the "four Ws", i.e.:

"What" – i.e. species.

"Where" – preferably an Ordnance Survey grid reference*, though a location name or a post code etc., will do.

"When" – self evident!

"by Whom" – name and contact details of recorder.

In addition, a count of minimum numbers seen is useful, with any evidence for breeding (e.g. mating observed, ovipositing females seen or larvae found).

Records come in from over two hundred regular recorders (BC members and non-

members too) and from a variety of schemes:

Transects. We have 19 full transects running in Suffolk, plus two single-species transects – our contribution to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). This is the highest standard of input, as a weekly count has been conducted for more than 10 years at some sites, using an established scientific methodology. Single-species transects are also used to monitor Silver-studded Blue and Purple Hairstreak at a couple of sites.

Garden Records. Homeowners who send their records annually provide a valuable foundation for most of our common species. Some are sent to the national BC scheme, others come direct to me.

BTO Garden Birdwatch. Birdwatchers engaged in the British Trust for Ornithology garden birdwatch have the option of recording easily-identified species within their on-line recording scheme. These are recovered and entered to the Suffolk database at least once in each 5-year period.

Casual Sightings or Roving Records. Enthusiastic naturalists and butterfly watchers visit sites of high wildlife value and send in a variety of records – from a single Clouded Yellow to a detailed specific site survey. Voluntary wardens of SWT reserves often send dependable records for their sites year after year. Many BC members make the effort to visit the tetrads known to be under-recorded, progressively

*For grid references see:

<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/gi/nationalgrid/nationalgrid.pdf>

filling the "black holes" in the county distribution maps. See

www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk

for a link to last year's black hole map. Often visits to the great unknown can be an unexpected delight, sometimes turning up hairstreaks and other valuable records.



White-letter Hairstreak
by Beryl Johnson

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey. The WCBS is organized and analyzed at BC Head Office level, and uses volunteers from BC and BTO membership. It is targeted at the same set of randomly selected squares annually, but as these are visited just in July and again in August, some species get missed (e.g. Orange-tip and Green Hairstreak). The scheme has been running for 3 seasons now, and results are passed back to County recorders. Essentially transect-like rules are applied, but the walk is done only twice a year instead of 26 times (optional extra visits are not discouraged though). A few people have dropped out, but in 2011 we had good data sets from 14 people covering 17 squares. If you would

like to join WCBS for 2012, there is still time to enrol with Suffolk Co-ordinator Peter Dare at: peterxema@aol.com

Big Butterfly Count. BC Head Office has put a lot of effort into organizing the Big Butterfly Count as a piece of nationwide citizen science. Lots of novice recorders have taken part, identifying butterflies for 15 minutes in a site of their own choosing. Suffolk harvested 2800 records of mainly common species flying during July and August. Although the places visited were mostly within our well recorded areas, it did provide a boost to our coverage for the current 5 year period (2010/2011 and on to 2014), adding 38 tetrads in TM and 28 in TL. However, only one of the tetrads visited was a black hole outstanding from the 2004-2009 period.

Wall Brown Survey. This year we conducted a single-species survey for Wall, and confirmed that it is declining as far and as fast as we had feared. For the second year in succession, it has not been found at all in West Suffolk. Despite the extra recording effort in likely squares, it was found in only 28 tetrads, compared with 83 as recently as 2003. The survey will continue for 2012, but in different target squares; if you want to participate, please email: butterflies@sns.org.uk with Wall Survey in the title line.

If, like me, you have trouble recalling what happened in past years, here is an aide-memoire:

Annual Overview at a glance

	Special Feature	General Verdict	Migration	Other	Tetrads	Species/ tetrad
2000	BNM begins afresh					8.5
2001	Foot & Mouth year	"hardly classic"		Red Admiral emergence Christmas Day. Churchyard survey.		8
2002	R. Stewart's final report			6 Camberwell Beauty	309	8.6
2003	BC: "A vintage year"	Outstanding	Good Painted Lady year	Good for all BAP species	449	9.4
2004	2nd brood White Admirals	Anticlimax	Some Painted Lady & Clouded Yellow	White Admiral 2nd brood Oct.	536	8.5
2005	Start of new 5 year period.	Unexciting		Hottest ever for Northern Hemisphere, but not for Suffolk	500	10
2006	Camberwell Beauty Migration	Mixed	Outstanding	Baseline S-sB count. Golden autumn	557	9.4
2007	Earliest-ever records	Poor		Early start to spring; dull thereafter	509	9
2008	Unremarkable	Poor again	Poor		549	9
2009	Painted Lady Migration	Average plus	Outstanding	Frosts in Feb	645	10.6
2010	Silver-washed dispersal	Curate's egg	Weak	Cold winter, wind & snow	544	9.7
2011	Consolidation by Silver-washed Fritillary	Confused; poor for common sp.	Poor	Spring heatwave & drought, many early/late records	657	8.6
2012	Mild start and ??					

There are 32 species on our recording sheet (residents and regular migrants) and Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary and (perhaps) Marbled White are recent arrivals that could be here to stay. Camberwell Beauty, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary and Long-tailed Blue have occasionally enhanced our skies too. In most years, 34 species are recorded, but occasional Large Tortoiseshell, Chalkhill Blue and Long-tailed Blue can raise the count to 40. The tetrads incorporating top sites like Minsmere hit 33 over a 5 year term, but the county average remains much lower at 13.5 over the same period, and a meagre 8.6 for 2011 in isolation – remember how little immigration we had last year. The tetrads including Theberton Woods and Ipswich Golf Club achieved 22 and 26 respectively this year, and top gardens can hit the high 20s over a decade. A better overview for the county comes from evaluating the 10km squares; this comes in with an average of 26. No one square has all our regular species however; with the Silver-studded Blue restricted to the Sandlings and the Dingy Skipper only remaining in the Brecks, and few places will have as many as 30 regulars.

During the Millennium survey, the average species per tetrad count achieved was 15.4, better than in any subsequent 5-year period. This was undoubtedly the result of comprehensive surveying of many rather ordinary tetrads. Our recent efforts may have been assisted by electronic technology, but there is no substitute for determined

fieldwork. And there is the reality that many once common species are no longer easily found in every square. The declines of Wall and Small Heath, Small Tortoiseshell and Common Blue are all nibbling away at our general biodiversity. On the other side of the coin, the appearance of new species is a lot of fun. By the time we run out of the stock of existing recording sheets, I hope to add Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary and Marbled White to the replacement forms.

All our butterfly records are sent off annually to Butterfly Conservation for absorption into the National database. Our annual butterfly report is published a year in arrears in Suffolk Natural History – the transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society. The Suffolk Argus invariably brings a shortened version much sooner than that.

