



Butterfly  
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



# The Suffolk Argus

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

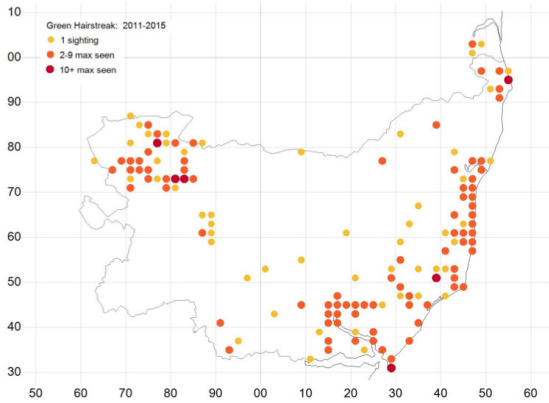
Green Hairstreak pair: Kiln Meadow, Ipswich photo: Kevin Ling



Summer 2016

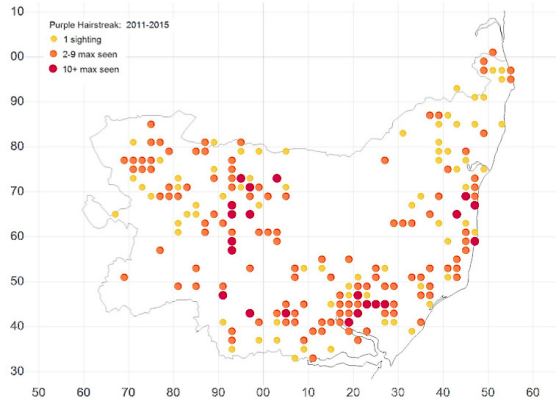
Volume 66

A selection from the series of **Butterfly Distribution Maps 2011 – 2015** which are available on the Branch website.  
**Continued inside the back cover.**

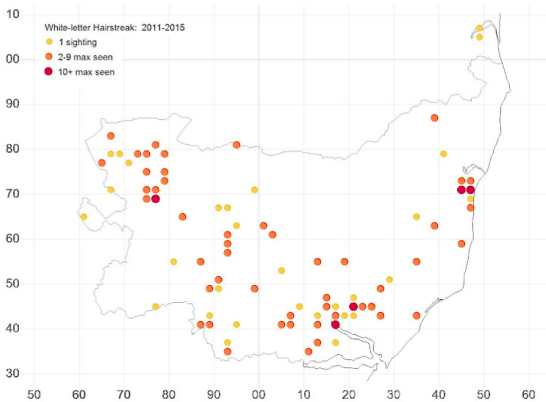


**Green Hairstreak**  
Recorded in 139 of 1025 Tetrads  
(13.5%)

**Purple Hairstreak**  
Recorded in 209 of 1025 Tetrads  
(20.3%)



**White-letter Hairstreak**  
Recorded in 83 of 1025 Tetrads  
(8%)



## Editorial

*Peter Maddison*

I imagine that most of us became members of BC because we have a love of butterflies and moths. We want to watch them, we want them to prosper and we are pleased to devote our annual subscription to 'Saving butterflies, moths and our environment', as the wording on the BC logo states.

Can we do more than that? Yes! is the answer, and many of our members do. A 2015 survey of members interests showed that a good number of us rate our involvement in recording and monitoring of butterflies as particularly important.

County Recorder Bill Stone has produced the 2015 Butterfly Report which is based on the 33,000 records that he received. You can read the report in the following pages.

There are several ways in which your butterfly sightings can be recorded in 2016 and if you haven't taken part in the past why not give it a go this summer. Garden records are valuable as are casual records from visits around the county. Records can be sent in on paper or preferably online, or through the iRecord phone app. Surveying a 1km square for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey on a visit during July and again in August might be possible. There is the Garden Butterfly Survey and the annual Big Butterfly Count which will run from 15<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> August.

The BC website and our own Branch website have details about these recording opportunities.

Keep an eye on the Suffolk Branch website Sightings page too. Here up-to-date information is shown of sightings in the county. Why not add your own sightings and photos to this page?

The second way in which members indicated that they want to help BC was in volunteering

for practical conservation work, and our Branch experience shows that we have an enthusiastic and ever growing group of volunteers whose work at Purdis Heath has benefitted the heathland environment and the Silver-studded Blue in particular. If you would like to be involved contact Helen Saunders whose email address is [helens919@gmail.com](mailto:helens919@gmail.com)

It might be that you have the hankering inclination and a certain amount of time that you could devote to the running of the Branch. Sue Sidle has been our Membership Secretary for the past 10 years and would like to hand over this role by the autumn of this year. Sue has developed a slick method for contacting members and liaising with BC head office. If you would like to find out what is involved in this role contact Sue whose email is [susansidle361@gmail.com](mailto:susansidle361@gmail.com)

We attend a number of events where we set up a stall and meet the public. The Plant Heritage event at Helmingham Hall is an example, where it is good to talk to people about butterflies, moths, pollinators, plants and more. We can only attend these events if we have sufficient personnel to man the stand for the day. A couple of hours chatting with like-minded helpers on one side of the table and an interested public on the other might be a way in which you are prepared to help the Branch. Let me know if you would like to be involved [prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk)

One sunny week at the start of May brought out the spring butterflies here in the east and Orange-tip and Holly Blue seem to have done particularly well. But then persistent grey skies and cool north winds hobbled the flight of the butterflies and before we knew it we were into June and looking for the emergence of the early summer species. I hope we see them! Have a good summer.

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## New Members

The following new members are warmly welcomed to the Suffolk Branch. We hope you find your membership interesting and enjoyable and that you will be able to take part in some of our events and work parties.

Mr J Bastow & Mr D Sewell, Halesworth	Mr E D Jackson & Dr S K Bullion, Brantham
Miss T Berry, Lowestoft	Mr M Jones, Stradishall
Mrs L Blake, Boxford	Mr A & Mrs S Leigh, Bury St Edmunds
Ms J Blunt & Mr T Marchant & Family, Felixstowe	Mrs J Mayes, Eye
Mr E Boyle, Harlston	Mr I & Mrs C Merch-Chammon, Clare
Ms A Chapman & Mr S Wiggin, Stowmarket	Mr R Moulson & Miss L Howel, Hadleigh
Mr C Cheeseman, Little Bealings	Mr C Mudd, Bury St Edmunds
Mr K & Mrs S Cooper, Chelmondiston	Miss R Pawsey & Mr S Backhouse & Family, Newmarket
Mr P Curtis, Kesgrave	Mr S Petrie, Holton
Ms S Darling, Ipswich	Ms J Poole, Honington
Mrs L Earley, Holbrook	Mrs S Prendergast, Laxfield
Ms C Fisher, Waldringfield	Mr I Pulford, Capel St. Mary
Mr A Foreman, Lidgate	Mr N Rozier, Stowmarket
Mrs R Forrest, Ipswich	Mrs T Rush, Glemsford
Mr J French, Lakenheath	Mrs Z Sedlackova, Wickham Market
Dr P & Mrs C Fretwell & Family, Moulton	Mr D & Mrs J Sheppard, Saxmundham
Mr H Gandy, Lowestoft	Mr P Smith, Ipswich
Mrs R J Gibbs & Family, Freckenham	Dr E & Mrs J Steel, Yoxford
Mrs J Glanfield, Needham Market	Mrs J Sweeting, Hadleigh
Mr P Hacon, Lowestoft	Mrs H Walker, Lowestoft
Mrs V Hall, Bramford	Ms J Walshaw, Holbrook
Mrs L & Mr N Hall & Family, Ipswich	Mr G Woodard, Hacheston
Mrs M & Mr E Harris, Bury St Edmunds	Miss J Wright, Stowmarket
Mr G & Mrs C Hooker, Eye	Mrs B Young, Ingham
Mr H Hurst, Chelmondiston	

## **Annual General Meeting & Members' Afternoon**

Members are warmly invited to attend the meeting which will be held on  
**Saturday 15th October at Waldringfield Village Hall at 3.00pm.**

OS Grid Ref: TM277444 Post Code: IP12 4QP

Speakers will include

Liz Cutting - Photography.

Liz was the 2015 winner of our UK butterfly photo competition.

Sharon Hearle - The Ipswich Heaths' Project: the past five years and the future,  
and other regional projects.

Sharon is the BC Regional Officer for Eastern England.

It would be helpful if members who wish to make a presentation inform the Secretary,  
Julian Dowding, at least one week before the meeting.

