



Butterfly  
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



# The Suffolk Argus

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

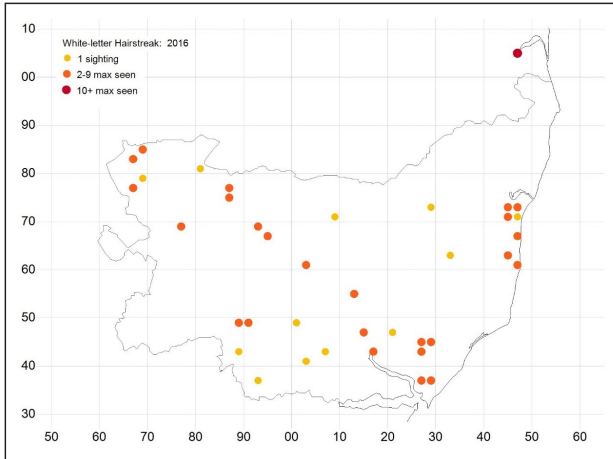


Small Copper at Sizewell May 2017 Photo: Charles Cuthbert

## 2016 Butterfly Report

**White-letter Hairstreak** and **Small Heath** are two of our six special Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, all of which need the attention of recorders.

### White-letter Hairstreak sightings 2016

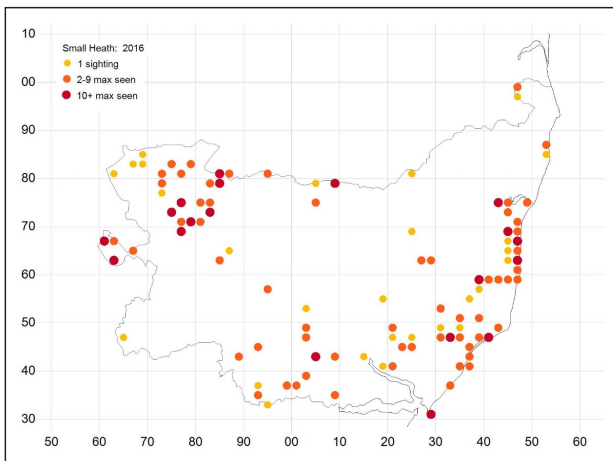


Surely there are more **White-letter Hairstreak** colonies in Suffolk.

Can you help to locate them in 2017?



### Small Heath sightings 2016



**Small Heath**, a butterfly of diminishing status, is described as ‘weak and vulnerable’ Records are important in 2017.



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## Editorial

*Peter Maddison*

Herein the 2016 Butterfly Report. A huge thank you is due to our members and other people who have sent Bill Stone, the County Butterfly Recorder, many thousands of sightings from which he has compiled this report showing the status of butterflies in the county. Assessing butterfly trends is an important part of what we do and I hope that you will be encouraged to spend time monitoring butterflies this year. It's worthwhile, intriguing, and, of course, very enjoyable.

How to set about recording butterflies and what to do with those records can be found on the national website and our own Branch website:

<http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk/>

Helen Saunders would be keen to hear from you if you are able to help with the surveying of the Silver-studded Blue in the Minsmere and Dunwich areas..... in 2018, if not 2017!

Enjoy the season!

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## Do you have a little time to spare and would like to help the Branch?

Perhaps you have the inclination at the back of your mind that you would like to help a conservation organisation but you don't want to become involved in committee work. Then you might consider taking on the role of *The Suffolk Argus* newsletter

editor. Collating Word documents and discussing the newsletter's layout with the designer/printer is the backbone of the job.

Why not contact me to discuss the options?

*Peter Maddison* [prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk)

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## New Members

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 the recording of butterflies and join some of our events and work parties.

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Butterfly Conservation

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# 2016 Suffolk Butterfly Report

Bill Stone

## 1. Introduction

On reflection, 2016 was a very average if not poor butterfly year in Suffolk and it appeared to reflect the picture seen across the UK. The wider butterfly year of 2016 was dominated by headlines in the national press highlighting continuing concerns regarding falling butterfly numbers. This was particularly noticeable following the publication of the results of the Big Butterfly Count which identified that the majority of butterfly species studied as part of the scheme saw their populations drop with some producing their worst numbers since the Big Butterfly Count scheme began in 2010. The release of results from surveys carried out by the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) in 2016 also showed a similar situation. Here, some 40 of the 57-species studied recorded a decline compared with 2015. So, why was 2016 such a poor year especially given the fact that the summer weather was warmer than average and relatively dry? In response to this question many experts, as well as pointing towards the increased use of pesticides and intensive farming methods, have raised concerns regarding current weather trends as being a major cause. This view is reinforced following the publishing of the report in 2016, *'Sensitivity of UK butterflies to local climatic extremes: which life stages are most at risk'*, by researchers from the University of East Anglia (UEA), which investigated the impact of extreme climatic events on butterfly populations. The report identified that the increasingly frequent extreme weather events being seen in the UK could threaten butterfly populations and could be part of the cause

of the reduction in butterfly populations. The UEA team looked at resident species of butterflies, those which only breed once in a year, and those having more than one brood annually. Multi-brood species were found to be more vulnerable than single brood species and in general extremes of temperature rather than precipitation were found to influence changes in butterfly populations. A key finding of this study was that rain during the pupal life-stage was detrimental to over one quarter of the species. The study also revealed extreme heat during the 'overwintering' life stage was the most detrimental extreme weather event affecting over half of UK species. This may be due to increased incidences of disease or potentially extreme hot temperatures acting as a cue for butterflies or their larvae to come out from overwintering too early and subsequently killed off by temperatures returning to colder conditions. In addition to the negative impacts, the authors found that some life stages may benefit from climatic extreme weather, with extreme heat in the adult stage causing a positive population change in over one third of the UK species. Whatever the key causes of declines in butterfly numbers actually are it remains clear how important it is to continue to record our butterflies and ensure that the collected data is submitted for use in conservation efforts. From a Suffolk perspective, the recording effort in 2016 was again significant, with increased county coverage in previously under recorded areas and a large number of butterfly records being submitted. My thanks go out to all of you who sent in records and who continue

to support me as County Butterfly Recorder.