And now it is time to get stuck into 2012. I look forward to receiving your contributions.



Small Tortoiseshell
by Beryl Johnson

Events Programme 2012

Matt Berry

As I write this we are still in the grip of the winter, albeit currently a very mild one. But it is time to herald in the spring and summer programme of events and prepare to dust off the cameras, notebooks and summer walking clothes and get out in the sun (we hope!) to see some butterflies and moths! So here are some brief notes to highlight what we have planned in 2012.

We start off with a spring walk in one of our "Black Hole" areas of Suffolk. These are tetrads where there are very few to no records, so if you can make it along to Stella's walk in west Suffolk you will not only be enjoying a pleasant spring time excursion, but also helping contribute to recording and understanding butterfly populations – think of it as a something of a mystery tour!

As you probably know, we've been promoting the "Buckthorn for Brimstones" project recently. In May we're visiting Holywells Park in Ipswich, where over ten years ago the first wave of Buckthorn planting began and where there is now a very healthy Brimstone population. We hope to be lucky with the weather on the day and witness courtship and egg-laying displays! We will also be on the lookout for other spring butterflies and just enjoying this wonderful, wildlife rich Park.

The Dingy Skipper is the focus for some dates in May. Join Rob Parker and other committee members in the Kings Forest to survey for them and any other butterflies in

the area. Tony Prichard will be hosting a moth night at Purdis Heath, hoping to add to our records of species at this precious site on the outskirts of Ipswich. If you have never been to a moth trapping event or wish to learn more about moths, I would recommend attending this event, or the one Tony will be helping with at Orwell Country Park in June.

For people that like to travel further afield for their butterflies we have several opportunities this year. In April I'll be leading a tour of Rhodes in Greece for a week of wildlife, warm weather and fantastic Greek culture, hospitality and cuisine. There are just 3 places left so get in touch soon if you are interested. To keep the Greek theme going I am also leading a tour in the northern Peloponnese region of Greece in late June. A wealth of wildlife and an abundance of butterflies are guaranteed (We will see well over 50 different species), during a week in some of the most picturesque mountainous areas in Greece. Details for both trips can be found at www.greenwings.co

Also in June we'll be heading north, over the border into Norfolk, to look for the British Swallowtail. It is such a special butterfly and near enough to justify an annual pilgrimage I feel! We should also be able to enjoy another local speciality, the Norfolk Hawker dragonfly – with its enigmatic green eyes! There will be the annual survey for Silver-studded Blue at RSPB Minsmere in June, which is well worth taking part in for a

chance to see the butterfly and also find out more about them and their fascinating life cycle from our resident expert Rob.

A highlight of the July events is the opportunity to go on a walk at Pakenham Wood for Silver-washed Fritillary. This beautiful butterfly has made a dramatic return to Suffolk in the past few years and it is so exciting to be able to see them on our own patch. What will happen this year? Will they strengthen their presence in Suffolk even further? Take part in this event and find out!

We have several events running during the Big Butterfly Count period during July and August, including joint events between ourselves and Ipswich Borough Council to survey butterfly species in Orwell Country Park and another at Flatford Mill to survey in and around the RSPB wildlife garden, at which we'll also have information and displays about gardening for wildlife, including butterflies and moths of course! Paul Johnson will be leading a weekend event in the Sussex area during the same period, in early August. It should be a fantastic two days of butterfly spotting for those that can make it. To whet your appetite, some of the species that may be seen include Brown Hairstreak, Silver-washed Fritillary, Wall, Silver-spotted Skipper, Adonis Blue & Chalkhill Blue.

In late August or early September I will be co-leading a tour in southern Spain with an

award winning wildlife photographer. We'll be exploring Andalucia, an area famed for its rich diversity of landscape, habitat and wildlife. Thanks to our expert's local knowledge we'll be able to visit some of the best places and maximise the potential for seeing many wildlife highlights, such as Two-tailed Pasha, European Chameleon, Griffon Vulture, Iberian Wolf, Spanish Ibex and much more! Plus there will be photography advice and tuition on tap. This trip promises to combine wildlife and photography with fantastic scenery and climate! The finer details are still to be confirmed, check www.greenwings.co to find out more in the near future, or contact me directly.

Finally, please do remember our A.G.M. and members evening in September. Once the short business side of things are over we'll be enjoying a number of presentations of members photos, as well as hearing updates on projects we've been working on, such as Purdis Heath for Silver-studded Blues and the Brimstones and Buckthorn project. We hope by then to be in a position to report some good news about a new project that promises to deliver some real benefit to Silver-studded Blue conservation.

I hope you find this year's array of events interesting and I look forward to meeting lots of you during the spring and summer months. I already have my fingers and everything else crossed for a good butterfly & moth year!

Trudie Willis, who opens her butterfly garden at Aldeburgh in aid of Butterfly Conservation, is developing her garden website. View at:

<http://sites.google.com/site/priorsoakbutterflygarden/>

Brimstones and Buckthorn update

Julian Dowding

The Brimstones and Buckthorn initiative, sponsored by Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation, Suffolk Naturalists' Society and Ipswich Borough Council, has so far sent out more than 200 packs of bushes, each containing 4 bushes. We still have a few packs left and are looking for just a handful more 'customers' in the east of the county, roughly following the coastal strip from Felixstowe to Lowestoft. If you know of

anybody in that area that would like to plant a few bushes to attract that most emblematic and enigmatic harbinger butterfly of Spring, the Brimstone, into their garden or local patch, then please pass on the following details and ask them to contact us as soon as possible, so that they can receive a delivery:

brimstones@suffolkbutterflies.org.uk
or, telephone: Julian 01473436096



Brimstone
by Beryl Johnson

*WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.*

As I write this, the earliest ever Suffolk Brimstone record was reported on 7th January, along the northern boundary edge of Landseer Park, Ipswich, by Sue Thoma and Andrew Glosby. If you would like a chance to see Brimstones in east Suffolk, it's worth visiting both Landseer and Holywells Parks. These two places are very well stocked with Buckthorns, the Brimstone foodplant, and consequently hold strong populations of the butterfly. The best times are possibly warm, sunny days in Spring, any time from March to May, when you can observe recently emerged overwintering

specimens searching for mates and nectar (or in the case of females, ovipositing sites) or alternatively, later in the year from late June/July onwards, when newly hatched specimens are on the wing. Look particularly in sunny, sheltered spots along rides and woodland edges. Brimstone Alley in Holywells Park is one such place. If you find such a spot, it's often best to just sit or stand, soaking up the atmosphere, in true W.H. Davies fashion and wait for the sulphur yellow males or the greenish white females, to come to you.