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The Photographic Competition will be held for the three classes:

1. Still photo taken in the UK
2. Still photo taken outside the UK
3. A video or digital slide show

Full details of the competition can be found on the Home page of the Branch website  
<http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk/index.html>

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## **Events this summer**

2nd July Holywells Park, Ipswich for identification and recording

7th July Landseer Park, Ipswich for grassland, woodland and heath butterflies

9th July Red Lodge Heath SSSI for butterflies and day-flying moths

17th July Bonny Wood for Purple Emperor and other woodland butterflies

20th July Kenton Hills and Sizewell for high summer butterflies

27th July Wildlife Day at Holywells Park, Family Day and BBC Event

31st July Wildlife Garden Open Day, Prior's Oak, Aldeburgh

20th August Rendlesham Forest for Grayling and late summer butterflies



# 2015 Suffolk Butterfly Report

Bill Stone

## 1. Introduction

The year will not be remembered as a great Suffolk butterfly year in respect of rarities, numbers of butterflies encountered or migrations. However, 2015 was important for butterflies following the publishing of two significant reports based on long-term butterfly studies which were particularly relevant for Suffolk.

The State of the UK's Butterflies 2015 report was published which covered the five-year period 2010-2014, for which nearly 100,000 Suffolk butterfly records were submitted. This report also reported recent trends in the ten-year period 2004-2010 together with the long-term trends going back to 1976. Key findings from the report revealed that 76% of the UK's resident and regular migrant butterflies declined in abundance, occurrence or both over the last four decades. Significantly, the report attracted headlines in the media such as "40 year slump for UK Butterflies", "Continuing declines for British Butterflies" and "Butterflies suffer again".

A decline in a number of species was identified as being of major concern, one of which was the Wall. The report found that the Wall had suffered a 36% fall in occurrence and a 25% drop in abundance since 2005. This decline chimes with what is being seen in Suffolk with the species slowly slipping away from the county and for which further comment is given in the species account of this report.

The report also sought to identify or suggest reasons for the declines in butterfly numbers. In respect of habitat specialists,

the deterioration of suitable habitats due to agricultural intensification and changing woodland management are seen as major causes. For our wider-countryside species then the reasons are less understood but climate change and the use of pesticides may be the answer.

In respect of the use of pesticides the findings of a study on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides was published this year (*see p17-18, Suffolk Argus Spring 2016*). This study, undertaken by the universities of Sussex and Stirling, in partnership with Butterfly Conservation and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology suggested that the use of these pesticides may be contributing to the decline of UK butterflies. Introduced in the mid 1990's, the neonicotinoid pesticide is absorbed into every cell of a plant making all parts poisonous to pests. However, the chemicals were also found to remain in the environment and were being absorbed by wild flowers growing in field margins and nearby areas. It is these plants that are likely to be providing nectar for butterflies or acting as food plants for their caterpillars. Of particular note, the study found that population trends of 15 species of butterfly showed declines associated with neonicotinoid use including Small Tortoiseshell, Small Skipper and Wall. This study has significance for Suffolk butterflies given the amount of intensive arable farming undertaken in the county.

Both studies show the importance of recording butterflies and ensuring the collected data is submitted for use in conservation efforts. This will remain a priority for me as Suffolk's butterfly recorder.

## 2. Overview of the UK weather in 2015

Until mid-November 2015 saw mostly quiet weather. The summer was rather cool and wet, but early autumn provided fine, sunny weather as compensation. However from late autumn a succession of Atlantic storms brought exceptional rainfall to the north and west, causing widespread severe flooding to many towns and cities.

2015 was a sunny year. January to April and September were all sunny months, whereas November was provisionally duller in the UK series.

The UK mean temperature was 9.2 °C, 0.4 °C above the 1981-2010 long term average. For most months, temperatures were fairly near average, although somewhat below from May to September. New UK temperature records of 36.7 °C and 22.4 °C were set on 1st July and 1st November respectively. November

was very mild and December exceptionally so; easily the mildest December in the Hadley Central England Temperature Dataset (CET) series from 1659. Remarkably there were no air frosts during December across southern Britain.

The UK rainfall total was 1289 mm, 112% of the 1981-2010 average and sixth-wettest in the UK series; these six years include 2015, 2014, 2012 and 2008. March, April and June were dry in the south-east and September and October in the north-west before the onset of the storms. Twice the normal rainfall fell across Snowdonia, northern England and southern Scotland in November, followed by two to three times in December. The latter was the wettest calendar month in the series for the UK. Despite all that rain, East Anglia remained drier than average for 3 seasons of the year. See table below.

<b>2015 Weather for East Anglia</b>						
<b>Season</b>	<b>Mean Temp Deg C</b>	<b>Anomaly Deg C</b>	<b>Sunshine hrs</b>	<b>Anomaly %</b>	<b>Rainfall mm</b>	<b>Anomaly %</b>
Winter 14/15	4.6	0.3	239.6	129	144.4	98
Spring	9.2	0.2	555.2	119	94.9	69
Summer	16.4	0.0	593.0	101	180.1	112
Autumn	11.3	0.4	315.8	97	165.5	92

Source: [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

Anomalies are measured against the 1981-2010 averages.

## 3. Residents - Winners & Losers

Looking at the results achieved indicates that almost half of the 38 species recorded in Suffolk had a slightly better year than in 2014. Despite it being a relatively sunny start to the year with reasonable day temperatures the spring will be remembered for some

very cold nights and periods of windy and wet weather. Given the erratic weather hibernating butterflies such as Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma appeared early in the year but then seemed to disappear by April, with subsequent populations being poor. As such, both Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell registered a disappointing year and this



was reflected in both the UK Transects and the Wider Countryside Survey results with perhaps both poor weather and parasitism to blame. In the main initial flight seasons were patchy due to the weather. This seemed to reflect the poor season recorded for Speckled Wood, Orange-tip and Green-veined White. Due to the late Spring, early flight seasons seemed to last longer and the traditional spring/ summer gap was less noticeable. With a relatively settled but slightly cooler than average Summer most butterflies struggled to increase their numbers, however, a few did reasonably well against the odds. For grassland butterflies, most had an average season and our woodland butterflies also held firm on last year's position but with Silver-washed Fritillary increasing its range again. Both Purple Hairstreak and White Admiral showed small increases on last year and White-letter Hairstreak appeared to register a better year but this may simply be down to increased coverage in suitable habitats. With a warm and settled Autumn flight seasons were extended again for a number of species and the mild winter saw butterflies such as Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Red Admiral and Comma albeit in small numbers, flying well into December. Stand out species for the season, however, was the Holly Blue which enjoyed a very good year and reflected positive national trends for this butterfly.

#### 4. Early & Late

Spring butterflies were represented by a few early fliers perhaps falsely lured out by the sunny days. Remarkably, this led to new earliest dates for Orange-tip on 16th February, previously 9th March 2014, and Speckled Wood on 10th March, previously 12th March 2014. A Meadow Brown was seen on 12th April two days earlier than the previous earliest date of 14th April 2014 and a White-

letter Hairstreak was recorded on 30th May, with the previous earliest being 2nd June 2011. Continuing with the hairstreaks a new latest date was set for Purple Hairstreak on 27th September with the previous latest date being set last year on 15th September 2014. Increased monitoring of the Chalkhill Blue population in the west of the county extended the latest date seen from 7th September 2014 to a new date of 28th September. With the mild winter it was to be expected that some very late flying butterflies would change a latest-date record. This occurred when a Brimstone was seen on 28th December almost a month later than the previous date of 27th November 2006.

#### 5. Rarities and Migrants

In 2014, Suffolk shared in the butterfly event of the decade with the arrival of small numbers of the **Scarce Tortoiseshell** (Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell) butterfly from mainland Europe. This event was well reported and observers from Suffolk were able to contribute to a number of articles which has assisted in increasing our knowledge and awareness of this species, particularly with identification. This is a species that hibernates early and it was hoped that some of the butterflies from the 2014 influx would remain in the UK and over winter until the spring of 2015. Incredibly, records were made again in Suffolk with a singleton being seen at Peewit Hill, Felixstowe and flying between 27th March and 2nd April 2015 and at least two more butterflies flying at RSPB North Warren along the old railway track between 15th and 20th April 2015.

Other rarities of note included a **Queen of Spain Fritillary** seen at Fritton on 18th and 19th July 2015 and a single Long-tailed Blue at Landseer Park, Ipswich on 9th August 2015.