## 2. Overview of the UK weather in 2016

The majority of months were at least slightly warmer than average for the UK as a whole, most notably September and December whose anomalies were around +2 °C. However, both April and November were around a degree cooler than average. Most places were within 10% of the yearly average for rainfall, with a slight tendency for eastern areas to be wetter and western areas drier. Sunshine was slightly above average generally. The most extreme weather events of the year were a series of five named winter storms (Gertrude, Henry, Imogen, Jake and Katie) which occurred between late January and late March, bringing some damaging winds. Storm Angus in mid-November and Barbara and Conor over the Christmas period also caused some disruption. The best of the summer weather was experienced in late July, late August and early September, with two or three notable but short-lived heat-

waves, but there were also some instances of thundery summer downpours causing localised flash-flooding, and including two notable cases of widespread disruption to electricity grid supplies due to lightning. The provisional UK mean temperature for 2016 was 9.3 °C, which is 0.5 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average and just outside the top ten warmest years in the historical UK series from 1910. It was also just 0.1 °C warmer than 2015. September was equal-second warmest in the series, and December ranked eighth, whereas April and November were each notably colder than average. The provisional UK rainfall total for 2016 was 1136 mm, which is 98% of the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall patterns were very variable but generally unexceptional. January and June were notably wetter than average for many, whereas October and December were much drier than average. 2016 was a somewhat sunnier than average year for many areas, but again no individual regions deviated by as much as 10% above the long-term average.

## 2016 Weather for East Anglia

Season	Mean Temp Deg C	Anomaly Deg C	Sunshine hrs	Anomaly %	Rainfall mm	Anomaly %
Winter <sup>15/16</sup>	6.9	3.1	196.8	117	152.1	105
Spring	8.8	0.6	529.3	119	179.8	130
Summer	17.2	1.6	592.7	104	169.0	109
Autumn	11.6	1.1	353.2	111	158.0	97

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

Anomalies are measured against the 1981-2010 averages.

## 3. Residents - Winners & Losers

The most common butterfly recorded in Suffolk in 2016 was the Small White although it showed a small shortfall when compared to numbers seen in 2015. The

Large White was the third most common county butterfly but its numbers were also down on 2015. On a national level the Large White did not appear to have a good season and the UKBMS Summary of Changes table shows a fall in numbers of

7% between 2015 and 2016. Of concern, however, is the 10-year trend which shows a fall in numbers of 21%. The generalist species such as Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock both showed reductions in their numbers here in Suffolk when compared with 2015. The Big Butterfly Count reported that the Small Tortoiseshell saw a 47% drop in numbers and Peacock slumped by 42% with both species recording their second worst years. The hairstreaks appeared to have had a mixed year with numbers of Green Hairstreak being down on 2015 this perhaps reflecting the variable weather seen during the spring. Both Purple and White-letter Hairstreaks remained roughly in line with what was achieved in 2015. Grassland butterflies such as Meadow Brown and the three Suffolk golden skippers (Essex, Small and Large) all appeared to have enjoyed longer than average flight seasons but none seemed to have had a positive year in respect of an increase in numbers. The only grassland species that seemed to buck this trend slightly was the Ringlet. The butterflies species closely associated to the Suffolk Brecklands and Sandlings showed mixed results. Grayling maintained its position when compared with 2015, whereas Small Copper, Common Blue and Small Heath all showed small decreases.

#### 4. Early & Late

As it was a poor butterfly year there was only a little movement in respect of changes to earliest and latest dates for our Suffolk species. Perhaps the most significant was the sighting of a Painted Lady on 4<sup>th</sup> January at RSPB Minsmere some 6 weeks earlier than the previous earliest date of 20<sup>th</sup> February. This sighting is perhaps indicative

of an overwintering individual rather than an actual migrant. Suitable weather appears to have led to a new latest date for Essex Skipper being recorded, this being the 14<sup>th</sup> September. This was some two days later than the previous latest date which had stood since 1984. Another grassland species, the Ringlet, also extended its latest date from 8<sup>th</sup> September to 15<sup>th</sup> September. In respect of Meadow Brown there were numerous records for this species well into September and with one October record on the 7<sup>th</sup>, narrowly missing the current latest date of the 8<sup>th</sup> October. Finally, two days were added to the latest date for Comma after a sighting on 14<sup>th</sup> December and is perhaps indicative of the mild winter of 2016/2017.

#### 5. Rarities and Migrants

Of our common migrants, the Red Admiral appeared to have had a very good year and many records were received indicating widescale penetration of the county. Some were seen in good numbers particularly along coastal sites with some high double figure counts made. Of the Suffolk tetrads surveyed in 2016 Red Admiral was found in 69.2% and this species was actually our second most common butterfly. Neither Clouded Yellow nor Painted Lady had a very good year although Painted Lady was the most common of the two being found in 38.9% of surveyed tetrads as opposed to only 7.2% for Clouded Yellow. The year saw only a few rarities reported with the first being a Large Tortoiseshell seen in a garden in central Ipswich on 5<sup>th</sup> May. Enquiries undertaken in the local area revealed the arrival of a ship from Scandinavia carrying timber at Ipswich

