



Butterfly
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



The Suffolk Argus

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

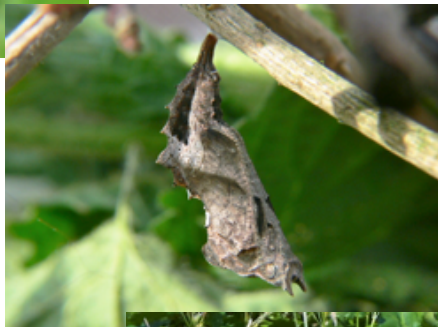
Common Blue pair at The Haven, Aldeburgh beach August 2017 Photo: Tony Fox





**Comma larva, pupa and adult at
Belstead Nature Reserve**

See Kevin Ling's article on Page 10



Photos: Kevin Ling



**Shrike at work.....
article on Page 13**

Impaled Swallowtail

Photo: Jillian Macready

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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

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.

**Copy date for the Suffolk Argus
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Butterfly Conservation

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Editorial

Peter Maddison

Another season of butterfly recording has drawn to a close. I hope you were able to make the most of the fine weather of the spring and early summer months and were able to enjoy not only some particularly early sightings, but also the abundance of some species. Even when the weather broke in late July and cloud drifted in from the North Sea there were many days when temperatures remained high enough for recording butterflies, though hanging around waiting for the sun to appear in a patch of blue sky did get tedious. How many times did I finish a walk that had deteriorated into near total cloud cover only for wall-to-wall sunshine to reappear whilst I was on my way home. Now that butterfly records have been gathered, they need to be sent, if they haven't already, to Bill Stone, and it would make his job easier if he received them by the end of October.

I haven't heard of many rarities in the county this year, but no doubt Bill will enlighten us in his next report. In this newsletter, however, Bill has written about a European species that might occur in Britain in the next few years and will be a species that we in the east ought to look out for.

In the newsletter Twm Wade writes about a new project in conjunction with Highways England and their contractors to encourage butterflies on the verges of the A14.

Kev Ling writes about a precious reserve that is on his doorstep. It is his local patch and one that through frequent visits has

allowed him to get to know well. Many of us have got favoured areas that we visit for butterflies and other wildlife. It would be good to hear of these places - why not consider writing a piece, long or short, that inspires you?

The AGM and Members' Afternoon is on the 25th November at Stowupland Village Hall. Do join us for this event in mid Suffolk to which we hope members from across the county will find travel relatively easy. The annual Photographic Competition has gone from strength to strength and is an enjoyable part of the meeting. Details of how you can enter are given in this newsletter and on the Branch website.

Conservation work at Purdis Heath has begun again and work parties are held on the first Saturday of each month. Some new tools have been bought - tree-popper, Chillington hoes and sharp saw blades! - and there's tea and cake too! Come along and give the tools a swing or a bash. There are no gym membership fees, it's fun and the Silver-studded Blues will thank you.

It is our conservation work, and our recording of butterflies that has caught the attention of Geoffrey Probert, the High Sheriff of Suffolk, and the lead article that follows is his letter of appreciation of the work that Branch members carry out.

We thank the High Sheriff for this recognition.

Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation

Message of thanks from the High Sheriff of Suffolk

The High Sheriff is a job stretching back to Saxon days. The first High Sheriff of Suffolk we know of was Toli who died in 1066, probably at Hastings defending our land. Unfortunately the Sheriff of Nottingham rather spoilt our reputation! Over the centuries we have lost our old powers as Shire-Reeve to collect taxes, raise posses & so on. We remain the Queen's Representative for Law & Order and spend time encouraging & thanking all those wonderful people who serve our county in the Constabulary, Fire & Rescue & the Judiciary. These days we spend an increasing share of our time supporting & encouraging the voluntary sector. In my year I particularly wanted to thank those who protect & record our heritage, our environment & our history.

So this article is my opportunity to thank all of you who are out there recording our butterflies & helping protect the environment in which they thrive. I know you are often to be seen out there surveying & preparing distribution maps. And, of course, making a contribution to redressing the decline of endangered species like the White Admiral & Silver-studded Blue, and to celebrating the revival of the likes of the Dingy Skipper & Chalkhill Blue. And it was a great achievement to win the Wren Biodiversity Action Fund grant for the Ipswich Heathland Project. Well

done committee and all the volunteer team. Keep up the great work!

On our farm in south Suffolk we are in a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme and I was glad to see this year that our 10 hectares of Wild Bird Seed Mix plots have been awash with butterflies. Let's all work together for the Papilionoidea.