*A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.*

From *Leisure* by W.H. Davies

Nowton Park - a new butterfly transect

Fay Jones, Nowton Park Ranger

fay.jones@stedsbc.gov.uk

I have been interested in butterfly recording ever since I had to walk my college transect as part of an assignment way back in 2009. I found analyzing the data and comparing it to other local sites fascinating. Through volunteering at a number of nature reserves and having a go at walking their transects when I got my job with St Edmundsbury borough council at Nowton Park I thought – I can do this!

So, after looking through the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme's website to see what I had to do I took a walk round Nowton Park looking at the different habitats and species that were present. I came up with a rough route encompassing as many of the habitats as possible and then I gave Rob Parker (County Recorder) a ring. He helped me to map the route and plot various way marks (start/end points etc). After the relevant documents (about route habitats, transect location etc) were sent to BC HQ I was issued with a transect number and I was all set for the 2011 season!

For those that don't know it Nowton is a country park on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds. It was given to St Edmundsbury Borough Council in 1985. Its 172 acres were heavily landscaped throughout the Victorian period but now comprise mostly of mature parkland, planted wildflower meadows and secondary woodland. There is an arboretum of specimen trees from around the world, 2

ponds and 3 sports pitches. The park is managed equally for wildlife and leisure (not always an easy balance) so what better way to keep a check on it than monitoring the butterflies?

Nowton's transect starts just over the bridge from the car park and follows the red route and a woodland edge. (See map Page 2) Section 2 goes across a heavily mown open parkland area. Section 3 is a small meadow with a bramble edge on one side and a lot of knapweed on the other (also an excellent area for *Orthoptera*) and into shaded woodland of planted specimens and cedars with bramble/nettle edges. Section 5 starts at a small knapweed meadow and follows the path round the large pond. The transect then follows several bramble/scrub edges round to the hornbeam maze then drops down onto more grassy/bramble edges. Section 8 is a long stretch through the largest wildflower meadow (known as Wood Henge meadow – it is also a good place to see grass snakes). Section 9 dog-legs round a woodland edge and the most flora rich meadow of the park and ends at the top of the football pitches. The transect usually takes about 50 minutes to walk.

So, what did the 2011 season hold? Being an urban park I had a few ideas but there were also some very pleasant surprises. With the help of a good friend (and Nowton Park

volunteer) we managed to walk 21 out of the 26 recording weeks - counting 721 butterflies on transect. 20 species were seen on transect including Small Coppers, Common Blues and 1 lone Purple Hairstreak in week 11. Brimstones were seen in the park but not on transect. No Painted Ladies or Clouded Yellows which, speaking to a colleague, used to frequent the park until a few years ago. Our most abundant species was the Meadow Brown (343 counted on transect). Week 13 was the highest for overall numbers (106). All encouraging stuff!

So, what's in store for 2012?

As well as a new ranger centre being built this winter a lot of tree clearing and thinning has happened (mostly sycamore) ready for the planting of native species of trees and shrubs. The hedge flanking the ditch near the car park is to be replanted with 20% buckthorn – good news Brimstones, as well as a fair bit of holly (near where the Holly Blues have been seen on transect). So if you visit the park soon the work areas may look a bit extreme but never fear the butterflies have been thought of! 2012 will be an interesting year – seeing the effect the tree clearing (and loss of some large bramble/nettle patches) will have. There has also been some dispute over the cutting times of the wildflower meadows (too early) so hopefully these can be rectified. I am immensely heartened by what I've found in 2011 and looking forward to the 2012 season (especially now I know there are Hairstreaks – where did I put my binoculars?!)

I find butterfly recording very relaxing – I get an hour every week in the best months of the year to go and look for these amazing insects, always in beautiful locations – and would recommend it to everyone. If you are interested in helping to record butterflies then either contact your local transect walker (transects can be found at <http://www.ukbms.org/map.htm> and click Suffolk), your local transect co-ordinator or join in with the Big Butterfly Hunt in the summer.

When Nowton Park's visitor centre is up and running I hope to have copies of the transect map and recording sheets available for people to help themselves and have a go! If you would like to try walking a transect to see if it is for you then feel free to contact me and I'll be happy to show you around Nowton's.

Anyone wishing to visit Nowton who is using a SatNav the nearest postcode is IP29 5LU (although this will take you to the Victory Sports ground – just carry on along that road – the park is on the left hand side).



Small Copper
by Beryl Johnson

Progress being made at Purdis Heath for Silver-studded Blue

Matt Berry

As first reported in the Autumn 2011 edition of the Argus, we have been holding monthly volunteer work parties throughout the winter. As explained in previous articles there is a dire need to improve the core heathland habitat of the site, for the Silver-studded Blue and to benefit a multitude of other wildlife, e.g. Grayling, Viviparous Lizard and so on. One of the main issues is the encroachment of scrub (Oak, Silver Birch and Gorse), which has increasingly smothered the heather by the shading effect and leaf fall. This suppresses heathland vegetation and enriches the soil, both bad news!

The volunteer work parties have therefore been focused on tackling this particular problem. In November and December groups of up to ten people have been wielding bow saws and loppers to cut down lots of small (and not so small - with a chainsaw) trees to open up areas to encourage heather. The cut material has been moved to the woodland edge to create habitat for a wealth of wildlife, from the tiniest invertebrate to lizards, small mammals, hedgehogs and birds. A significant amount of work has been done and so we are making some really excellent progress towards turning the tide and getting the heathland into better shape. If put in monetary terms the hours spent so far this winter equates to about £2,050 of labour that volunteers have invested into the site!

Here is what some of our volunteers have to say about their experiences....

“Working at Purdis Heath is great, not only do you get to help the local environment, but you get to meet like-minded people too. I get over there whenever I can.” - Hawk

“As a relatively new BC member I have attended winter work parties at Purdis Heath. Following a summer of searching for and enjoying butterflies, I have spent time this winter helping to improve the habitat on the heath. This work will benefit the Silver-studded Blue butterfly in particular, but has also created further habitats for the reptiles that populate this site. The work has been enjoyable - I have learned a great deal and we will hopefully be rewarded in the summer with an increased number of butterflies.” - Helen

“I’ve found the work parties good fun, and it’s been really nice to meet some people who are interested in the same things as me. I’m looking forward to the surveys in the summer, going over Purdis with some experts as I have still never seen a S-sB despite many walks round the heath.” - Susanne

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers that have been coming out to help, most of whom are Butterfly Conservation members (or soon to be, following some “gentle” persuasion!). If

any of our members reading this feel the urge to join us for a future work party you would be more than welcome. It isn't going to be the same type of work every month and during spring and summer we will be spending lots of time observing and recording the wildlife, not least Silver-studded Blues (fingers crossed for a good year!). It's important to remember that the recording element is equally as important as the practical habitat management. Without it we would have less knowledge to call upon for choosing the right type of management, plus very little measure of success for the habitat management undertaken.