docks a few days before the sighting was made. Given, the proximity of the sighting to the docks this could be an indication as to origin. Although not photographed, the observer provided a description which allowed Scarce Tortoiseshell to be eliminated. It is an interesting thought that before 2013, Scarce Tortoiseshell was a butterfly that was only ever dreamed about being seen in Suffolk. However, any record of a large tortoiseshell species now has to be carefully reviewed to determine if it is a Large or Scarce Tortoiseshell. Later in the year, a Swallowtail was seen at SWT Carlton Marshes near Lowestoft on 6<sup>th</sup> June and was likely to be a wanderer from the nearby Norfolk population. In August, a report was received relating to a Long-tailed Blue being seen and photographed in Sudbury on 22nd. Further information revealed the butterfly had actually been found in a packet of Waitrose spinach before being released! Out of interest, I contacted Waitrose regarding the origin of their spinach learning that most was prepacked in Spain and Portugal before being quickly imported to the UK in refrigerated transport. It would therefore be feasible for the butterfly to have been “packed” as an adult. Finally, in October, singles of Camberwell Beauty were reported at Landguard Bird Observatory, Felixstowe on the 5<sup>th</sup> and from a garden in central Ipswich on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Both sightings coincided with moderate to strong easterly winds being experienced along the Suffolk coast as a result of a high-pressure weather system over Scandinavia and this would suggest their likely origin.

## 6. Other species of interest

**Chalkhill Blue:** The site in the west of the

county was again closely monitored with the first butterflies seen on 20th July when 3 males were recorded. Of note, this date was the same as 2015. The peak count was made on 5th August with 105 males counted along with 15 females. Compared to 2015, this year's peak was slightly lower but made a week earlier. The last visit on 1<sup>st</sup> September recorded 3 male butterflies and all were considered to be in good condition. Although the butterfly was seen throughout the full survey area, close monitoring continues to suggest that there are again two distinct, but small populations. Based on these results the colony appears to be self-sustaining and will continue to be monitored. Disappointingly, no other records were received in the year which was surprising given the good numbers being seen on the Devils Dyke just over the border in Cambridgeshire. However, it is likely that small pockets of this species exist in west Suffolk on suitable chalk land habitat especially if the larval host plant, horseshoe vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*) can be found. Some localized conservation efforts are now being made away from the known colony. This is being attempted through the planting of horseshoe vetch in an area near to the Suffolk/ Cambridgeshire border and where disturbance will be minimal.

**Purple Emperor:** With better awareness of the butterfly and its life cycle along with improved recorder coverage sightings of Purple Emperor continued to be made in 2016. The butterfly was recorded in 8 tetrads (2km x 2km squares), only one tetrad less than that achieved in 2015. Regular visits by a dedicated few to suitable sites such as SWT Bradfield Woods, the Bonny/ Priestley Wood complex near Needham Market and several wooded areas around Hadleigh led



to several butterflies being found. Also, for the first time a Purple Emperor was recorded on a transect walk through Ramsey and Hintlesham Woods. Increasing records from neighbouring counties such as Essex and Cambridgeshire suggests that this species continues to slowly expand its range throughout East Anglia.

**Silver-washed Fritillary:** Over the last few years the Silver-washed Fritillary has established itself in reasonable numbers in suitable woodland throughout Suffolk. This follows a significant range expansion being undertaken and noted throughout East Anglia. In 2015, the butterfly was recorded in 37 tetrads and in numbers well into double figures. In 2016, numbers seen were lower and appeared to buck the positive trend enjoyed previously with the butterfly only recorded in 29 tetrads. However, when the results over the two years (2015-2016) are compared it shows that the butterfly was actually recorded in 13 new tetrads in 2016. These new tetrads suggest short range movement from previously colonised areas and is perhaps indicative of further local expansion in more suitable areas.

## 7. Unusual Species

Records were again received for Brown Hairstreak and these related to the suspected introduced populations at two sites within Ipswich - Pipers Vale, Orwell Country Park and the Belstead Meadows strip. Adults were seen from 5<sup>th</sup> August to 13<sup>th</sup> September and a peak count of 6 on 29<sup>th</sup> August. A record of a single Marbled White in Lowestoft on 7<sup>th</sup> July was also received, its origin is unknown. Records for Marbled White were also received from the

known introduced population at Landseer Park, Ipswich with a maximum count of 16 made on 7<sup>th</sup> July. 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, local monitoring will be undertaken and records will be maintained at a county level in order to assess population and range changes.

## 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.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity/speciesandhabitats/specieslist>

### Dingy Skipper

The Suffolk Dingy Skipper season normally follows on from the first sighting on the Devils Dyke, Cambridgeshire which this year was made on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. It was no surprise to find the first Suffolk Dingy Skippers flying on the 7<sup>th</sup> May in the eastern section of the Kings Forest. The last butterfly reported, again in the eastern section of the Kings Forest, was on the 9<sup>th</sup> June and was, rather fittingly, of a female egg laying on the larval foot plant Bird's-foot Trefoil.

A number of surveys were undertaken during the flight period and these focussed on the known colonies within the Kings Forest, the NWT reserve at Thetford Heath

and a few other small sites.

**Kings Forest:** The first survey undertaken was on the 7<sup>th</sup> May and this focussed on areas around the Archery and eastwards along Ride 204. The weather was warm and sunny and this no doubt helped to encourage a few butterflies out on to the wing. A number of Dingy Skippers were found: 3 Griffins Covert, Kings Forest (TL836734), 1 Jerrys New Plantation, Kings Forest (TL834735), 2 along the north/ south ride, west of the Archery (TL834737). A walk was also undertaken within the western section of the forest towards West Stow but no Dingy Skippers were seen.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May, despite poor weather the Archery Ranges and Wordwell Ride were surveyed. The weather did improve slightly allowing Dingy Skippers to be found albeit in smaller numbers than expected: 1 Archery Ranges (TL829737), 1 north/ south ride east side of Archery Ranges Plantation- (TL834736), 2 Cleared forestry compartments off ride by Griffins Covert- (TL838733 + TL838734), 1 Ride 204, midway towards Griffins Covert- (TL835735), 3 Wordwell Ride, Kings Forest (TL833732 + TL833731 + TL833730).