With best wishes

Geoffrey Probert
High Sheriff of Suffolk 2017



White Admiral
by Beryl Johnson

A14 Project, Newmarket

Twm Wade

It is impossible to live in Suffolk without some knowledge or experience of the A14 trunk road as it cuts through the middle of the county from east to west. For many it is a commercial asset, a boon to their working life, saving time and mental effort. As they travel, I wonder how many consider the wildlife that might live either side. Have you ever thought what sort of habitat the engineering work created?

The A14 is a corridor for commerce and has the potential as a corridor for wildlife if we think about it. Yet there is always the concern that wildlife, which is encouraged to live on the verges, will die on the carriageway or cause accidents. That same philosophy applies to mankind who would prefer to live in a house next to a road than sleep under the stars with only a blanket for cover. Hence, I am hoping to convince Highways England (HE) of the merits of managing their verges to benefit moths and butterflies.

The A14 Project near Newmarket is a trial to demonstrate that by introducing a range of nectar-rich plants into the verge we can increase the number of insects. For this project the target insect is the Chalkhill Blue butterfly. The Chalkhill Blue has one known colony in Suffolk on an area of land which is

probably less than the area of a tennis court. Meanwhile, in Cambridgeshire there is an abundance along the Devils Dyke. So the vision for the project is to introduce Horseshoe Vetch, the nursery plant for Chalkhill Blues, to those parts of the A14 and A11 which cut through chalk. The Chalkhill Blue is a good flyer and the site is only two miles from the Devils Dyke making natural migration likely.

Engineers and government departments in particular are difficult to convince when it comes to change or novel ideas. For this reason, we have this trial at the top of a cutting that can be accessed from Exning and is free from excessive scrub. While it is perfectly legal to walk, ride a bike or horse and use a horse and carriage along a trunk road and in places public rights of way cross the road, HE do not like the public to step foot on their estate off the carriageway. In consequence, it took some time to convince the officers responsible for maintaining “the network” (their word) to allow the trial to go ahead.

The trial area is about 150m long at the top of the cutting a short distance south of J37. Unlike areas within Cambridgeshire, rabbits kept scrub to a minimum until recently and there was an open swarth where it seemed possible

to establish both Horseshoe Vetch and Birdsfoot Trefoil, a nectar-bearing plant favoured by many insects as well as the nursery plant for Dingy Skippers. Late in November after an emotional roller-coaster, we were planting the well-grown seedlings made ready for us from seed by Sarah Cook of Plant Heritage.

In January this year I asked to have access to see how well the plants were doing. I then learned that the HE was changing the managing contractor and the new one would not be engaged until April. That was a low point yet in late May I got on site and estimated the plant survival rate at about 40%. From then on I monitored the site for plants and butterflies about once a fortnight. It

became apparent that we had received the seed for the Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil, not the Common version ordered. Also I perceived that we were on the cusp of scrub taking over. These two factors could frustrate the trial so we bought 20 Common Birdsfoot Trefoil plants and got permission to crop or pull up the scrub.

The plants did flower but I suspect that only Birdsfoot Trefoil seed was viable. Of the grassland species, I did see Common Blue (including a female) and Brown Argus but generally the numbers are low. I feel confident that the potential is there and one day you may see Chalkhill Blues flying in Suffolk.



Planting on the bank of the A14 Photo: Brian Ogden



The planting area on the A14 at Exning Photo: Twm Wade

Urban Buzz

‘Urban Buzz’ is an ambitious Buglife project aiming to create 100 ‘buzzing hotspots’ in and around Ipswich for our much loved bees, butterflies, moths and other pollinators, providing flowers, breeding and sheltering opportunities. With the help of local partners, which includes Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation and various community groups, over the next 20 months ‘Urban Buzz’ can help create a more vibrant buzzing town!

A video of the work of Urban Buzz in Ipswich can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/227758199>

Background

The UK has lost over 90% of its wildflower rich grassland since the 1940s, with a move to more intensive farming and development being the two main causes for this loss of habitat. Many of our pollinator species are in decline with some formally widespread species restricted to certain parts of the UK.

Why help pollinators?

We need to protect pollinators, as they provide us with much of our food, as well as pollinating many of our garden and wildflower plants. Butterflies and moths are good indicators of pollinator habitat - they need larval food plants and nectar plants. Moths, most of which feed at night, are responsible for the pollination of many garden plants such as

honeysuckle, campion, evening primrose and sweet rocket.