Only one record of **Swallowtail** was received in the year and this concerned a butterfly seen in the west of the county on 16th August and which was identified as the continental race, *gorganus*. On 19th November, following email contact and the sharing of photos a **Geranium Bronze** was identified as being present and flying in a kitchen in Lindsey. As the reporter had just returned from Italy and had brought back geranium cuttings it seems clear that the butterfly had been inadvertently transported from Italy as an egg/ larva/ pupa amongst the cuttings.

Despite large numbers of Painted Lady butterflies appearing in North Africa and southern Europe at the appropriate time to signal large scale northerly movements the anticipated Painted Lady “invasion” did not occur. That said, an increase in sightings of this remarkable butterfly was noted with some reasonable counts being made at coastal sites. Clouded Yellow was much less numerous than in previous years although was seen in small numbers throughout the county. Some evidence was reported of migrating butterflies including Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Small White. In respect of the latter, large numbers were reported along the coast at East Lane/ Shingle Street in late September.

### 6. Other species of interest

The **Chalkhill Blue** site in the west of the county was closely monitored with the first butterflies seen on 20th July when 4 males were counted. This date was almost a week later than 2014. The peak count was made on 16th August with 156 males counted along with 18 females. Compared to 2014 this year’s peak was higher by 63% and was a week later. The last visit on 28<sup>th</sup> September recorded a single male butterfly; however, it

was noted to be in good condition. Although the butterfly was seen throughout the full survey area, close monitoring now suggests that there are two distinct populations. Based on these results the colony appears to be self-sustaining and worthy of an ongoing monitoring effort. No other records were received in the year but it is likely that small pockets of this species exist in suitable chalk land habitat especially if the larval host plant, horseshoe vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*) can be found. It is worth noting that the Cambridgeshire population along the Devils Dyke near Newmarket enjoyed an incredible year with some very high counts made and at least one new site was identified.

With better awareness of the butterfly and its life cycle along with improved recorder coverage sightings of **Purple Emperor** increased slightly and a few new sites were identified. Sustained visits to suitable sites as identified in 2014 such as Bonny/ Priestley Wood near Needham Market led to several butterflies being watched. It was also pleasing to see that a Suffolk Branch, Butterfly Conservation Purple Emperor event held at these woods, was rewarded with some stunning views of this incredible butterfly. Reports were also received from RSPB Wolves Wood near Hadleigh and in maturing woodlands close to Ipswich. There is now growing evidence that this species is expanding its range eastwards within East Anglia, with nearby Essex and Cambridgeshire also seeing an increase in records.

In 2015, records received for the **Silver-washed Fritillary** demonstrated that the foothold that this species now has in Suffolk was maintained and extended slightly with the butterfly being recorded in 37 tetrads, an increase from 33 tetrads in 2014. Again, some

good counts were received with the flight season running well into early September. As with previous years, garden records continue to be made which demonstrates that this butterfly will happily wander from its preferred habitats.

Disappointingly, no records for **Marbled White** were made in the west of the county despite this species seeming to have enjoyed an excellent season in neighbouring Cambridgeshire and on a national level. However, the butterfly continues to fly at the central Ipswich site at Landseer Park and was recorded flying from late June into late July. The butterfly was again recorded in small numbers at another site close by at Pipers Vale but it is unknown if its presence here is by natural expansion from the original site or by deliberate intervention.

In 2015, news of the existence of a **Brown Hairstreak** colony in Suffolk was received. This location is close to the introduced Marbled Whites in central Ipswich and information received suggests that the colony has existed in small numbers since 2009. It is assumed that the population derives from an unauthorised introduction perhaps undertaken by those responsible for the nearby Marbled Whites. Egg searches undertaken over the 2015/2016 winter by a small number of individuals suggest that the population is confined to central Ipswich and has not spread further.

The recording position on these presumed releases of Marbled White and Brown Hairstreaks is that they will not be submitted to Butterfly Conservation for inclusion in national data sets. However, some local monitoring will be undertaken and records will be maintained at a county level in order to assess population and range changes.

## 7. Unusual Species

As with previous years a number of “odd” butterflies were reported. On the 30th July, a **Clipper** (*Parthenos sylvia*) butterfly was identified from photographs as being present in Chelmondiston. This butterfly originates from South/ South-east Asia and features regularly in butterfly house collections. It is likely that its origins lie in such a collection, especially as the Jimmy’s farm butterfly house is only a few miles away.

Continuing the exotic theme, in August, two reports of a **Zebra Longwing** (*Heliconius charithonia*) butterfly were received. The butterfly is actually the state butterfly of Florida and is known for its long migration to Mexico. Remarkably, both sightings were made within a few miles of each other with one sighting from the Gislingham area on 7th August and the other from Badwell Ash on the 8th August. What makes these sightings even more unusual is the fact that two more sightings of this species were made in Norfolk, one near Cromer on the 22nd August and the other at Garboldisham on the 23rd August. It is not clear how many butterflies were actually on the wing but clearly the four records over a large area suggest multiple butterflies being at large. It is highly likely that, as with the Clipper, these butterflies originate from a private breeder/ collector or have escaped from a butterfly house.

## 8. Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan - Priority Species

Seven species of butterfly occurring in Suffolk are deemed as UK BAP priority species. These are Dingy Skipper, Silver-studded Blue, White-letter Hairstreak, White Admiral, Grayling, Wall and Small Heath. See also <http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/biodiversity-action-plans.aspx>

## **Dingy Skipper**

The Dingy Skipper appears to have had a poor year in 2015 with no new territories discovered and no significant counts made. In 2014, the butterfly was recorded in 5 tetrads. In 2015, this had fallen to 4 tetrads. It was first reported on 10th May along the Wordwell Ride in the Kings Forest and the last butterfly was seen on 25th May close to the Archery Course, Kings Forest. The only other sites that produced records in addition to the Kings Forest were at Thetford Heath and sites immediately local to the heath along the St. Edmund Way.

The dates recorded, allowing at least another week of laying after the 25th May, suggest a flight season of perhaps 3-4 weeks. It has to be said that difficult weather conditions and a lack of active recorders led to under-recording in 2015. I myself spent a lot of time in the Suffolk Brecks looking for the Dingy Skipper but was greatly hampered by strong winds and heavy rain. In addition, intensive forestry operations close to and including key Dingy Skipper locations within the Kings Forest were also underway at the time when butterflies were flying. This work had also been in place in the preceding months so it is feasible that numbers of caterpillars and pupae were lost.

## **2015 Dingy Skipper Survey**

As with many butterfly surveys, chosen dates to undertake counts, do not necessarily coincide with ideal weather and peak flying periods. The Suffolk Breckland population normally flies 10-14 days after those first seen in Cambridgeshire along the Devils Dyke. In 2015, the first butterflies flying along the Devils Dyke were seen on 27th April.

Two survey dates were organised in 2015 and the first survey took place on 13th May

and focussed on the eastern Kings Forest. Numbers of Dingy Skippers seen were noticeably low compared to previous years, however, the weather in the morning was not very suitable as it was damp and cool. As mentioned above the area surveyed was noted to be subject to extensive forestry work involving felling and clearance work. This meant that some of the routes undertaken in previous years had to be abandoned due to access being restricted or on health and safety grounds. The survey reinforced what was noted in 2013 and 2014 in that the flight area was still biased towards the eastern edge of the forest. The Wordwell ride, in the south east corner of the forest, provided most butterflies seen and continued to show the benefits of the ride widening work undertaken. The second survey date was on the 20th May and again this was a complete wash out in the morning due to heavy rain. In the afternoon, limited coverage was possible and this led to counts being undertaken along the Chalk Lane path in the Kings Forest and then an exploration of sites along the St. Edmund Path. Here small numbers of Dingy Skippers were found at both locations.

Over the next week further searches were undertaken on Thetford Heath area and sites nearby. Unfortunately, despite being looked for no Dingy Skippers were found at Elveden Center Parks. Also, no surveys were undertaken on any MOD sites which was disappointing given the successful visit to RAF Barnham in 2014.

## **Silver-studded Blue**

*Report by Helen Saunders and David Dowding*

## **Phenology**

Due to some poor spring weather the Silver-studded Blue was expected to emerge slightly later than the recent 5-year average. Indeed,

on 29/05/15 a last instar caterpillar was observed climbing up a heather stem on Purdis Heath. This suggested there were still 2-3 weeks until emergence, slightly later than last year. The first butterfly was seen on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June in Dunwich Forest, 6 days later than 2014 but in time with the recent 5 year average. This year's average population peak was on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 4 days later than 2015 but on time with the 5-year average.