Finally, in addition to these monthly work parties we were pleased to join with the Greenways Countryside Project and Ipswich Wildlife Group on 21st January 2012, for the annual Megabash event. Around fifty - yes fifty! - people came and gave their time to help clear a tremendous amount of invasive scrub from the central areas of heather. It was pleasing to note that some of the people were local residents. Purdis Heath is privately owned and its future is not certain, both for the wildlife and the people that visit and enjoy it. Therefore, it is vital that the people living close value and care for their local patch of "purple heather paradise".

Grass management project - Biodiversity boost for Ipswich

Matt Berry

In my day job, working for Ipswich Borough Council as their Wildlife Team Leader, I have been drawing up plans for a project that could see significant benefits to wildlife in the town. These are challenging times for any Local Authority, having to balance good service provision to the public with ever decreasing resources. I was asked to investigate whether there was scope to reduce the amount of grass that was mown short throughout the year, whilst providing real benefit to wildlife and people.

I already have extensive experience of converting short mown grass areas into wildlife habitat. For example, Landseer Park, which was up until ten years ago not much more than a green desert of short grass. Now it is has over 20 acres of

meadow, hundreds of new trees and lots more wildlife! So significant has the positive change been that it was designated a County Wildlife Site in 2008 and plans are now afoot to declare it a Local Nature Reserve.

The most logical starting point for this project was to audit the town for other similarly large areas of grass that could be easily converted to meadow, scrub, woodland, or a mixture of all three. The town is blessed with a plethora of parks and open spaces so that was where I began my search. However, a strategic landscape approach was also in order and so areas outside parks that could act as corridors or stepping stones for wildlife were also sought out. 26 locations were identified, that added up to an area of 35 hectares – an area

equivalent to the size of Christchurch Park.

The next step was a public consultation exercise, which lasted for six weeks, up until 31st December 2011. The results of the consultation showed that overall the public were in support of the project, save for a few sites that caused objections. Several local organisations also wrote letters of support – Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Ipswich Wildlife Group, Forestry Commission, Suffolk Ornithologists' Group, Suffolk Amphibian and Reptile Group, our own Butterfly Conservation and a few others.

We are now starting on the next phase of the project. The sites involved include – Chantry Park, Landseer Park, Bourne Park, Gippeswyk Park, Dumbarton Road Rec., Alexandra Park, Stonelodge Park, Valley Road, Whitehouse Park, Sherrington Road Rec., Bramford Lane Rec. and several others. The grass management changes will start in March and tree planting schemes will be scheduled for winter 2012/13. This gives us enough time to fine tune site plans and to engage with local communities and groups, as we want to involve the public as much as possible – after all it is their open space.

From a Butterfly Conservation perspective the changes can only be good. Habitat for the majority of wildlife is constantly under pressure and in my opinion redressing the balance is well overdue and I hope this project can make a small contribution to doing that. I also believe it is important to recognise the value of grassland habitat. We are forever being encouraged to plant trees and protect woodland (superbly valuable though that is) but let us not forget the rainforest at our feet – the biodiversity of our grasslands can be incredible! There are

numerous species of butterfly that rely on grassland habitat for larval food plants, for example Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Ringlet. In association with the grasses will be nectar plants and meadow / scrub edge habitat, where invaluable plants such as nettles and brambles will establish. This will benefit butterflies whose caterpillars feed on nettles, such as Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma. One can sometimes find Emperor Moth caterpillars noshing on bramble and, if elm trees are in close proximity, White-letter Hairstreaks could be seen nectaring on bramble flowers.

Butterfly Conservation plans to get involved in supporting the project from the outset and investing in it in the longer term. We are looking at ways to maximise the value of habitats created for our Lepidoptera. This might be through advice or active involvement in some of the sites. There will definitely be more Buckthorns being planted to encourage the Brimstone. Ipswich Borough Council has supported this initiative since it first began over ten years ago, resulting in Brimstones establishing a stronghold in Holywells Park, and that partnership will continue. Another idea is to begin a survey of one of the larger and less recorded areas, Chantry Park, and to do this annually. This will then provide a measure of how the changes are affecting the biodiversity of the Park.

If any of our members would like more information about the project, or have ideas of their own that they wish to share, please get in touch with me at work via matt.berry@ipswich.gov.uk or telephone 01473 433993.

Butterfly Nets Again

Richard Stewart

Some years ago I was involved in correspondence about the use of butterfly nets, in both the national BC magazine and Branch newsletters. Most responses supported my opposition to their use but our Suffolk veteran lepidopterist, Wilfrid George, was a notable exception, penning a memorable poetic riposte in Suffolk Argus Volume 38. My main objections are that I have never been convinced that catching a flying butterfly doesn't harm it, bearing in mind the nature of the many scales on their wings. I also believe that sufficient field craft can lead to a ready identification of all our British species, especially with the recent improvements in close focus binoculars and macro systems in digital cameras.

The issue returned to my thoughts after perusing the Winter Gifts catalogue of a well-known firm supplying 'everything for wildlife, science and environment'. The page for the 'Young Naturalist' featured a

'Starter Butterfly Kit' of net, magnifying pot and guide', obviously encouraging not just capture but also further examination in a confined space where wing beating can cause further damage. Below was another product, a smaller butterfly net. I would suggest this is not the image of watching and studying butterflies that we wish to project in our society, either at Branch or national level. Outside Suffolk I have rarely encountered nets at BC field meetings and I know that some Branches to which I belong actively discourage their use. Several European countries forbid their use, except under scientific licence, and they are forbidden in the brochure of North American butterfly holidays I still receive. To actually encourage the younger generation to have this 'hunter gatherer' mentality seems particularly unfortunate. I shall write to the company concerned.

eBay for Charity

BC has recently registered with eBay for Charity. If selling an item on eBay, it is now possible to donate a percentage of the final selling price to Butterfly Conservation. Further details can be found at www.ebay.co.uk/ebayforcharity

Surrey Downs, Betchworth to Dorking

Saturday 30th July 2011

Paul Johnson

For this late July foray, five of us met at Dorking Deepdene station for what is known locally as the Great Train Journey East – the *Great* referring very much to the array of butterflies to be seen on the walk back to Dorking from Betchworth station rather than the length of the rail journey which is a mere 5 minutes. Whilst we looked at the species list from the 2006 incarnation of this field trip which Richard had brought along for reference, a Holly Blue laid eggs upon a patch of sheltered Ivy behind the platform. Just above the track bed, a bright Gatekeeper moved beneath a sun which would provide warmth, rather than outright heat, for the remainder of the day.