What we want to achieve

The project will provide resources for pollinators throughout the year benefitting bees, butterflies, moths and more, focussing on key stages of their life-cycle, and providing connectivity for pollinators to fly in abundance throughout the town.

By catering for pollinators we are indirectly creating habitat for other wildlife as well. These ‘Buzzing hotspots’ will become important green oases for birds, small mammals, herpetofauna and other non-pollinating insects, forming a key part of the Wild Ipswich Vision. Parks, community areas, schools and roadsides will form the majority of sites.

How can you help?

We are always looking for site suggestions so if you have any ideas please get in touch with us. We need help with site preparation to prepare the ground before seeding and planting of wild flowers or flowering shrubs/trees. And help will be needed to maintain meadows in a nectar rich state by cutting and raking off the arisings.

Contact David Dowding, Ipswich Urban Buzz Officer
07963197221
david.dowding@buglife.org.uk

Belstead's Nature Reserves

Kev Ling

It is always nice to have a nature reserve on one's doorstep. So, I am blessed to have a large area to explore in the Belstead area of Ipswich.

Belstead Meadows, Kiln Meadow, Spring Wood and Bobbits Lane nature reserves are nestled side by side, providing acres of fantastic wildlife habitat that includes Insects, Birds, Mammals, Amphibians and Flora. It is the Butterflies that I will focus on in this article.

My new year kicked off with a walk along Bobbits Lane, examining the hedgerows for Brown Hairstreak eggs. The larval foodplant is Blackthorn and the eggs are laid singly on the bark of the foodplant, generally at a fork in a branch that is on first or second year growth. It pays to look early in the year before new growth makes it more challenging. A good number were found along this stretch, but later in the year, the adults would prove elusive to me, despite numerous hours on the lookout.

As would be expected, the Orange-tip is one of the first species to appear. My personal favourite, the Orange-tip provides a welcome splash of colour after a long winter and helps kick start spring. Given the mild temperatures in 2017 my first sighting this year was at Belstead Meadows on 2nd April, my earliest on record. My favoured spot by the tunnel under the A14 never disappoints and I would return there regularly to observe the early stages of the next generation of Orange-tips.

On 2nd April I also observed my earliest recorded Holly Blue, along with a further six species (Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Speckled Wood, Comma, Brimstone and Small White). This was certainly a good omen for the year to come.

Saved from development, Kiln Meadow, which is owned by Ipswich Borough Council, was officially opened in 2013. It comprises a mixture of grassland, hedgerows and young woodland and supports a vast range of butterflies. On the 30th April I recorded my first Green Hairstreak of the year there, on the same Hawthorn as previous years. Normally seen in quick bursts, I had the pleasure of observing and photographing this particular example for a full thirty minutes. The following day was the annual Spring Wood Celebration event where the Suffolk Branch of BC attends and provides guided walks. Unfortunately, the weather was not kind to us this year, but we hope to see you there in 2018, as it is a great day out. Spring Wood provides one of the finest displays of Bluebells in the area and is well worth a visit.

The next event at Kiln Meadow was the BioBiltz on 11th June. Blessed with good weather the variety of species started to increase with the emergence of the grassland species such as Meadow Brown, Ringlet and skippers. Other notable sightings included Brown Hairstreak and Comma larvae as well as adult Brimstone, Small Copper, Red Admiral, Peacock,

Small Tortoiseshell and whites. Follow this link to explore the other diverse wildlife found on the day. <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/bioblitz/kilnmeadow2017>.

By mid-June there were single sightings of both Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral. Both of these species not recorded at Kiln Meadow previously to my knowledge (happy to be corrected otherwise). The White Admiral was not such a surprise as these are present a short flight away at Wherstead and Cutlers Wood. As for the Silver-washed Fritillary, is this yet another example of how this species has spread across the county in recent years?

Towards the end of June (29th), a late afternoon walk saw butterflies reaching their peak at Kiln Meadow, with a tally of over 500 seen in just one third of the reserve. This included 234 skippers and 215 Ringlet. But the summer highlight for me was the Comma. Never before had I seen so many on the wing and on this walk 26 were counted. I was fortunate enough to also see larvae and a pupa of this species (photos page 2). For the remainder of the summer, Comma would be ever present. Red Admiral numbers also started to increase and the first of the summer brood Peacocks also took to the wing.

Into July and there was an explosion of Gatekeeper. After a disappointing 2016, this species bounced back with a

vengeance and sightings would remain constant for weeks to come. What was interesting was the differences in size, with one example found so large, I almost mistook it for a female Meadow Brown.