### Population counts

This year's total was 995. When compared to the "datum year" of 2006 where 5470 butterflies were counted this returns a very low figure of only 18% but this is down to a change in sampling techniques. This year arrangements had been made to create two single-species transects as a method of sampling the overall numbers in the Minsmere colonies. This is in place of the traditional 100% annual count at population peak and only records a small fraction of the butterflies.

This now means that the 2006-2014 data for the Minsmere complex is no longer comparable with the present results. In order to compare the 2015 data fairly with the 2006 "datum year", both sets of Minsmere data had to be excluded. As a result the 2015 data was actually 50% of the 2006 data, despite an initial 18% figure.

As a result only 26 out of the original 44 sites are comparable. There was still a 24% decrease in the remaining 26 sites with only 3 of these sites (11%), Purdis Heath, Westleton football pitch and Lower Hollesley F, showing any significant population increases. Three sites continued to produce nil counts and this year they were joined by the sporadic Ransomes Lagoon site. In the future the 5 sites for Minsmere will be comparable with

other transect surveys, but not with the total species counts.

The data indicates that overall SSB had a poor year across Suffolk but with only a 24% decrease from last year there were no critically low counts. It was pleasing to see the new site at Piper's Vale hold fast, despite the small size of the site. It was also good to note an increase at Purdis Heath, where a huge volunteer effort over the last 5 years seems to have revitalized the population. Nevertheless the butterfly is still struggling across Suffolk, and the ongoing maintenance and recreation of pioneer heathland communities will prove vital to the species' success.

### White-letter Hairstreak

The White-letter Hairstreak is a troublesome butterfly for recording purposes. Seeing the butterfly and accurately addressing the population of this species is difficult due to it invariably flying in the canopy of elms and neighbouring trees. It can also roam wide areas utilising elm hidden amongst roadside hedgerows. It is, therefore, difficult to count away from known sites where established viewing positions are normally used.

In 2015, the butterfly was first recorded on 30th May, a new earliest date for the species in the county and last recorded on 16th August. The highest count was 11, on 10th July in Dunwich Forest. The butterfly was recorded in 32 tetrads, 10 more than in 2014 although the vast majority of records were of single butterflies. Although this is a small but positive increase over the previous year, the long-term county trend still raises concern. On a national level, the UKBMS 10 year trend indicates a significant -74% fall in abundance with a 2014/2015 comparison indicating a -12% fall.

Identifying additional sites is important for the future assessment of this species. Looking for elms in the spring is a useful method as they often get lost amongst other more dominant trees as the canopy develops. These sites can then be recorded and returned to in the summer for accurate monitoring.

### **White Admiral**

A small increase in numbers seen and range was noted for this species in 2015. Records received identified that the butterfly was seen in 61 tetrads, 6 more than in 2014.

The first White Admiral was recorded on 28th June and the flight season appeared to naturally finish at the end of August. A late record on 13th September at Hurst Fen, Mildenhall Woods was the only record received which was indicative of a second generation. The highest count was of 14 butterflies seen at Pakenham Woods on 9th July, although, several other low double figure counts were made.

Despite being a butterfly of mature deciduous woodlands a number of records and photos received for this species concerned individuals seen in gardens and parks. This reinforces the fact that it is a strong flyer prone to wandering and seeking out new territories. Despite the species appearing to be stable in the county, albeit, in low numbers the national position is very different. The UKBMS 10 year trends indicate a -43% fall in abundance and the 2014/2015 year comparison shows a -19% fall.

### **Grayling**

In 2014, the Grayling enjoyed a reasonably good year and showed a small increase in

distribution and in the numbers actually seen. However, in 2015 this species appears to have slipped back again being seen in only 59 tetrads as opposed to 70 in the previous year. The first butterfly was seen on 26th June on Upper Hollesley Common and was last reported on 20th September on Purdis Heath. When seen at key sites good numbers were recorded with the highest count of 100 seen at Westleton Heath on 21st July.

The Grayling is found in the Breckland habitat in the west of the county and the Sandlings habitat in the east and sharply represents this species' preference for dry, sandy grasslands. It used to be recorded in the general countryside on clay soils in High Suffolk but these records are now few and far between. A few wanderers were recorded away from key sites in gardens and parklands indicating that this species is capable of finding new sites and will exploit them if suitable.

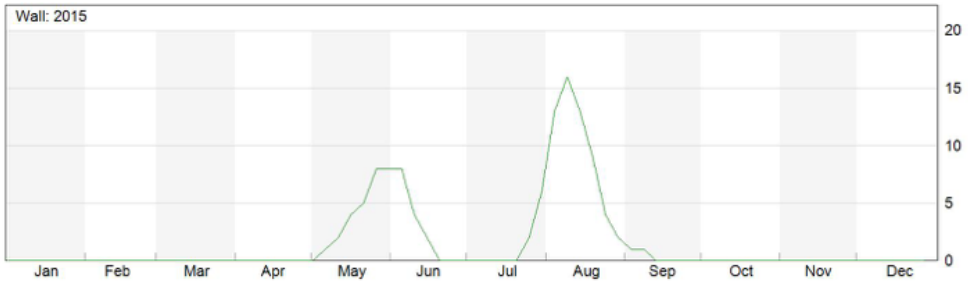
It is not entirely clear why the population was knocked back in the year, but it is likely to reflect habitat loss or perhaps increased disturbance. It may also be that developing caterpillars in the spring were victims of the unsettled weather.

The UKBMS Summary of Changes Table for 2015 identifies a change of -38% for the Grayling population between 2014 and 2015. So, Suffolk unfortunately appears to be in line with this trend. However, the position is worse when looking at the national long term series trend with the Grayling recorded as having declined by -61% which is classified as "very highly significant". In Suffolk, it remains a weak but stable population but clearly vulnerable and it is essential that close monitoring continues.



## Wall

Based on the records received the Wall appears to have had two distinct generations with the first being from approximately 9th May (Blundeston) to 7th June (Bradwell/Hollesley) and then again from approximately 1st August (Hollesley) to 29<sup>th</sup> August (SWT Carlton Marshes). The best single site count was 9 made at Beccles Marshes on 11th August. A single butterfly reported on 10th September at Iken is the only evidence of a potential third generation. The graph below shows the two generations quite well.



In the south-east of the county sightings continue but are very much reduced compared with previous years. The East Lane/ Shingle Street corridor has historically been a favoured Wall location but this position has changed dramatically in recent years. Suitable habitat has been lost through changes in land use, coastal erosion and by way of associated major coastal protection activities. This year, there were only three Wall sightings from this corridor in May/June. In August, only one sighting was made, this being on the 15th. This record concerned a single male Wall which was found “inland” along Red House Lane, approximately 1km from the lagoon and car park area.

Small numbers are still believed to be present in the Hollesley and Boyton areas. Here

This year the Wall was only recorded in 22 tetrads as opposed to 36 in 2014. From the records actually received it appears that the stronghold for this species in Suffolk is now very much in the north-east of the county around the Waveney Forest and Waveney Valley. Records have been received from Gunton west through to the Beccles area. A significant percentage of the records from this area come from recorders visiting the Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserves at North Cove and Carlton Marshes with the butterflies being seen along grassy paths and meadow edges.

the butterflies appear to be attracted to a few private “wildlife “gardens and also on land managed by the RSPB at their reserve at Boyton Marshes. In the Orford area, sightings of up to 3 butterflies were made from the churchyard at Orford Church and some nearby gardens but no records from localities such as Chantry Marshes or Chantry Point were received. Of note, however, were reports of the butterfly being seen in small numbers on Orfordness on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May close to the landing quay and it is hoped that the butterfly may favour this area enough to establish itself in good numbers.

Sadly, there have been no west Suffolk sightings reported this year despite a number of appeals encouraging recorders to search suitable areas. It was hoped that some

records may have been made from the RSPB Lakenheath area especially given increased visitor numbers whilst a male Little Bittern was present for a long period in May.

The Wall continues to decline in Suffolk and this position is reflected throughout the UK and parts of Europe. The UKBMS Summary of Changes shows a depressing -44% fall between 2014 and 2015. Consideration of the long term series trend is even worse with a -88% decline. As such, this decline is considered as “very highly significant”. It is therefore essential that the county population is monitored very closely and both range and abundance recorded accurately. Sadly, our Wall transect along the sea wall at East Lane has failed due to the absence of Walls.