On 14<sup>th</sup> May, the Chalk Lane was walked in cool and overcast weather. Despite this several Dingy Skippers were found along the northern edge of the lane approximately 200m from the B1106 (after the fenced area) frequenting the path edge and the small compartments: 5 (TL825752). Again, walks into the western section were also undertaken but no Dingy Skippers were found despite some suitable habitat being found.

On 25<sup>th</sup> May, the Archery Ranges and Wordwell Ride were again surveyed but in

poor weather. However, a single roosting Dingy Skipper was found: 1 (TL833739).

**NWT Thetford Heath:** Access was granted to visit the heath on 24<sup>th</sup> May. The weather was not great on arrival being cool with a moderate northerly wind. Despite this the weather did improve and the survey was undertaken. Very little Bird's-foot Trefoil was noted and it did appear that the grass had grown longer and thicker than seen in previous years. Dingy Skippers were seen: 10 in NW Corner (TL846807), 7 in N Central section (TL848807), 2 in NE Corner (TL850807)

**Angles Way (Marmansgrave Wood), St Edmunds Way :** A number of sites along this pathway on the west and north side of Thetford Heath were inspected on 24<sup>th</sup> May with Dingy Skippers being found. There is clearly a relationship between these small colonies and the population on NWT Thetford Heath especially given the short distance between them: 2 Angles Way (TL841797), 5 Marmansgrave Wood (TL841800), 5 "Re-Stock" area, St Edmunds Way (TL849808)

**RAF Barnham (TL8580/8680) and MOD Thetford Rifle Ranges (TL8481):** Unfortunately, these sites were not visited this year due to a lack of time and opportunity.

**Center Parcs, Elveden (TL8180):** No Dingy Skippers were reported again from within the Center Parcs site and it appears that this colony is now defunct. Searches of areas surrounding the Center Parcs site and north from here towards Brandon were also undertaken but these also failed to find any Dingy Skippers.

**Casual recording:** A number of individuals also volunteered to visit areas where the butterfly had not been seen in recent years

and this added to the amount of coverage undertaken to search for the butterfly. These areas included large sections of the western side of the Kings Forest and also Barnham Cross Common, Euston, Culford and Cavenham.

The Dingy Skipper was recorded in 5 tetrads in 2016, an increase from the 4 tetrads in 2015.

A number of planned visits to additional sites were not carried out due to poor weather and access issues. It is hoped that in 2017 better coverage can be achieved with greater participation through focussed and coordinated recording. It will be particularly important to visit again those sites that have historical records for Dingy Skipper and where no recent visits have been undertaken. In addition, a number of sites under the control of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) such as RAF Barnham Camp need to be surveyed. The small butterfly population remains extremely vulnerable in Suffolk, particularly within the Kings Forest due to the ongoing forestry clearance work.

### **Silver-studded Blue**

*Report by D.Dowding and H.Saunders*

### **Phenology**

Hot May weather looked to set up an early flight season but a wet June really held back the butterflies' emergence. Larval searches under slabs found caterpillars pupating in early June. The first butterflies were seen on the 15th June, a week later than last year but in keeping with the 5-year average. The average peak count date was the 4<sup>th</sup> July, 4 days later than 2015 and 8 days later than 2014, 4 days later than the 5-year average.

The very hot May but really wet June was not ideal for the butterfly. The butterflies began coming out at a similar time to 2015 but never really peaked in good numbers due to the inclement conditions. Although the number of butterflies has almost halved in 10 years, the butterflies' range has remained the same.

### **Population counts**

This year's total was 1003. 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 and survey effort. It is still similar to the 2015 data of 995, showing a slight increase (0.8%).

During the 2015 season arrangements had been made to create two single-species transects as a method of sampling the overall numbers in the Minsmere colonies. This is now in place of the traditional 100% annual count at population peak and only records a small fraction of the butterflies. This surveying was unfortunately not carried over into 2016 and therefore data for the Minsmere and Dunwich areas (the majority of the Suffolk population) is very limited for 2016. Ad hoc counts have shown the species to still be in good numbers at these sites but without a dedicated recorder, to take multiple samples, the data is less comparable. Efforts had been made to recruit transect walkers for 2016 and will continue, in the hope these transects can be covered for the coming season.

As a result, only 22 peak counts were made this season compared with 26 (2015) and 29

(2014). Of the sites that could be compared there was a slight increase in numbers on last year's figures. 11 of the 22 sites showed a marked increase with only 3 down and the other 8 staying roughly the same. As a result, this year was a better year than last but still around half of the numbers from 2006 at comparable sites (53%). It is likely that with better weather in the flight season, numbers would have been significantly higher, as the promising number of males before the weather turned, dictated numbers matching that of 2013.

Again, there are many factors to which cause low or high counts. As well as the weather, habitat condition, predation, parasitism and disease. Often when there is a decrease, it is followed by a good year but the relative influence of each factor is difficult to assess. On the whole, the butterfly is still struggling across Suffolk, and the ongoing maintenance and re-creation of pioneer heathland communities will prove vital in the species' success. Likewise, the greater the data set tabulated each year, the greater the comparability and the more trends can be analysed. As a result, we are always looking for volunteers, both for practical conservation work and for population monitoring. If you are interested in helping please contact Helen Saunders – details in the Suffolk Argus or on Suffolk Branch website: <http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk/>

### **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 2016, the butterfly was first recorded on 2<sup>nd</sup> July at SWT Newbourne Springs and last recorded on 13<sup>th</sup> September at Laxfield. The highest count this year was of 12 on 23<sup>rd</sup> July at Burgh Castle but as in previous years most records related to single butterflies. The map below shows the recorded coverage for the year with the butterfly being recorded in 38 tetrads, a small increase on the 32 tetrads in 2015. Some of this increase is down to some intensive but localised monitoring by a dedicated few observers. Also, a small number of WCBS squares produced White-letter Hairstreak for the first time.