As the summer progressed, so did the number of visits I made to this beautiful area of Ipswich. With the exception of a dip in the weather in early/mid-August, I could not remember seeing so many Butterflies for some time. Small Copper numbers steadily increased along Bobbits Lane and on a good day it was normal to find 15 species along this stretch. Across the road at Kiln Meadow a plum tree started to shed its summer fruit. The windfalls littering the floor, inviting Comma and Red Admiral to a feast. With the grassland species now at an end, Large Whites replaced them as one of the most numerous species.

As I write this article, we are now moving into October and Autumn is starting to tighten its grip. On a mild day, there are still small numbers of butterflies to be seen, with the hibernating species feeding themselves in preparation for a long winter ahead. And that is just about it for 2017. What will we do for the next five months, except look forward to that moment when the Orange-tip heralds the start of Spring and we can look forward to doing it all again.

Lost In Norfolk - Pentax Papilio 8.5 x 21 close focus (0.5 m) binoculars.

If anyone has a spare pair they are willing to sell, please contact me on 01473-216518.

Richard Stewart.

Observations on the Small Heath

Richard Stewart.

Can I add a footnote to Bill Stone's excellent 2016 report in *The Suffolk Argus* Vol 69. He described the Small Heath as 'highly adaptive' and being 'found in a variety of grassy habitats' with 'the key requirement of a short sward of fine grass species'.

That is my conclusion but over the years, including on the transect I used to walk in the Fynn valley, numbers were higher when tall grasses were nearby. At Shingle Street on 14th June 2017 my wife Marie and I did a comprehensive count from the path beyond 'The Havens' at one end to the start of the footpath heading towards East

Lane. We ended up with a count of 104 and it was noticeable that numbers were reduced towards the end of the path past 'The Havens' where longer grasses were absent. Many were also found in the scrub areas between the road and the houses.

On a different topic, the area fronting these houses and the shingle beach must now have the best display of valerian in Suffolk, especially close to the Coastguard Cottages. It would certainly be worth a visit if there was a large influx of butterflies since valerian flowers would offer welcome nectar to exhausted butterflies coming in from the North Sea.

Observing a Silver-washed Fritillary

Mike Dean

During late July I made the most of the morning sunshine to cycle the six miles to a local wood, as I hadn't been there recently. It's one of those Suffolk woods that have seen colonisation of both the White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary (SWF) over the last decade.

I saw something that I'd never directly witnessed before. A rather worn female SWF was flying very slowly along the main ride keeping very close to the ground and often dropping down to crawl amongst the short vegetation. It was hardly surprising this individual was past its best as the SWF had been on the wing since at least mid June this year. Anyway, as it flitted by it became aware of my bike and backpack,

that was over the handlebars - both black. It disappeared from view until I became aware that it had alighted on the bottom of my bag and was bending its body trying to lay an egg!

As you might imagine I gently discouraged this particular act, so it flew to a nearby tree trunk (Ash) partly covered in moss and spent at least ten minutes whilst I was watching, crawling, fluttering and inspecting the bark surface; she laid several eggs during this time.

I've read the theory of this behaviour many times but never seen the practice. That is, until now, naturally.

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.

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>

Shrike at work or just a clumsy Swallowtail?

Jillian Macready

I witnessed a tragedy on holiday, at least for one European Swallowtail. It's always a tragedy to lose a beautiful butterfly, but actually I observed the aftermath of a tragedy as I didn't see it happen, so I'm puzzled as to why it happened.

While we were photographing these magnificent creatures flitting around a milk thistle in a meadow in Catalonia, April 2017, we noticed another one looking a bit odd. As you do with photographing butterflies, you take one record shot as soon as you see them, in case they fly away, but this one didn't fly so we got closer, taking further shots and then I realised he was upside down with his legs in the air and he wasn't moving. We didn't believe it wouldn't fly away but as we got near we noticed he was in fact pinned by the head to one of the leaf spines. Milk thistles have vicious needle-sharp and very long spines on their leaves, a bit like spear thistles in the UK and sharper than the normal creeping thistle

we see all over the place. The spike had gone clean through his head, mounting him to the thistle leaf. (photo page 2)

Either he had impaled himself deliberately, which is unlikely, or a gust of wind had knocked him off balance and a leaf needle had caught him in the wrong place or maybe, and this is more likely, a shrike had impaled him, ready to go back to its prey at a later stage. This is a well-known tactic of all the shrike species. They are called the Butcher Bird and for good reason, as they will even do it when they are not hungry just to store food; putting their prey in thorn bushes to come back to later as if coming back to a larder.