### **Small Heath**

The Small Heath was recorded in 122 tetrads this year which represents a disappointing decrease of 20 tetrads when compared to the 142 achieved in 2014. The first record was received on 4th May and interestingly was seen at sites in both the east and west of the county on this date. It was last reported on 29<sup>th</sup> October at RSPB Boyton Marshes. The maximum count for the year was made on the transect walked at RSPB North Warren on 1st July and resulted in 118 being recorded. Elsewhere, high double-figure counts (50+) were recorded at key sites in both the east and west of the county.

The 2015 distribution of this butterfly in the heaths of the Sandlings to the east of the county and the Brecklands to the west. However, the Small Heath is not confined to heathland. It is highly adaptive and can be found in a variety of grassy habitats including woodland rides but the key requirement is a short sward of fine grass species. The decrease in distribution is similar to that

seen for Grayling this year and the fact that both butterflies share similar habitat has to be considered as a major concern. Again, as with Grayling the year’s shortfall may be connected with habitat loss or increased disturbance.

The UKBMS Summary of Changes Table for 2015 identifies a series trend (over last 39 years) of -56% for the Small Heath population and this fall in abundance is described as “very highly significant”. A comparison between 2014 and 2015 showed a percentage change in abundance of -10%. In Suffolk it remains a weak but stable population and as with the Grayling it is clearly very vulnerable and requires continued monitoring.

## **9. Recording and Geographic Coverage**

In 2015, **33,168** butterfly records were added to the county database. These records reflected **38** naturally occurring species of butterfly and related to 710 tetrads. With 1089 tetrads in Suffolk that meant that the records received provided positive coverage for 65% of Suffolk.

The level of recording coverage achieved in 2015 is significant as this year represents the first year of the new five-year recording period (2015-2019) for the “Butterflies for the New Millennium” (BNM) survey. This scheme operates in Britain and Ireland in order to assess change, inform conservation and stimulate research. Being the first year of the new recording period the excellent coverage achieved will assist in targeting those areas of the county that are historically under recorded or for which no butterfly records actually exist. These areas, known as “black-holes” will form the focus of future recording efforts.

The significant increase in butterfly records

in 2015 reflects the access now available to, and the inclusion of county level data from, a number of scientific based recording schemes such as UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) and the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS). Other citizen science initiatives such as the Big Butterfly Count are also included along with other significant partner schemes such as BTO Garden Bird-watch. Great efforts are now being made by a number of organisations, including Butterfly Conservation to enable easy recording and capture of important data through the use of online recording schemes and smart phone recording “apps”. Here in Suffolk, a significant increase in records submitted via social media such as Twitter and by way of such “apps” is being noticed annually.

### Species Maps

Distribution Maps and flight charts have been prepared for our regular Suffolk species, and these are available for reference on the Suffolk Branch website:

<http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk/distribution%20maps.html>

With the high number of tetrads visited in 2015 and the incredible number of records received the average butterfly species per tetrad for 2015 was recorded as 11. To put that into context the last five-year period (2011-2015) gives us an average of 14.6 species per recorded tetrad.

### Analysis

The most abundant butterflies in the county in 2015 were Large White which was seen in 78.3% of surveyed tetrads closely followed by Small White (74.2%) and Peacock (71.8%). Of note, in 2014, Small Tortoiseshell was the most abundant butterfly being seen in 78% of

surveyed tetrads with Peacock a close second (77.9%) and Large White being in third place (69%). National trends reflect this change at the top and reference to the “UKBMS summary of changes table for 2015” shows that Small Tortoiseshell showed a decrease of -44% compared to numbers recorded in 2014. Similarly, a decrease of -21% is seen for Peacock. The Big Butterfly Count also showed significant decreases in the survey period for both Peacock (down 61% on 2014) and Small Tortoiseshell (down 57% on 2014).

Comparing the Suffolk scarcity data for 2015 to 2014 shows a worrying “drop” for two key Suffolk species: Dingy Skipper and Wall. Both are discussed in subsequent annexes, however, long term trends for both species suggest both have weak populations and are very vulnerable. The position of the “golden” skippers (Small/ Essex/ Large) is always worthy of a close look. Despite being robust and adaptable butterflies any negative changes recorded can act as an indicator of problems that are affecting grassland habitats. All three species showed little change in Suffolk compared to 2014. However, Small and Large Skipper showed small percentage decreases on the “UKBMS summary of changes table for 2015” of -8% and -21% respectively. Conversely, very small percentage increases are noted for all three species in the WCBS results. The Small Copper is a butterfly that has been identified recently as a species in significant decline. Again, a number of poor summers and habitat loss has contributed greatly to this difficult situation with results from the UKBMS summary table indicating nearly a 50% decline in the last ten years. Always a popular butterfly with Suffolk recorders, Small Copper appears to have been recorded at a similar level in 2015 compared to 2014. Looking at the last five-year period (2011-

2015) suggests a stable position but clearly it is a species that will require close monitoring in the future.

The latest rolling five-year figure (2011-2015) covers 1025 tetrads and shows an average of **14.6** species per tetrad.

**Transects**

Transects are very effective at monitoring habitat specialist butterflies and lowland semi-natural habitats. They are resource intensive but give a sharp view of butterfly trends. The 2015 results from those transects

walked in Suffolk have been added to the Suffolk database and are a useful addition as they reflect consistent, sustained and focused recording within the county. During 2015, 20 transects and 5 single species transects were monitored and these are listed below. My thanks go to all those team coordinators and walkers, who put in dedicated monitoring efforts, these are shown in the table on the next page.

During 2015, a new transect was set up at SWT Redgrave and Lopham Fen and the original transect at SWT Lackford Lakes resurrected. Both will be walked and monitored in 2016.

<b>Suffolk Transects</b>	
Alton Water	RSPB Minsmere
Black Heath	RSPB North Warren
Center Parcs (Elveden)	RSPB Wolves Wood.
Dunwich Forest 1	Sizewell Belts
Dunwich Forest 2	Spring Lane (Bury St Edmunds)
Manor Farm (Coddham)	SWT Bradfield Woods
Newsons Farm (Thorpe Green)	SWT Cavenham Heath
Newsons Farm Extension (Thorpe Green)	SWT Knettishall Heath
Nowton Country Park	Tythe Farm (Fressingfield)
Ramsey/Hintlesham Woods	Upper Abbey Farm (Leiston)

Single-species transects:

<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Species</b>
Blaxhall Common	Silver-studded Blue
Dunwich Heath	Silver-studded Blue
RSPB Minsmere	Silver-studded Blue
Purdis Heath	Silver-studded Blue
SWT Bradfield Woods	Purple Hairstreak

**Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme (WCBS)**

The WCBS complements transect monitoring of butterfly populations on semi-natural sites and forms part of an integrated approach to monitoring butterflies through the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). It runs as a partnership between Butterfly Conservation, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The scheme targets common and widespread butterflies by selecting random 1km squares

which are then subject to a minimum of two visits ideally in July and August. In 2015, a total of 32, 1km squares (27 WCBS, 5 BTO) were surveyed. The records generated from the scheme are included in the Suffolk data set and represent a significant contribution both in terms of record numbers but also in respect of the locations involved. The squares surveyed in 2015 were:

*The full 2015 Butterfly Report, including year analysis tables, will be published in the next volume of Suffolk Natural History.*

Square Reference	Name	Square Reference	Name
TL6381	West Row	TM0871	Gislingham
TL6545	Haverhill	TM0969	Wickham Skeith
TL7163	Gazeley	TM1666	Aspall
TL7262	Dalham	TM2144	Foxhall
TL7781	Wangford	TM2147	Playford
TL7866	Risby	TM2481	Shotford Heath
TL8381	Thetford (W)	TM2975	Cratfield
TL8482	Thetford (W)	TM3150	Eyeke, Woodbridge
TL8566	Fornham St Martin, Bury St Edmunds (N)	TM3183	St Margaret, South Elmham
TL8843	Sudbury (N)	TM3388	Bungay
TL9047	Acton, Lavenham	TM3450	Rendlesham Forest, Eyke
TL9577	Coney Weston	TM3549	Rendlesham Forest, Capel St. Andrew
TL9859	Rattlesden	TM3568	Peasenhall
TM0048	Nedging-with- Naughton	TM3762	Benhall, Saxmundham
TM0378	Redgrave	TM4162	Knoddishall
TM0553	Battisford	TM5075	Southwold

## Gardening for Butterflies

Kevin Ling

Although regularly a feature of the 'Argus' magazine, I thought I would continue the trend of advice and observations, in respect of encouraging Butterflies and Moths into the garden.