By 11 o'clock, we were off the train and making our way past a straggling line of houses and on towards the imposing old lime kiln at Betchworth Quarry. I think we all entered these disused workings with heightened anticipation for the site comprises terraces of grassland bisected by a path which leads, enticingly, down to a Buddleia grove. However, anticipation can be a dangerous thing for there were very few butterflies here today. Those that were – such as Brown Argus and Small Copper – were content to flit about amongst the grasses rather than visit the Marjoram, Field

Scabious, Knapweed and Hemp Agrimony flowers which imbued the foreground with a purple hue such was the abundance with which they grew here.

At the next clearing we met with greater success. A fritillary sped through, its low, linear trajectory more characteristic of Dark Green than Silver-washed, although positive identification was not possible. Then a Silver-spotted Skipper was confirmed as it paused to feed at a Field Scabious. We enjoyed this vivacious little butterfly for some time as it hared about energetically amongst the flowers and fine sward grasses. On leaving, we found another Silver-spotted Skipper – a female this time and somewhat more circumspect in nature.

Progressing westwards, we continued to note down butterflies; Small Heaths and Common Blues on open ground, then Green-veined Whites and Speckled Woods in shadier areas, the latter species evident at every intersection of the path as it cut through the largely wooded slopes between Betchworth and Brockham. We turned off the path by a derelict lime kiln battery, the structure now supported by scaffold and becoming increasingly overwhelmed by Buddleia growth as it is slowly absorbed into the natural landscape. There were good

opportunities here to watch Silver-washed Fritillaries as they alighted periodically on the spikes of purple blossom. It was also interesting to note the fritillaries flying out from the Buddleias and then invariably turning back upon reaching the battery's perimeter fence although it offered no real impediment to their progress. A solitary Peacock, some Red Admirals and the day's only Brimstone nectared here too. I'd seen a good number of Brimstones in similar habitat near Sevenoaks just 24 hours previously, and their scarcity today was one of those small curiosities which seem to crop up with regularity when butterfly watching.

Nearby Brookham Quarry was rather quiet – despite the undoubted quality of the habitat – and there was to be no repeat of the Purple Emperor sighting which was one of the highlights of the 2006 expedition. However, we did add two Marbled Whites, a lone female Large Skipper and a couple of second brood Dingy Skippers. One of the latter basked for some time on an area of exposed chalk, the rudimentary patchwork of earthen colours on its forewings well-defined and the series of little off-white pearls along the wing margins picked out cleanly. We also spent some time trying to elicit the identity of a small golden skipper in a patch of rough grass. However, neither Essex nor Small Skipper had been confirmed by the time we crossed the River Mole at the end of the walk, and numbers of both of these species seem to be bumping along the bottom of a very deep trough in this area.

The final downland compartment before we made the breathless, perspiring ascent to Box Hill held a notable population of Brown Argus. Wherever we looked here it seemed to be present in ones, twos or threes, contributing to a total count of 38 and reinforcing the impression that this was perhaps a day to celebrate the smaller, more discreet species of British butterfly. This compartment was also memorable for the stunning iridescent blue of a male Banded Demoiselle which rose in front of us. Later on, we would momentarily witness another burst of breathtakingly intense colour as a Kingfisher flew past us whilst we watched Purple Hairstreaks about an oak tree by the River Mole.

Upon the slopes of Box Hill we found our first Chalkhill Blues, mainly the distinctive males which would drop down periodically onto Carline Thistle, Bird's-foot Trefoil and the flowers of Marjoram which they favour so strongly. Silver-spotted Skippers were here in strong numbers too; disappearing over the ground before us in a fulminating blur of wings before applying the brakes at the next suitable flower or appearing to crash down onto the turf in the manner of an out of control Formula 1 race.

Just before the countenance of Box Hill changes from chalk down to woodland, we encountered quartering the turf an interesting blue butterfly – interesting as it had some of the pallor of a Chalkhill Blue but wings which flashed brightly whenever they caught the sun. Presently, it settled

outstretched on a Carline Thistle. The drab head of the thistle seemed to heighten the shimmering blue wings and we were, crucially, also able to make out fine black lines radiating into the white wing margins. None of us had recorded a second brood Adonis Blue in July before and none of us (I think I'm right in saying) an Adonis quite so pale. It was a memorable sighting upon which to reflect as we pushed through a

narrow gap in the hedge line and began the descent to Dorking.

Species List; Dingy Skipper, Large Skipper, Silver-spotted Skipper, Green-veined White, Small White, Large White, Brimstone, Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Holly Blue, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Brown Argus, Peacock, Comma, Red Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary, Marbled White, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

The Grayling Colony At Winterton

Richard Stewart

Although Suffolk still has good numbers of Grayling, there are few colonies of any real size. Consequently we travel to Winterton, on the east Norfolk coast. Here is a long and deep dune system, with Suffolk at its best having only short stretches of this habitat, such as those at Walberswick and Kessingland. We usually concentrate on the section to the left of the beach road, heading eventually to Waxham. Our initial visit was to see Dark Green Fritillaries but now we tend to concentrate on Grayling: 157 in 2009, the highest Norfolk total for the year, a miserable 12 in 2010 and then came the day of blue sky and light breeze that accompanied September 1st, 2011, our wedding anniversary. We counted small numbers of Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath and Small White, but two species dominated.

The first was Small Copper, 67 in total, the four var. *caeruleopunctata* being the most of

this aberration I had ever seen on one site. A few also had a lime green and yellow colouring near where wings joined the body, a variation not noted before. With the Grayling we first walked through the dunes close to the beach then inland to count butterflies attracted to the many flowering and sunlit heather clumps. Our day total for this species was 314, more than we had expected, in fact twice the 2009 total. Even then that was probably lower than in reality, such was the difficulty of counting as many as seven flying close together and at least forty on or around two sunlit beds of heather just five yards apart. They came in different sizes and condition, with a rare opportunity to see their open wings as they displayed the courtship behaviour fully described in Thomas and Lewington's 'The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland'. Once again though, this particular site failed to produce any instances of Grayling landing on us – something this species often does, both in Britain and on the Continent.

Neonicotinoid Insecticides

This article has been reproduced (with approval) from Invertebrate Conservation News (ICN) No. 65, June 2011. ICN is prepared by the Amateur Entomologists' Society (AES) and is published with the AES Bulletin.