Within the county, the long-term trend is still of concern with no real significant increases noted and I have described the White-letter Hairstreak population as being weak but stable. On a national level, the UKBMS 10 year trend indicates a fall of -72% in abundance with a fall of -42% from 2015 to 2016. This species is described as suffering from a “very highly significant” fall in abundance based on the UKBMS 1976-2106 trend period which reveals a fall in White-letter Hairstreak abundance of -97%. Clearly, as identified above, locating 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. The coverage map for 2016 is shown on page 2.

## White Admiral

As with its woodland cousin, the Silver-washed Fritillary, the White Admiral also suffered a small reduction in the numbers seen this year. It was recorded in 57 tetrads as opposed to the 61 in 2015. The map below shows the distribution in the county in 2016.

The first butterfly was seen on 8<sup>th</sup> June at Framlingham Mere which is a very early date and the last on 25<sup>th</sup> September at Kirton. The highest count was of 20 in Mutford Woods on 20<sup>th</sup> July but most records received recorded only two or three butterflies per site. The length of the flight period seen suggests a strong August peak and a very small but distinct second generation in September.

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 trend indicates a -52% fall in abundance. As with the White-letter Hairstreak, the White Admiral is also described as suffering from a “very highly significant” fall in abundance based on the UKBMS 1976-2016 trend period which reveals a fall in abundance of -65%.

## Grayling

In 2016, the Grayling was recorded in 61 tetrads as opposed to the 59 in 2015. It was

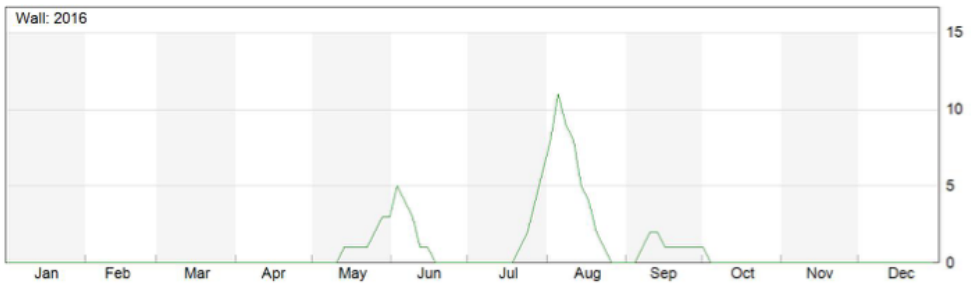
first seen on 26<sup>th</sup> June at Kenton Hills and last seen on at 20<sup>th</sup> September at Ipswich Golf Club. Some reasonable counts were made with many 50+ received. The highest count made related to 70 seen at Upper Hollesley Common on 9<sup>th</sup> August.

The county distribution divide for Grayling is clear and is representative of the Breckland habitat in the west of the county and the Sandlings habitat in the east. It 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. As with previous years 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. Of interest, a number of records of Graylings found in urban gardens made reference to the butterfly nectaring on buddleja and in a couple of cases the butterflies were seen vigorously defending the buddleja against other butterflies.

The UKBMS Summary of Changes Table for 2016 identifies a change of -29% for the Grayling population over the last 10 year trend. The position is worse when looking at the national long term series trend (1976-2016) with the Grayling recorded as having declined by -66% which is defined as “very highly significant”. In Suffolk, it remains a weak but stable population. But, it is clearly vulnerable to changes in land use and from increased footfall within the Brecklands and Sandlings areas. As such, it is essential that close monitoring continues.

## Wall

The Wall was first recorded in 2016 on 15<sup>th</sup> May at SWT Carlton Marshes and last seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> October at Landguard Common, Felixstowe. The highest count received was of 9 butterflies at SWT Carlton Marshes on



generation.

The Wall was, disappointingly, only recorded in 18 tetrads in 2016, down on the 22 in 2015. The stronghold for the species is now very much in the north-east of the county around the Waveney Forest and Waveney Valley areas. Perhaps the key site for the whole county is now SWT Carlton Marshes with this site providing the bulk of the Wall records received for the whole county.

In the south-east of the county sightings continue but are very much reduced compared with previous years. Some records received deserve further comment. Two records from RSPB Minsmere were received in early August and these are assumed to be coastal wanderers. Of particular note were sightings made later in September and October at Landguard Common, Felixstowe. A maximum of two butterflies were recorded, falling very much in the third-generation flight period. The origin

of these butterflies is unknown but it is likely that they represent coastal wanderers or perhaps are the progeny from an earlier wanderer.

6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August. Most records received were of single butterflies. A review of all the records received helps to identify the generations seen within the county. The graph below helps to show the first (15<sup>th</sup> May to 25<sup>th</sup> June) and second (13<sup>th</sup> July to 23<sup>rd</sup> August) generations with a small third (11<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October)

of these butterflies is unknown but it is likely that they represent coastal wanderers or perhaps are the progeny from an earlier wanderer.

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 more recently by way of extensive and intrusive coastal protection activities. There was only one Wall sighting from this corridor in 2016. Small numbers are still believed to be present in the Hollesley and Boyton areas, particularly on the RSPB Hollesley Marshes reserve. In the Orford and Sudbourne area, sightings were also down on previous years with only a handful of records received.

In the west of the county, records of up to 4 Wall were received from Brandon Country Park. These related to observations of Walls

by a single observer on several dates in late July and early August. Unfortunately, subsequent searching of the areas identified by others failed to locate any of the butterflies. This area will need to be checked again in 2017 to see if a small population exists.

Sadly, 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 -31% fall between 2015 and 2016. Consideration of the long-term series trend (1976-2016) is even worse with a -89% decline. As such, this decline is classified as “very highly significant”. It is therefore essential that the county population is monitored very closely and both range and abundance recorded accurately.