By way of introduction, our garden is in an urban setting (within a mile of Belstead), so attracting the spring species has always been more of a challenge. The spring of 2016 has however given us reward for our planning. A couple of years ago we planted some Garlic Mustard seedlings and following a dormant flowering year in 2015 due to them being bi-annuals, 2016 has produced a profusion of flowering plants. The target species is of course Orange-tip, a butterfly that has been very rare in our garden, with only a single male seen in 2015. All that has changed this spring, with a female seen flitting across several flower heads, leaving a trail of single eggs in it's wake. Only one egg is generally laid per plant stem, due to the caterpillar's cannibalistic tendencies.

A second spring species seen regularly was Holly Blue, with a couple of males very attracted to our extensive Privet hedging. After watching their movements for a couple of weeks, we were finally visited by a female who took no time at all laying eggs on the flower buds of our established *Pyracantha*. Also competing for our attention was the larvae of the Brown-tail moth, with several seen feeding on both the leaves and flower buds. Another welcome spring visitor was the tiny but beautiful Mint Moth, *Pyrausta aurata*. A regular daytime visitor to our garden, it favours Mint, Majoram and Meadow Clary, *Salvia Pratensis*.

We have also enjoyed other successes over the past couple of summers. Following the rescue of some Peacock caterpillars destined for the council shredder, we hurriedly planted up some pots with nettles and enjoyed watching the caterpillars grow, pupate and finally hatch. Thinking this was it for the year, we turned our attentions to watching the butterflies nectaring on the plants we had grown specifically. A visiting Red Admiral took notice of the potted nettles and duly laid eggs, although by the time we returned from our holiday there were no signs of larvae (predation being the most likely cause).

Our final success was with Large White. A good number of eggs were found on the underside of Nasturtium leaves. We found that by planting them up against the wall of our house, the larvae by nature then crawled up the wall and pupated under the fascia boards, allowing close observation throughout winter.

Our top recommendations for the garden would be:

### **Larval Food plants**

Garlic Mustard (Orange Tip)  
Nasturtium (Whites)  
Nettles (Peacock, Red Admiral)

### **Nectaring Plants**

Buddleia  
*Verbena bonariensis*  
Red Valerian (Centranthus)  
Knapweed  
Privet (Holly Blue)



## Autumn Butterfly Nectar Sources in an Ipswich Garden.

*Richard Stewart*

To complete the seasonal list this shorter selection should be prefaced by the fact that many of the nectar sources listed for summer are still available well into autumn. These include *Buddleia davidii*, if constantly deflowered, Bowles mauve wallflower, *Verbena bonariensis* and valerian. The list is in order of numbers of species observed nectaring:

*Sedum spectabile* (8) Large and Small White, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Painted Lady, Speckled Wood, Wall. This pink variety is definitely the best. We also have the deep red Autumn Joy but it has only attracted a Comma.

*Buddleia x weyeriana* (7) Large and Green-veined White, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper and Silver Y moth. This is a late flowering yellow variety and with regular deadheading it can still have flowers into December. It grows to the top of an adjacent pine tree, in which Red Admirals sometimes hibernate. These can be seen nectaring well into the winter months.

Michaelmas Daisy (2) Large White and Red Admiral. The low number is explained by our having just a small clump, not in the sunniest of positions. Usually a larger sunlit bed, particularly of purple flowers, will attract more species.

Ivy - we just have some within our back hedge but a more luxurious growth has reached almost to the top of a tall sycamore just beyond our back fence. Sunlit into late evening it attracts many insects, including Red Admiral. Hornets also patrol and not just for the ivy's abundant late-flowering nectar. Ivy is also a good roosting and

hibernating site, especially for Brimstones. Finally, we also put out large bowls of apple, plum and damson pieces, mainly chunks cut off before freezing the fruit. The juices have attracted Red Admiral, Comma and Speckled Wood but never a Small Tortoiseshell or Peacock. Also surprisingly, we have never had to rescue any butterfly from the sticky juices produced by the soft fruits.

### Records are needed from Christchurch Park, Ipswich.

*Richard Stewart.*

Have you seen any of the following species in the park?

- Swallowtail
- Clouded Yellow
- Green Hairstreak
- Brown Argus
- Wall
- Small Heath

If so, please contact Richard Stewart by email [rgsvalezina@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rgsvalezina@hotmail.co.uk)

With the following information: name, address, phone or email for any follow-up, date, place seen within the park and any noted activity such as nectaring, basking or egg-laying.

## Plant a Pot for Pollinators!

Butterfly Conservation's new Plant a Pot for Pollinators project encourages householders to plant a pot with nectar sources such as Shasta Daisy, Oregano and Catmint.

BC's Vice-president, Alan Titchmarsh said: "One carefully planted, well positioned pot or container can make a huge difference to butterflies, moths, bees and pollinating insects that need nectar to fuel their work. You don't need a big, fancy garden to be butterfly-friendly. You don't need green-fingers to get involved - planting a pot for pollinators is a really easy project."

Ten plants are suggested for growing singly in pots or for mixing two or three different varieties in one pot. Place the container in a sunny spot and keep an eye on what turns up.

[www.plantpotsforpollinators.org](http://www.plantpotsforpollinators.org)

## The Top Nectar Sources For Container Gardening

1. Balkan Clary *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'
2. Catmint *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low'
3. Coneflower *Echinacea purpurea* 'Pow Wow Pink'
4. *Cosmos bipinnatus* Sonata Series
5. Cranesbill *Geranium* 'Rozanne'
6. Gayfeather *Liatris spicata* 'Kobold'
7. Giant Hyssop *Agastache* 'After Eight'
8. Lamb's Ears *Stachys byzantina*
9. Shasta Daisy *Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Snow Lady'
10. Wild Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* 'Country Cream'



*Comma* by Beryl Johnson

## Why I Volunteer

*Twm Wade*

I recently heard on the radio that without volunteers society could not function. The nature of volunteering and why people do it and what they get out of it, could be a topic for academic study but a personal reflection is probably more interesting.

When I joined BC in 2012, they provided me with guff about the organisation from which I gleaned the nugget that I could help by providing 3 bits of information: what, where and when I saw butterflies. I started to learn how to identify them and soon I was hooked. What for most people was a butterfly-disaster of a season, for me was fantastic.

Rob Parker pointed out to me that Exning, where I live, was under-recorded so I set out to fill these black holes armed with my new HD video camera. The Black hole map (see website) became my guide for places to visit. Rob then asked me to take on administering the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) scheme for Suffolk. This year I took on the same role for transects because I thought it would be something simple to do when nothing much is going on.

Routine administration was a career weakness but I did learn how to make it less time-consuming. Thankfully we have an excellent County Records officer who collates all the information so I am like a salesman, selling the idea of the need to record and report butterfly sightings. When I took on each task I had a lot to learn and now wish to share some of that with you. I assume you joined BC because you love seeing butterflies, want to know more about them and want to support their conservation. But you are busy earning money, keeping up with family and friends

and then chilling out. You may also want to know if there is more you could do to help; probably, and without getting too involved.

Volunteers come forward to help work parties such as those at Purdis Heath; a hard slog but very satisfying teamwork. Then there are the many individuals who report sightings and it has to be emphasised that all reported sightings are valuable (even those that show an absence of butterflies). Every report of 'what, where and when' adds to the statistical data about butterflies, the species distribution and abundance. It is the survey data gained at Purdis Heath that proves that the work parties are benefitting the Silver-studded Blue as well as other species.

So why do I visit 'black holes', make records and film butterflies and other wildlife? I enjoy it. I love the countryside, don't have a dog to walk or grandchildren to keep amused, so off I go. Casual recording means I can spend time enjoying the moment whether it is getting a better, closer film-shot or chatting to a passer-by or appreciating the view, it does not matter. In addition, I do it when I have company; casual recordings are just that, casual. And yes, I do have a few places I visit each year as best I can and do compare the count of one year with another.

Why do people do the WCBS? The scheme selects OS squares randomly and surveyors cross the square twice on different routes identifying and counting as they go. The surveyor only counts butterflies within a short distance and walks the same route each time but is only obliged to walk it in July and August. Reporting the information on-line is usually simple. Like the Radio 4 programme

Just a Minute, there is meant to be no repetition, hesitation or deviation as the walk progresses but I feel sure it happens. I have had different responses from those who have a square but one theme is common; it is 'their square'. Another common theme is that the square is somewhere they would otherwise not go; a novelty. So it is a fun adventure on a patch that they can say is theirs to survey.