In response to growing concern about the effects of neonicotinoid insecticides on bees, a campaign to suspend their use in the USA and the EU has been mounted by Avaaz, an international campaigning network. In the UK, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT) has responded by commenting on the campaign, in partnership with Buglife, The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, which has contacted its member-organisations with news of these developments.

BBCT says that it shares concerns about growing evidence suggesting that some pesticides, including neonicotinoids, are harmful to bees. According to BBCT's understanding of the scientific evidence, however, some of the claims in the Avaaz campaign are not well supported. Also BBCT takes issue with Avaaz's argument that pesticides are the root cause of global bee declines. It is BBCT's view that many wild bee species have declined primarily because of habitat loss and other factors, besides pesticide use. As far as honeybees are concerned, BBCT believes similarly that the causes of decline are more complicated than implied in the Avaaz literature. BBCT mentions that diseases have been particularly significant in the decline of honeybee colonies, but it is interesting to note that recent research (see ICN No. 64) indicates that there could be synergistic effects between disease and neonicotinoids.

On balance, BBCT supports the call for neonicotinoids to be banned as a precaution

until thorough independent research determines their safety. Also, BBCT agrees that a ban would probably make a significant difference to bee populations in some areas of intensive arable agriculture, where the crop species include abundant sources of pollen and nectar. BBCT points out, however, that such a ban would not (as claimed by Avaaz) "save our bees", because this would do nothing to alleviate the root cause of most declines in wild bees, which is thought to be the drastic loss of flower rich grasslands and other habitats.

BBCT stresses that the need, at least for wild bees, is to promote an integrated approach in which the most harmful pesticides would be banned, alongside the adoption of sympathetic methods of farming which support and encourage pollinators. In livestock-rearing or in mixed farming, particular benefits would be achieved through a return to species rich hay meadows instead of silage monocultures and the use of clover ley crops for improving fertility instead of widespread fertiliser use. In arable areas, the main hope for improvement lies in the management of low-productivity areas (margins and corners) as flower rich habitats. BBCT mentions that such management has been shown to promote a large increase in the numbers of foraging bee numbers. Evidence that it also enhances population size is, however, harder to gather and hence less robust.

Following its initial comments on the Avaaz campaign, BBCT reported that discussions were taking place with a view to making the campaign more authoritative. Meanwhile Buglife has continued its investigation into the available evidence regarding the environmental safety of neonicotinoids. This includes a research paper which reports that contamination of honeycomb in hives can have very significant effects on the health of the occupying bees. Also, the UK government department responsible for pesticide safety (Defra) has released a report compiled in 2009 by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP). According to Buglife, the report makes clear for the first time what evidence the Government has been relying on to license the use of neonicotinoids, or rather the one neonicotinoid product that is covered in the report.

References:

More on neonicotinoid insecticides, Invertebrate Conservation News No 64, Feb 2011.

More on neonicotinoid insecticides, Invertebrate Conservation News No 65, Jun 2

Buglife is pleased to see that the ACP report concludes that the available evidence, or the lack of it, indicates a significant cause for concern, but would have preferred to see a conclusion that a ban is therefore needed, at least until better evidence is obtained. The report notes that field studies have shown “no gross effects” on honeybees, but acknowledges that these studies, most of which were funded by the pesticide manufacturer, have been very short in duration (often only three days) and have not been published in peer-reviewed

journals. Also, the studies have focussed almost entirely on honeybees even though, as Buglife points out, more than 90% of pollination is done by wild bees, hoverflies, moths and other insects.

In field studies, one of the difficulties is that sub-lethal effects (for example, on the performance of bees) can be overlooked. Buglife cites a recent review of published studies (Cresswell, 2010), which indicates that field studies have failed to reveal effects that have been measured in the laboratory. Buglife is therefore concerned that the results of field studies could be a false basis for licensing neonicotinoids and is working with the Chemical Regulation Directorate in the UK in order to help shed some light on the matter.

References

The Buglife report:

<http://www.buglife.org.uk/Resources/Buglife/Documents/PDF/REVISED%20Buglife%20Neonicotinoid%20Report.pdf>

The Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP) report and letter to the CRD:

<http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/environment.asp?id=2989>

Cresswell, J. (2010):

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/j7v320r55510tr54/>

BBCT statement:

(<http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org.uk/news.htm>)

Purdis Heath, County Moth Night

20th August 2011

Tony Prichard

With all the activity going on at Purdis Heath recently it seemed a good opportunity to hold a moth night at the site. The site is relatively under-recorded in contrast to the neighbouring Ipswich Golf Course, one of the county's best recorded sites. In the absence of a national moth night in 2011 we had decided to run a county moth night and the visit to Purdis Heath coincided with this.

General moth numbers over the rather damp summer had been on the low side and some rain early in the afternoon before the event appeared to have dampened down moth activity for the evening's moth recording. The open heath was rather cool when we arrived and quickly getting cooler, so we set up the sheet light in the wooded area on the verge of the heathland, with some Skinner traps out on the heathland area. We had thirty species to light including a couple of species associated primarily with heathland - White-line Dart and True Lover's Knot. Other moths of interest included Satin Wave, Vapourer, Black Arches and the birch-feeding Lesser Swallow Prominent.

For the county moth night I received records from eight sites, a lowish turnout, that may

have been due to lack of publicity for the event. Records were received from the following sites: Purdis Heath – Suffolk Moth Group, Ipswich Golf Course – Neil Sherman, Ipswich – Tony Prichard, Grundisburgh – Martin Hough, Raydon – Graham Bull, Hen Reed-beds – John Everson, Woolpit – Paul Bryant, Martlesham Heath – Steve Goddard. This gave a distinctly south-eastern bias to the coverage.

The number of species recorded at each site varied from a low count of 23 to the highest of 45 at Martlesham Heath. 260 records were submitted with a total of 112 species recorded across the eight sites. This represents a fair proportion of the moths flying at this time of year with just over 580 species having been recorded in recent years in the county at this particular time of year. On a typical moth group event at this time of year we might expect to see between forty to eighty species, so it would appear that the effects of the poor season and conditions on the day kept the species totals lower than normal.

Migrant activity during this time was rather patchy and it is not surprising that no discernible migrant activity could be seen amongst the records for the night.

There were a few species recorded at all the sites and these were *Agriphila tristella*, Turnip Moth, Setaceous Hebrew Character, Vine's Rustic and Large Yellow Underwing. A little surprising was White-point, which was recorded at seven out of the eight sites but given its recent spread across the county maybe this should not have been too much of a surprise.