### Small Heath

The Small Heath was recorded in 104 tetrads this year which represents a disappointing decrease when compared to the 122 achieved in 2015 and the 142 in 2014. The first record was received on 7th May at the Tiger Hill Local Nature Reserve near Bures. It was last reported on 30<sup>th</sup> September at the Natural England reserve at Cavenham Heath. The maximum number recorded for the year was an estimated 100+ made on heathland within the RAF Barnham Camp training area on 10<sup>th</sup> July. Elsewhere, high double-figure counts (50+) were recorded at key sites in both the east and west of the county.

The 2016 distribution map on page 2 clearly shows the strongholds of this butterfly as the heaths of the Sandlings in the east of the county and of 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 the Suffolk population is of concern and unfortunately sits closely with national trends. The UKBMS Summary of Changes Table for 2016 identifies a series trend (1976-2016) of -58% for the Small Heath population and this fall in abundance is classified as being “very highly significant”. A comparison between 2015 and 2016 showed a percentage change in abundance of -26%. In Suffolk, based on recent declines, I have referred to it as weak and vulnerable. As such, it requires continued monitoring.

### 9. Recording and Geographic Coverage

We are now in the second year of the current 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 and is fully supported here in Suffolk. Being the second year it was important that the excellent level of coverage achieved last year was maintained. With over 28,000 records received and 677 tetrads covered it was clear that a brilliant recording effort had again been made. With 1089 tetrads in Suffolk it meant that butterflies were recorded in approximately 62% of the county during the year with an average of 10.2 species being seen per tetrad.

Combining the records from 2015 and 2016 shows that butterflies have been recorded in 841 tetrads, giving an incredible 77% county coverage. This is a brilliant position to be in at the end of year two and places us in a

very strong position going forward into the remaining three years.

### Species Maps

Distribution Maps and flight charts have been prepared for our regular Suffolk species, and these are available for reference as required. However, distribution maps for regular Suffolk species for period 2011-2015 can be downloaded from the BC Suffolk website at <http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk>

### Transects - UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS)

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 2016 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 2016, 21 transects and 3 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 at:

### Suffolk Transects:

Site Name	
Alton Water	RSPB North Warren
Black Heath	RSPB Wolves Wood
Center Parcs (Elveden)	Sizewell Belts
Dunwich Forest 1	Spring Lane (Bury St Edmunds)
Dunwich Forest 2	SWT Bradfield Woods
Manor Farm (Coddendam)	SWT Lackford Lakes
Newsons Farm (Thorpe Green)	SWT Knettishall Heath
Newsons Farm Extension (Thorpe Green)	NE Cavenham Heath
Nowton Country Park	SWT Redgrave and Lopham Fen
Ramsey/Hintlesham Woods	Upper Abbey Farm (Leiston)
RSPB Minsmere	

### Suffolk Single-species transects:

Site Name	Species
Blaxhall Common	Silver-studded Blue
Purdis Heath	Silver-studded Blue
SWT Bradfield Woods	Purple Hairstreak



**Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme (WCBS) - UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS)**

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. 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. In 2016, records were received from a total of 28 squares.

OS Reference	Org'	Name	OS Reference	Org'	Name
TL6381	BC	West Row	TM0553	BC	Battisford
TL6545	BC	Haverhill	TM0871	BC	Gislingham
TL7163	BC	Gazeley	TM1666	BTO	Aspall
TL7774	BTO	Icklingham	TM2144	BTO	Foxhall
TL7781	BC	Wangford	TM2147	BC	Playford
TL7866	BC	Risby	TM2481	BTO	Shotford Heath
TL7951	BC	Hawkedon	TM3150	BC	Eye,
TL8381	BC	Thetford (W)	TM3183	BC	St Margaret, South Elmham
TL8482	BC	Thetford (W)	TM3388	BC	Bungay
TL8566	BC	Fornham St Martin, Bury St Edmunds (N)	TM3450	BC	Rendlesham Forest
TL8843	BC	Sudbury (N)	TM3549	BC	Rendlesham Forest,
TL8862	BTO	Rushbrooke	TM3568	BC	Peasenhall
TL9047	BC	Acton, Lavenham	TM4051	BTO	Sudbourne
TM0048	BC	Nedging-with-Naughton	TM5075	BTO	Southwold

*The full 2016 Butterfly Report, including maps and year analysis tables, will be published in the next volume of Suffolk Natural History, the Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society.*



## Elm – the only host plant for the White-letter Hairstreak

Rob Parker

When Dutch Elm Disease (DED) struck Britain's Elm trees, pessimists said it would be the death knell for the White-letter Hairstreak (WLH). Forty years later, the species has suffered setbacks in many areas, but is by no means lost. In Suffolk, we still have plenty of elm, although we have lost a lot of mature English elms and mature Wych elms, the latter being the variety favoured by the WLH. Fortunately, the Huntingdon variety, widespread in East Anglia, has fared better than other varieties, and the butterfly has adapted to lay eggs on the sucker growth which often sprouts healthily from the root system of dying trees. Thus the butterfly has lived on, despite the countryside being littered with the still-standing corpses of dead elms.

A good deal of work has been going on in UK, France and Spain to find disease-resistant strains of elm, and to propagate these in order to replace the elms in our countryside. There have been successes at several levels, and Butterfly Conservation has been working to get some promising varieties planted to provide the necessary host trees for future generations of the WLH.

Two different varieties of elm have been planted in Suffolk recently as a long term conservation measure:

***Ulmus laevis*, the European White Elm** is not genetically resistant to DED, but it benefits from being unappealing to the elm bark beetle. The adult beetles spread the spores

of DED when the females lay their eggs into the bark of most elms. However, they avoid this variety, which grows well in most of Europe, where it supports colonies of WLH. Until now, it has not been planted much in UK.

***Ulmus minor* “Ademuz”, a variety of Field Elm**, has been cultivated in Spain as a strain genetically resistant to DED, and these are now available commercially.