What about transects? The great thing about these is that the walker chooses the location and the route. It could be their regular lunchtime walk, where they take the dog for its midday exercise, a regular haunt where butterflies are abundant. There are also scientific reasons. Work is being done affecting the site's habitat and a transect is a

way of measuring the benefit or otherwise of the work; as at Purdis Heath. They require discipline or a small team of helpers because the transect needs to be walked once a week for 26 weeks of the year, preferably in suitable weather during the middle of the day.

The answer to why I volunteer is simple. I enjoy it, it costs nothing but time, and in that time I would only be doing other things. Butterflies are beautiful whether at a distance or close up. Their lives are simple yet complex because their lives are so dependant on climate and habitat. You can enjoy the moment or make Lepidoptera a life-time's study. They have certainly added an interest to my life.

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## The Green Hairstreak... and the computers that will work at the speed of light.

Butterflies have a wing pattern of curved intertwined surfaces, known as the gyroid structure. They are minute: the holes within the structure are less than one micron thick (one micron = one thousandth of a millimeter).

Researchers from the Australian Swinburne University of Technology together with RMIT University have been examining these structures, which are incredibly strong and have interesting light properties that give butterflies some of their super-vibrant colours. The researchers have made their own version of the gyroid structure, based on the intricate wing structure of the Green Hairstreak, *Callophrys rubi*.

When built into optical computers - super-

fast devices that beam information at the speed of light - these structures improve resolution and have better mechanical strength.

These new gyroid structures could help make more compact, light based electronics because their smaller size will allow larger numbers of devices to be integrated onto a single chip. The new material can be used to control the way that light interacts with it, and therefore could be used to transmit light-based information at the speed of light around a computer chip.

The research has been published in the journal [\*Science Advances\*](#).

## Theberton Wood: A brief site guide

*Adrian Richards*

This excellent butterfly wood is well worth a visit on any sunny day throughout spring and summer. It is at its best during July, which is the main flight period for the three main target species found here: the Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary. The wood, owned by the Forestry Commission consists mainly of oaks with an understory of willow, hazel and aspen, most of the conifers having been removed.

The entrance gate is at grid ref. TM 422656 on the northern edge of the wood. There is also a layby here which offers limited parking. If this is full there are further pull-ins on the same road, but please do park with care. Just beyond the gate is a large clearing surrounded by oaks and willows. This is the best place to see Purple Emperors. On a warm sunny day it is usually the males that are first on the wing from mid-morning onwards, flying around the tops of the oaks, descending lower to fly around the willows looking for newly hatched females. It is not unusual to see 2 or 3 males flying around at the same time. The females are usually seen from midday onwards, perched on the willow branches. Now and then the Purple Emperors will descend and land on the ground, dabbing with their proboscises to extract mineral salts from the soil. They are also partial to overripe bananas and some of the regular visitors will try and tempt them down with these. The regulars are quite an amiable bunch and are usually happy to point the butterflies out to you if you are uncertain where to look. Most good emperor woods involve a very long walk in order to see them but not here. You just get out of your car and walk ten metres. An ideal site for those not able to walk far and you can also bring a small folding chair!

White Admirals with their graceful gliding flight can also be seen around the clearing visiting Bramble flowers. They occur throughout the wood. Gatekeepers are also common here. They can be seen in good number feasting on Bramble flowers and the bright yellow - coloured Fleabane found in the damp areas.

Purple Hairstreaks are on the wing during July and into August, and visitors to the wood, who scrutinise the treetops for the emperor, often spot the hairstreak in the oak and ash canopy. Oaks around the clearing inside the gate are a good place to begin the search.

The clearing often provides an opportunity to see some impressive dragonflies. There is often a Norfolk Hawker here. One seems to take up residence each July. The Brown Hawker with its amber tinted wings is another often seen along with Southern Hawker and Emperor Dragonflies.

If you wish to explore the wood further, a ride leads away from the clearing to the south. At the next ride, turn left. You are now on a wide ride lined with Brambles. Keep a lookout for the large and impressive Silver-washed Fritillary visiting the Bramble flowers. You are only likely to encounter one or two at most. There are other woods in Suffolk where they can be seen in better numbers.

If you continue along the ride after 120 metres there is a turning to the right, for the first 20 metres or so along this ride either side, some stunning flowers can be seen including beautiful clumps of Ragged Robin, more Fleabane and many tall flowering spikes of Common Spotted Orchid. The ride opens out

onto another large clearing dominated by a watch tower at its centre. This area is also a good spot to see Purple Emperors as they often perch on the tower roof. Just beyond the tower and to the right is a large pond. The pond is covered in part with floating pondweed. Great Crested Newts breed here but are difficult to see although their tadpoles can be seen hanging motionless just below the surface. The tadpoles have feathery gills that look sprayed with gold and glint in the light. Large numbers of damselflies can be seen around the pond. Azure Blue, Large Red and Blue-tailed are the main species here. Darter dragonflies to look out for are the Ruddy Darter, Four-spotted Chaser and Broad-bodied Chaser, which all occur in good numbers here.

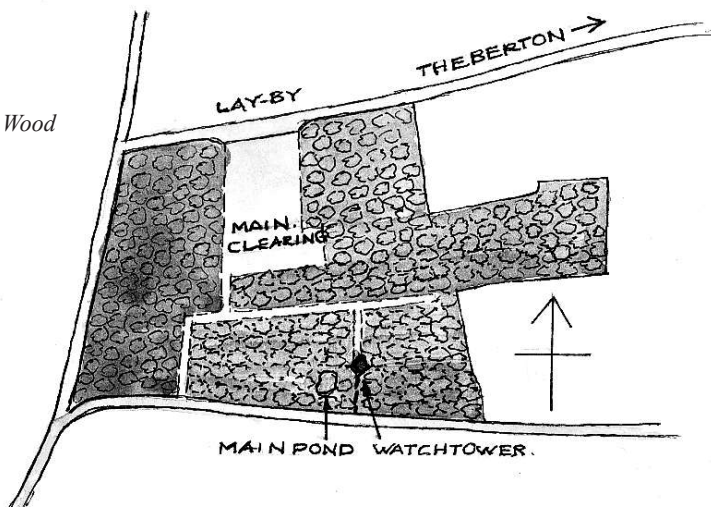
Other than Grey Squirrels, mammal sightings in the wood are rare. Muntjac Deer are sometimes seen but more often it is their loud bark that is heard. Occasionally a herd of Red Deer can be seen, nonchalantly walking through.

Most of the common woodland birds occur here. During the summer a pair of Spotted

Flycatchers usually nest in one of the many nest boxes dotted around the wood. The wood also hosts at least 2 pairs of Marsh Tits, often their distinct “Pitchou” call can be heard, even if the birds themselves appear elusive. Many different birds of prey are often seen as people look up to the treetops to see the Purple Emperor! Look out for Buzzards, Kestrels and Sparrowhawks. I was lucky enough to see a Honey Buzzard fly over last July but that was exceptional. I hope this article will encourage you to visit this lovely wood and enjoy its excellent wildlife. Good luck.

**Historic Note** by the Conservation Officer  
It is known that the Purple Emperor did not arrive naturally at Theberton. It was the subject of a series of releases made at Theberton Wood circa 2000, by an individual acting without the knowledge of Butterfly Conservation, and without the consent of the landowner. Butterfly Conservation does not approve of any release made without strictly following the guidelines set out in *Insect re-establishment - a code of conservation practice*. *Invertebrate Link*, 2002.

Map of  
Theberton Wood





## Book review: 'In Pursuit of Butterflies' by Matthew Oates, pub. Bloomsbury, 2015

*Richard Stewart*

I must admit that the Purple Emperor proliferation on both front and back covers was initially off-putting but this is indeed a fifty year love affair with butterflies, from childhood to 2013. The index lists sixty seven native, migrant and rarer species which Matthew has studied in all their stages of life. I particularly admired his resilience and patient with Mountain Ringlet egg laying and winter searches for Wall Brown larvae. Not surprisingly the Purple Emperor is the star species, one mating pair after separating being described as 'flying off into the concluding pages of a D. H. Lawrence novel'. There are accounts of memorable years that include the long, hot summer of 1976 and the Painted Lady year of 1997 plus intimate and comprehensive studies of habitats ranging from Meathop Moss to the New Forest, also of course including Purple Emperor hotspots such as Savernake and Alice Holt forest. I loved his account of Compton Farm on the Isle of Wight, where health and safety issues 'had scarcely penetrated the farm'. I would question some accounts, especially his assertion that eggs of the rare Long-tailed Blue on Denbies near Dorking disappeared through deer grazing on pea flowers. I was told it was a more dastardly human intervention.