The record of most conservation interest was probably my record of Lunar Yellow Underwing in my Ipswich back garden, the

only BAP species recorded on the night and missing from the heathland sites. Other records of interest included *Evergestis extimalis* in Ipswich, *Pyla fusca* and *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla* at Martlesham Heath, Satin Wave at Purdis Heath, Small Wainscot at Hen Reedbeds, Red Underwing in Ipswich and finally Pinion-streaked Snout at both Martlesham Heath and Hen Reedbeds.

Recording opportunities:

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) - outlined in *Notes for Butterfly Recorders* on page 6. Contact the Suffolk Co-ordinator Peter Dare at: peterxema@aol.com

Wall Brown Survey – outlined in *Notes for Butterfly Recorders* on page 6.
Email: butterflies@sns.org.uk

Help wanted for our new website

The main BC website and the Branches' websites will be upgraded by June of this year and we want to make the most of the opportunity that is presented to us.

Easy access to pages about our butterflies, dates of sightings, the events programme and links to other websites will be just some of the details that will be included on the Suffolk website.

To make this happen we need help. If you have knowledge of uploading information onto template pages and are willing to help with this work – it's not greatly time consuming! - our Chairman, Mike Dean, is keen to hear from you. (His address details are on the Contacts page).

Butterflies of the Peloponnese

Matt Berry

In the UK, the halcyon days of summer spent soaking up the intoxicating sights, sounds and scents of a wildflower meadow festooned with the dancing delights of butterflies as they flit from flower to flower, is one that is sadly all too often either a distant memory, or as dreamlike as the scene itself. Do not despair though, as wild places do still exist where such evocative experiences can be found! The Peloponnese region of Greece is one such place and here is a chance to come on a journey to discover its many wildlife delights. Not only is much of the countryside still intact, allowing you to witness and enjoy a great diversity of butterflies, but there is the added bonus of the wonderful warm Greek climate too. Your heart and soul will thank you as you return uplifted from a relaxed week in this enchanting environment.

The base for the holiday will be a very comfortable hotel in the small and charming village of Kalavryta, on the north-west slopes of one of the most famous butterfly mountains in Greece – Chelmos (pronounced Helmos), which is part of the Aroanian mountain range. We will spend a leisurely week exploring the area, by comfortable mini-bus, a special cog railway through the fantastic scenery of Vouriakos Gorge and on foot. We will keep driving to a minimum to allow for as much time as

possible to be spent on discovering and enjoying the wildlife and scenery. Included amongst the places we'll visit are Mount Chelmos itself and Mount Killini, plus several locations in the vast and largely unspoilt surrounding countryside.

The habitats we'll visit are wide ranging, from meadow, alpine pasture, Olive, Cherry groves and pine forest, to Mediterranean scrub, mountain streams, lakes and rivers, mountain gorges, caves and even spots in the town and surrounding villages, as many butterfly species can be found even there. Our wildlife spotting won't be restricted to butterflies, although that is our main focus. We'll also be on the lookout for flowers, birds, (such as Red Backed Shrike & Short-toed Eagle) dragonflies, (such as the Greek Goldenring) amphibians, and reptiles (such as the Peloponnese Wall Lizard & Herman's Tortoise) – indeed, any wildlife! We can expect to see a whole host of butterfly species; it is possible to see almost as many species in one day as there are in the whole of the UK! But we don't want to take you on a rushed tick list type holiday. Instead we aim to slow down and enjoy a more relaxed pace. We want to give you every opportunity to indulge your passion for wildlife, by observing, photographing or sketching, and simply by being there to just inhale the wonders before your eyes and

ears! The leaders are accomplished and widely published wildlife photographers, and are particularly renowned butterfly specialists. They will be on hand to offer you as much, or as little, guidance as you desire! Plus, not only are there upwards of 100 species of butterfly to encounter, but at times we will be able to watch large numbers of individual species. Who wouldn't want to pause and take in the show of dozens of Balkan Marbled White, Clouded Yellow and Black-veined White!

Those are just three of the special butterflies we'll enjoy during our stay. As we're on Chelmos we will of course be keen to seek out its famous namesake, the Chelmos Blue. There are many other delights though; Southern White Admiral, Clouded Apollo, Cleopatra, Lattice Brown, Large Wall Brown, Camberwell Beauty, Powdered Brimstone, Southern Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, European Swallowtail, Grecian Copper, Nettle Tree Butterfly, Large Tortoiseshell, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Spotted Fritillary, Cardinal, Great Banded Grayling,

Mountain Small White, Escher's Blue, Anomalous Blue, Amanda's Blue, Ilex Hairstreak, Greek Clouded Yellow, Olive Skipper, Oriental Marbled Skipper, Blue Argus, Pontic Blue, Osiris Blue, Greek Mazarine Blue and many more!

Along the way we'll also be able to sample other local treasures, like freshly picked cherries from local orchards, wild strawberries from hidden forest glades and the delicious honey that the many local beekeepers produce; a taste of mountain flowers and the Mediterranean sun in a jar!

The warm Greek climate and hospitality, a wealth of wildlife, breathtaking natural scenery, a hint of history and a whole host of magic memories, all colourfully adorned by those jewels of the natural world, the butterflies, await us!

10% of profits from this trip will be donated to Butterfly Conservation.