Several Branches of Butterfly Conservation, notably Hampshire, have been growing both the above varieties in places where mature elms have fallen to DED, with the aim of restoring elms to their countryside, and providing suitable habitat for the recovery of their WLH colonies.

Two years ago, Andrew Brookes of the Hampshire Branch sent freshly harvested seed of *Ulmus laevis* to other Branches interested in a similar conservation measure. I received an envelope of seed (free, with compliments) and sowed some at home. I used very little, but passed some on to interested Committee members, and we engaged the interest of the Parks Departments at St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Borough Councils.

As a result, we finished up with small amounts growing with members, and two parallel ventures on a larger scale. At St Edmundsbury's Nowton Park Nursery about 50 young plants were grown in a propagation tunnel by a project employing young-

sters with learning difficulties. At Ipswich's Chantry Park, the charity ActiveLives grew about 20 for us. This very generous co-operation, at no cost to Butterfly Conservation, patiently nurtured seedlings through the winter of 2015/16, kept them moist and fertilized, potted them up and reached the winter of 2016/17 with plants ready to be planted out in suitable locations. The shortest, home grown specimens, were about a metre high whereas the strongest had reached head height in the nurseries.

In the meantime, Andrew Brookes had obtained some commercially grown "Ademuz" from Spain, and one batch of a dozen was purchased by Suffolk Branch, at a cost of £9 each plant. These were delivered in January 2017, conveniently ready for planting at the same time as the locally propagated White Elms.

Planting decisions resulted in a mix of public and private sites, spread between West and East Suffolk, as follows. They were planted by volunteers in groups of about 3, usually close to an existing WLH colony or in a place where the species had flown in the past. Most went into the ground in February/early March, protected from browsing by tree guards and stakes.

### European White Elm

#### [West Suffolk 53]

4 by stream at Tayfen Meadows, Bury St Edmunds.

6 on private land near Thurston.

1 on private land at Fornham.

33 at Bury St Edmunds, beside Lark, planted 2 Mar 2017

9 awaiting planting, St Eds Council land, beside Lark.

#### [East Suffolk/Ipswich 21]

3 Alexandra Park

3 Chantry Park

3 Christchurch Park

3 Landseer Park

3 Holywells Park

3 Waldringfield (planting deferred)

3 Stutton (Private land)

#### Disease resistant Field Elm 'Ademuz' [12 total]

A courier brought the plants on 14 Jan 2017, well wrapped and with plenty of moisture around the roots. The tallest were just over a metre. Most were planted promptly, close to a known White-letter hairstreak colony..

3 Near Aldeburgh,

(Trudie's garden, Private)

3 at Newmarket Plantation, Cavenham.

(Private)

3 in Holywells Park,

behind Susie Mellor memorial bench.

3 for Waldringfield (awaiting planting).

Now we must wait and see; obviously it is going to be a few years before any of these trees are big enough to support a White-letter Hairstreak colony. Two of the sites lie on existing butterfly transects, which should assist future monitoring. Let's hope it turns out to have been a useful act of conservation – both for the elms and the White-letter Hairstreak.

## **Butterflies in Christchurch Park, Ipswich**

*Richard Stewart*

As a follow up to our editor's very positive review of my recently published book, can I ask everyone visiting this attractive park, so close to the middle of Ipswich, to contact me about future butterfly sightings. Obviously the butterfly garden itself is the main focus and this has recently had its nectar plants increased, with particular emphasis on early flowering plants for butterflies emerging from hibernation. The Brimstone's presence should be increased by many more buckthorns being added, of both varieties. Some are at the north end of the park but the majority are in the orchard area, extending the already existing hedge of native species. Thanks to a late but very welcome record from Adrian Richards I was able to include the Green Hairstreak in the species seen between 2003 and 2016, bringing the total up to twenty five. The

area below the tennis courts is probably the best possibility but both gorse and broom, the larval food plants in Suffolk, have also been planted at the northern end.

The species I am particularly interested in are Common Blue, not recorded by me in 2016, with a previously recorded colony in the grasses below the tennis courts. White Admiral could be attracted by the increase in honeysuckle. One was seen and photographed, in 2016, in the Dales, only about a mile from the park. Silver-washed Fritillary is still spreading and as I have recorded one in our garden, less than half a mile from the park, it could soon be seen there. Any Grayling sightings would be most welcome as only one has been recorded since 2003. Please contact me by email: [rgsvalezina@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rgsvalezina@hotmail.co.uk)

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

Members are warmly invited to attend the meeting which will be held on  
**Saturday 25th November at Stowupland Village Hall at 2.30pm.**

OS Grid Ref: TM070600 Post Code: IP14 4BQ

Speakers will include Steve Aylward, Head of Property & Projects for  
Suffolk Wildlife Trust

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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## **Photographic Competition**

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 Events page of the Branch website  
<http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk/events.html>

## On My Travels for Butterflies – Part 1 Cotley Hill, Wiltshire

*Kevin Ling*

From time to time, it is refreshing to leave the beautiful county of Suffolk and venture further afield in search of a butterfly fix.

For spring butterflies, there can be no finer place than Cotley Hill, situated just south of Warminster. Parking is available by way of a small layby at the A36/B3414 roundabout (grid ref ST918429). A visit from mid – late May will provide a diverse mix of butterflies, with 15 species seen on my visit. Over a full season, this site is home to up to 30 species. I had visited for a particular species that I had not seen before, the Marsh Fritillary. I was not disappointed with about 40 seen during the walk.