As with many contemporary natural history writers, he includes many quotes and references to poetry, from his beloved Edward Thomas to his own efforts - 'Drunkard's Corner' and 'Green Man' were my favourites. Prose icons such as Richard Jefferies and Thoreau are also

included and he displays a wide interest in many conservation and more political issues, including protesting against the Iraq war and insensitively located windfarms. I did feel 'Mrs. O' should have received more praise: she must be a very patient and understanding lady, though to be fair the book is dedicated to her. There is thankfully plenty of humour, from the very amusing account of tenant farmer Arthur Brown to Matthew's remarkable ability to encounter 'mating large whites', often in the company of prestigious groups. I loved his reply to someone encountered while he was carrying a milk churn for extra height in watching Purple Emperors: 'The Lord hath need of it'. I also chuckled at his collective noun for an 'encirclement of nature consultants' - a waffle.

In a book of 480 pages there are bound to be a few raised eyebrows. There is an obvious ambivalence about using a net and I found repeated support for breeders and unauthorised releasing very alarming, bearing in mind his high profile. This is contrary to every thing Butterfly Conservation stands for and there is a long established and widely accepted official code for reintroducing species which I am sure his employers, the National Trust, support. Butterfly Conservation gets many positive mentions, including having made 'butterflies socially acceptable'. Amazingly though I could find no mention of the Millennium Survey, probably the largest study and recording of butterflies carried out anywhere in the world.

There are also examples of what I can only describe as something that verges on the edge of hubris. Matthew is good at what he does and he knows it. There's no intrinsic harm in that but some examples given should have been firmly edited out. The worst came when he counts 316 Green Hairstreaks at one site in 36 minutes, then berates a transect walker nearby who has recorded only 38, suggesting she should go back and do it properly. In what I can only surmise was a momentary lapse of reason he seems to have forgotten that on a transect you can only count the butterflies within an imaginary box around you.

However, this is always a very honest and up-front account from someone who, from his many television and radio appearances, has increased the public perception of

butterflies. Thankfully also there is just one adverse comment about the Swallowtail, our largest and most beautiful British species. I also deeply admire anyone prepared to publicly confess to being stung by a December wasp and forgetting the presence of his two children, ages six and nine, while studying Mountain Ringlets. I enjoyed it immensely, despite the above reservations and will end with a few quotes from an author who describes his life as being 'primarily about the love of natural beauty':

'Butterflies live in the moment, the moment of being' 'Some things we are not meant to understand, but merely to believe' and my favourite which is 'Whatever mistakes you make in life, please do not underestimate a caterpillar'.

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## **Newbourne Springs SWT Reserve, Tuesday 7th June 2016**

*Peter Maddison*

This was a morning walk at the 19 hectares reserve, which is about 8 miles from Ipswich on the Felixstowe peninsula. Here alder carr, wet fen and heathland are the main habitat types.

Before the meeting started a Brown Argus had been found and it obligingly stayed in the vicinity so that newly arriving members could see it. A Turtle Dove purred from a nearby thicket.

Speckled Wood and Holly Blue eluded us in the first section of woodland but in the small meadow by the pond two Small Copper, an Orange-tip, a Green-veined White and a Mother Shipton moth were found. A couple of Marsh Orchids and a spotted Orchid

were flowering. Broad-bodied Chasers and various damselflies darted around the pond.

On the heath there were more Small Copper but a search for Small Heath was in vain. We stopped to listen to a Nightingale and lesser Whitethroat, then moved on to rejoin our circuit of the carr. Occasional whites, including Large White and Green-veined White were identified and it's possible that amongst the unidentified passing butterflies Small white and Female Brimstone put in an appearance. Three Speckled Wood were counted before we reached the reversion field, where a short excursion added Common Blue to our list of species. An interesting observation was that Bird's-foot Trefoil was absent here so perhaps the fairly

abundant Hop Trefoil was their larval food plant.

The fen, bathed in sunshine seemed ideal for butterflies, but a distant white was all that could be counted. However the abundant Ragged Robin, whose vibrant pink colour contrasted with the lush green vegetation of the fen, was an impressive sight.

The previous week's grey skies and northerly winds had probably ended the flight season of most of the Spring butterflies. At least our day was warm and sunny and in our two hour walk six species were positively recorded.

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## Gislingham Primary School visit, Tuesday 10th May 2016

*Fay Jones*

I was kindly invited to visit Gilslingham Primary School to have a jam-packed, butterfly-filled afternoon with Year 2. A lovely half an hour was spent with the children doing a Q & A session as butterflies and their life cycles are part of the work they are doing in their science lessons. The class are also 'growing' their own Painted Ladies, of which half were chrysalises at the time of visiting. I couldn't quite answer all their excellent questions but I had a good go! We talked specifically about Painted Ladies and their migrations, about not worrying if they only had 4 'big' legs (yes they're still insects!) and what they liked to eat best.

We then went outside to play a butterfly and food plant match up game as some of the flower beds outside are to be replanted with butterfly friendly food plants in the near future and the children needed some ideas. However, they were able to identify over half of the plants and common butterfly species so clearly didn't need that much help. After a brief interlude of Ancient Greek - learning the meaning of lepidoptera and being thrilled to learn that they were all lepidopterists! - the children, in small groups, showed off their excellent drama skills by re-enacting the life cycle of a butterfly - never have so many convincing caterpillars been in a room at once!



*Painted Lady  
by Beryl Johnson*

## **Plant Heritage Spring Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall, Saturday 29th May 2016**

It was last December that we learned of an event being organised at Helmingham Hall by the Suffolk group of Plant Heritage. The committee decided to take a stall at the May event on Whitsun Bank Holiday Sunday. The day started at 10.00am which meant that the people with the SBBC stand, Peter and Anne, would have to be there at 9.00am if not sooner to set up our stall.

A little later, Twm Wade joined the crew, as did Sue Sidle and Richard Perryman. The day started cloudy but brightened up later, although a cooling wind persisted.

Our stand had a good location between the plant selling stands and the main car park and we received good interest from the public. Adults asked questions about plants for butterflies and moths, and made comments about frequent sightings of Holly Blue in their gardens this year. Children enjoyed the activities on the butterfly craft table.

The Branch had just received an information pack on the new BC project 'Plant a Pot for Pollinators' and the poster, showing the ten plants that are suggested for attracting butterflies, proved to be an attention grabbing, talking point for visitors to the stand.

A butterfly walk was on the programme but disappointingly, even in the relatively

sheltered knot garden, no butterflies were to be seen. During the afternoon a visitor to the stand asked for the identification of a butterfly that they had just photographed in the garden - it was a Holly Blue.

Sarah Cook who organised the Plant Fair said it was the best-attended event they had ever had and we have agreed that the event will be well worth doing again next May. We hope that there will be future collaboration between Plant Heritage and Butterfly Conservation to our mutual benefit.

If anyone else would like to be involved in such events, please let any member of the Committee know.

**Autumn  
Copy date**

**Sunday 2nd October**

Plant Heritage event at Helmingham Hall



Photos Twm Wade

Summer butterflies



White-letter Hairstreak PRM



Purple Hairstreak PRM



## Holly Blue

*A note from David Basham*

‘I got home from holiday yesterday [28th May] and went over to my allotment in Ipswich where, as I was talking to a friend, I observed a female Holly Blue laying an egg on a neighbour’s Bay bush. A cursory internet search doesn’t show Bay as a known foodplant so this morsel of information may increase our knowledge base. It might at least be worth people with Bay in their garden keeping an eye out for Holly Blues.’

*Holly Blue egg on Bay*     *David Basham*



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Identifying Holly Blue and Common Blue can be confusing. If a blue butterfly is seen in your garden early in the year it will almost certainly be a Holly Blue. The Common Blue is a grassland species usually using Birds-foot trefoil on which to lay its eggs.

The upperwings of both species are superficially similar, but there are differences. Look at the underwing of the two blues - they are very different. With experience the powder blue of the Holly Blue can be seen when the butterfly is in flight.



Holly Blue     BC website photo



Common Blue     PRM