Keep in touch with Suffolk Branch news

www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk



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www.facebook.com/BC.Suffolk

EARLIEST/LATEST EVER RECORDS

Recorder	Earliest To 2011	Species	Latest To 2011	Recorder
R. Havard	17 May 08	Small Skipper	25 Sep 95	Stella Wolfe
Stuart Ling	29 May 83	Essex Skipper	12 Sep 84	Alan Hubbard
Stella Wolfe	21 May 07	Large Skipper	18 Sep 04	Mervyn Crawford
W. E. Lemmon	25 Apr 90	Dingy Skipper	4 Jul 83	D. Croxson
Mervyn Bell	28 May 97	Swallowtail	28 Aug 91	Ian Porter
Colin Hawes	27 Apr 97	Clouded Yellow	21 Nov 32	Mr Richardson
H. Parcell	9 Jan 98	Brimstone	27 Nov 06	Jo Woods
Terry Hammond	18 Mar 95	Large White	25 Dec 11	Dave Langlois
Nigel Odin	21 Feb 07	Small White	19 Nov 06	Stuart Gough
Eileen Coe	11 Mar 00	Green-veined White	5 Nov 06	Will Brame
Mike Crewe	23 Mar 90	Orange Tip	20 Jul 95	Mrs Sindall
Stuart Gough	9 Apr 11	Green Hairstreak	20 Jul 96	Richard Havard
Peter Maddison	13 Jun 11	Purple Hairstreak	8 Sep 00	Neil Sherman
David Young	2 Jun 11	White-letter Hairstreak	28 Aug 00	John Walshe
Reg Etheridge	20 Mar 10	Small Copper	16 Nov 84	Richard Stewart
Rob Macklin	30 May 11	Silver-studded Blue	30 Sep 07	Richard Havard
Mervyn Crawford	24 Apr 04	Brown Argus	27 Oct 08	Nigel Odin
Anne Welch	7 Apr 11	Common Blue	6 Nov 94	Steve Piotrowski
Jennifer Hadley	18 Mar 90	Holly Blue	13 Nov 11	Darren Underwood
Nick Blacker	7 Jun 11	White Admiral	11 Oct 04	Nigel Cuming
Rob Parker	1 Jul 06	Purple Emperor	6 Aug 05	Neil Sherman
Three jointly	1 Jan 00	Red Admiral	31 Dec 06	Nick Dickson
Anthony Cook	20 Feb 90	Painted Lady	20 Nov 95	Colin Hawes
A & E Beaumont	1 Jan 00	Small Tortoiseshell	28 Dec 97	Mrs Frost
Jo Pask	12 Mar 07	Camberwell Beauty	14 Oct 96	S & R Biddle
Two jointly	1 Jan 00	Peacock	31 Dec 97	Peter Hobbs
Stan Dumican	15 Jan 95	Comma	12 Dec 00	Gawin & Travis
Pete Etheridge	20 Jun 11	Silver-washed Fritillary	15 Aug 11	Steve Hunt
Glenys Proctor	27 Mar 07	Speckled Wood	16 Nov 11	Mervyn Crawford
Reg Etheridge	1 Apr 09	Wall	30 Oct 95	Betty Serjeant
Mike Taylor	21 Jun 03	Grayling	1 Oct 06	Steve Goddard
C. Twinch, M. Barlc	10 Jun 07	Gatekeeper	6 Oct 05	Lydia Calvesbert
Colin Hawes	5 May 08	Meadow Brown	6 Oct 05	Lydia Calvesbert
Anne Welch	3 Jun 11	Ringlet	27 Aug 84	L. G Palmer
Ricky Fairhead	24 Apr 07	Small Heath	10 Nov 11	Reg Etheridge

Finding adult Purple Hairstreaks in Suffolk

Mike Dean

After observing and recording butterflies in Suffolk for near on 50 years, I have come to the definite conclusion that the Purple Hairstreak is really very much more widely distributed and common than the current distribution maps might suggest. The problem for most casual recorders is that this pretty little insect is shy and quite elusive and often only found by pure chance. Which is surprising as the county is not short of fair sized oak trees, the larval food plant and 'home' of this species, and my experience has been that almost every decent, mature oak, harbours a colony of this butterfly, which gets its English name from the beautiful iridescent sheen of purple when the open fore-wings are caught by the rays of the sun.

So, what are the essentials, good weather apart, required to find this insect? A list, not in priority order might be:

- Patience and timing
- Location
- A thick skin
- Binoculars
- Sun hat & sun glasses
- Willingness to endure a stiff neck next day!

A little elaboration may just help.

Depending on the season, the adult butterfly

is on the wing from about the second week in July and throughout August and is normally noticeable from midday onwards. That said, the extraordinarily early season 2011 saw records of this species earlier than that. *Timing* is thus quite crucial, especially at the start of this species flight period, when a fruitless search one day will be rewarded in the exact same location even a few days later, so be especially *patient* as a lot of time has to be spent, normally on a hot and sunny day (note the *sun hat*), simply looking up into the higher oak branches - hence the inevitability of that *stiff neck*. Secondly, *location* is paramount as no oak means no hairstreak! Large oaks in open woodland are a good bet, but any mature specimen especially in the company of other oaks and especially ash will do nicely. I have also found them on much smaller and stunted trees associated with heath land, with Knettishall Heath springing readily to mind. The butterfly spends most of its time high up in the tree crawling over and feeding on the sweet honeydew exuded by aphids. Ash trees or even the humble sycamore (both of which, in hot summers produce quantities of honeydew) adjacent to a home oak are particularly favoured. In good summers populations can reach quite unexpected proportions. This hairstreak flies only in fits and bursts, often when disturbed by birds and quite often the birds that help the recorder most are a marauding gang of

Long-tailed Tits who leave few branches undisturbed! When the butterflies do take to flight, it is usually quite short and erratic, around the tree crown or from tree to tree and they appear silvery, almost whitish in the sun – the effect once described by writers as ‘tossing a silver coin in the sunlight’. That really is a most apt description. So, this is where a decent pair of *binoculars* comes into its own in trying to track that give-away glinting, flashing flight and then for further identification when at rest or walking over the leaves.

Although I mentioned the reluctance of this little butterfly to come to ground level, they do sometimes, and more likely in the late afternoon between about 4pm and 6pm when the angle of the sun is lower and when they visit bramble blossom. It was a behaviour that I noticed many years ago on a camping holiday in France and which was quite a revelation. The adults are sometimes active at this lower level much earlier in the day, either because they have just emerged from their pupa, (spent during the winter in the leaf litter) when they can be inadvertently kicked up from the long grass, or because they are attracted by the remains

of the overnight dew.

So, your plan of action needs to be in two parts really if you want to get a view of this lovely insect in your locality. Firstly, when you’re out walking at any time of the year, make a mental note of likely sites and oak trees that appear to be suitable – not just in the country but in and around the more urban areas of Suffolk as well. You will be surprised, really. Then, when the flight time comes around, pick your sunny day, take your ‘kit’ and just go along to literally stop and stare and to be astounded by some insect neighbours that you never imagined you had!

Just one last thing, as you may have been wondering why you may need to have that *thick skin*? Well, what would you think if a complete stranger, dressed in a sun hat with dark glasses, stood for hours peering aimlessly through binoculars at the crown of an apparently empty oak tree - at the end of *your* garden at that?

Exactly..... but good hunting anyway!



Purple Hairstreak
by Douglas Hammersley

Purple Hairstreak



Eggs at the base of an oak bud Photo by Phil Corley



Larva Photo by Mike Dean



Male taking honeydew Photo by Peter Maddison



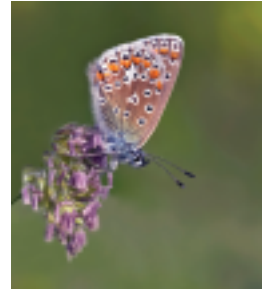
Female basking Photo by Keith Warmington

A Summer event - Betchworth to Box Hill



Brown Argus

Photos by Peter Maddison



Common Blue

Photo by Matt Berry



Photo by Matt Berry

Winter Conservation Work at Purdis Heath

*This well-signed event encouraged
plenty of helpers.*

Photos by Peter Maddison