‘Marshies’ are a species that lend themselves well to those of us who like to capture their intricate beauty on camera or to just stop and admire them as they bask for long periods of time when the sun is out. They are a variable species whereby the wing colours can vary a great deal despite the chequered pattern being more constant. If you are lucky you may, like me, see an aberration. The site is host to a good coverage of Devil’s-bit Scabious, the larval foodplant of the Marsh Fritillary. The males will generally emerge first and can be seen patrolling at low level, searching for freshly emerged females with which to mate. An early morning visit can allow close up observation of freshly emerged specimens drying their wings before taking flight as the temperature rises. From the car, you immediately go through a gate that leads up the path to Cotley Hill. Look out for Green Hairstreak in this first section. To your right-hand side there is a south-west facing slope that immediately starts producing several key species, including Marsh Fritillary, Dingy and

Grizzled Skipper, Small Blue and Brown Argus. These slopes support a rich variety of flora, so adherence to the footpaths is always recommended. Don’t panic, at Cotley Hill the species will come to you!

After a few hundred yards there is a junction in the path. The lower route to the left will take you to some more prime Marsh Fritillary habitat, or you can continue up hill. Whatever way you choose, the walk can easily be turned into a circular route so that all areas can be explored.

As I headed uphill other species were soon encountered, including the stunning Adonis Blue. The vibrant colour of the male’s wings make them easily distinguishable from Common Blue and are a joy to behold. These were found on the south facing slopes where the grass was more closely cropped.

The path continues to lead upwards on the south-west slopes of Cotley Hill and continues to Scratchbury Hill. This upper section is also known to be a site for Wall, however none were seen during my visit, with the wind starting to pick up strength the higher we got. We took a path to the left, which gradually descends back to the circular route already referred to. More species were added to the list including Orange-tip, Small White, Large White, Green-veined White, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. However I must confess that it was difficult to divert my attention away from the Marsh Fritillaries that frequented every stage of the walk.

If you ever find yourself in this corner of Wiltshire, I would certainly recommend this site.

## Success in Crete

*Richard Stewart*

Over many years I have found several advantages in belonging to ten different branches of Butterfly Conservation. One has been that my wife and I have enjoyed many holidays, mainly but not exclusively in Europe, with the Lincolnshire, Upper Thames and Suffolk branches. In these groups there were experts able to identify not just European butterflies but also a wide range of other wildlife. Three of these holidays, spanning the period from spring to early summer, were at Casa Guilla, high on a rocky outcrop in the Spanish Pyrenees. The owners advertised regularly in the national magazine but sold their property a few years ago. Many species were recorded close by, in the meadows and wasteland, though much of this was subsequently purchased for vineyards. Perhaps the most atmospheric moments were early mornings on the balcony, before the sun broke through the deep mist in the valley below, with calls from unseen birds, hoopoes and nightingales, quail, golden orioles and cuckoos. We travelled further afield and I can still remember that wonderful moment when I first saw an Apollo, in a meadow close to an old smuggling track not far from the border with Andorra. On these holidays I saw species that were relatively common though rare in Britain, including Wood White, Glanville Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary and Large Tortoiseshell. A Suffolk Branch holiday to the Lake Kerkini area of Greece produced a very welcome Large Copper and even more varieties of blues, ringlets, hairstreaks and whites.

However, one magnificent species eluded me, the Two-tailed Pasha, the only

European representative of a genus with a stronghold in North Africa. I don't need to describe it further as Kevin Ling displayed a fine photo at our last AGM and this was subsequently reproduced on the back cover of the Autumn 2016 *Suffolk Argus*. One reason for not seeing it was its preferred coastal habitat and since we were going to Crete in late April and early May 2016 I thought there might be a possibility. I contacted our editor who thought it might be too early. The first brood is from May to June but we only had three days of May before returning home. The richly flowering meadows and roadsides where we explored produced many species, including Painted Lady, Swallowtail and Clouded Yellow. On May 3rd, our last day, we headed for the monastery of Ayia Triadha. It was a very attractive place but the church inside wasn't to my taste. Most of the group went inside for a tour but I took a quick look at all the silver and gold ornamentation and decided to go elsewhere. I prefer my religion to be simple and lacking in ostentation, especially if there are beggars just outside the door. I sat in the sunshine, talking to a few in our group, when suddenly a large butterfly flew past. I quickly made my excuses and pursued it, fortunately seeing it land low down below the monastery wall. I took a quick distant picture, which fortunately was in focus, then was able to look through my binoculars long enough to verify the identification of the Two-tailed Pasha. Then it flew up and majestically over the monastery wall. It didn't return and my only regret was that my wife Marie, still inside the church, didn't see it.

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**On My Travels...** Kevin Ling visited Cotley Hill, Wiltshire in pursuit of the Marsh Fritillary (Page 21)



The path to Cotley Hill, Wilts



Marsh Fritillary at Cotley Hill

Photos: Kevin Ling

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There have been some improved counts of 1st generation Wall, and Dingy Skipper this year



Wall on wall! Somerleyton Churchyard.  
Photo: David Pitt



Dingy Skipper in the Kings Forest  
Photo: Trevor Goodfellow



The Susie Mellor memorial bench sited in Brimstone Alley, Holywells Park, Ipswich.  
Funded by the Susie Mellor Legacy.

Photo: Kevin Ling



## The Branch stand at the Helmingham Hall Heritage Plant Fair

Photos: Karen Brown

“Thank you,” to the volunteers who made our attendance possible.

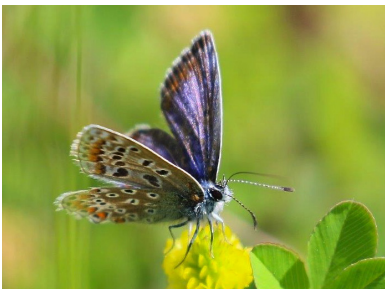
Hummingbird Hawkmoth was seen on Catmint in the formal garden, but all the butterflies: Red Admirals, Peacocks, Small Copper, Holly and Common Blues, and a few ‘whites’ were in the meadow.



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## Common Blue butterflies

Note the heavy dark spots of this aberrant form, photographed by Trevor Goodfellow at Thurston



Common Blue male, standard type, nectaring at Sizewell in late May.

Photo: Charles Cuthbert