It would be interesting to know if anyone else has observed this behaviour, as our guide, who was the very knowledgeable Tristan Lefanchis, said he had never encountered anything like it before.

Butterfly Thieves

Richard Stewart.

I was pleased to see a whole page in our national magazine devoted to the activities and subsequent sentencing of a notorious butterfly thief. The problem rose again in the third week of July 2017 with Swallowtail caterpillars being stolen. When I heard a trailer for this on the local television station I must admit I was very worried. I assumed it was going to be Strumpshaw as, a few days earlier, I had found five caterpillars, in different stages of development, on one milk parsley plant. I mentioned this to several visitors as the adult butterflies were not flying because of cloudy conditions. When I found out it was Hickling Broad, not just a National Nature reserve but with additional protection under the EU Birds and Habitats directives, I was personally relieved though of course still deeply upset. I contacted Strumpshaw early the next morning to suggest they block off this area, a boardwalk approached by a bridge over a dyke. What they did I don't know.

There is always this problem of finding rare

wildlife and wanting to share your joy with others, yet having to be conscious of others with ulterior motives. Some years ago, at Denbies on the North Downs, one of the most respected members of Butterfly Conservation found Long-tailed Blues on the pea flowers which grow in profusion along the Carriageway area. He naturally spread the news but an unscrupulous collector took the lot - I can't remember if it was eggs or caterpillars. His name was known but not widely publicised, which in my opinion was wrong. I noticed that the reports of the Swallowtail theft on both local television stations and in the 'Eastern Daily Press' failed, surprisingly, to include the fact that Swallowtails are one of the British butterflies given full legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside act, from egg to adult. I consequently contacted the Norfolk Wildlife trust to point this out. Stressing this legal protection might discourage others, since the magnitude of the theft, allied to Hickling's protected status, could mean that anyone found guilty might be given a custodial sentence.

Events Round up

Peter Maddison

Field events targeting the early flying species in late April and the beginning of May are very weather dependent and when night temperatures are not much above 0°C and a prolonged spell of light, northerly winds has been blowing the chances of recording many butterflies is slim. Nevertheless, at **Ramparts Field on the 30th April**, where 14 people gathered for fieldwork and photography, on a walk suitable for novices, 4 butterfly and 6 day-flying moth species were seen. A walk with similar focus was held in the **Kings Forest on the 7th May** and although

fewer people attended, 8 species, which included Small Heath, Green Hairstreak and pairing Orange-tips were sighted. Later in the afternoon Dingy Skippers were recorded by those who continued further through the forest.

Spring Wood Celebration Day on the 1st May is an annual event that we attend with our Branch table of leaflets and information boards. Other conservation organizations and groups concerned with 'green' living are there and together with music and food this is a

lively event which is always well attended by the public. Pity the overcast sky and bouts of drizzle didn't make the butterfly aspect of the guided wildlife walks as bountiful as in 2016.

A moth trap was run in woodland at Mildenhall on the night of 19th/20th May and when opened on the Saturday morning, species including the beautifully marked and named Pebble Prominent, Poplar Lutestring, Pale Oak Beauty, Common Swift and Clouded Border were observed. It was a sunny morning, so butterflies were on the wing and 6 species were recorded.

The **Dingy Skipper surveys** held during last week of May, which happened to be warm and sunny (so very different from the grim weather of many previous years) brought forth the butterflies, with 49 Dingy Skippers being counted on the 24th May. 15 species of butterflies and 6 species of day-flying moth were noted on that day.

The walk at Tiger Hill LNR, Bures St Mary on the 21st May was led by the warden, Nick Miller. 5 Small Copper topped the scoreboard, but on the heath 4 Small Heath were observed and in the meadow Brimstones were seen - it's always uplifting to glimpse a passing 'butter-coloured fly': in the east of the county I don't see many of this species. Red Admirals, Commas and the white butterflies were seen and one observant participant found Small Tortoiseshell larvae in a patch of nettles.

Once again we attended the **Plant Heritage Spring Fair at Helmingham Hall on the 28th May**. This was a busy day with lots of interest from the public in our stand. A couple of butterfly walks were held, the meadow with its wildflowers and network of meandering paths being the most productive butterfly area.

The weather preceding the **Salcey Forest Wood White event on the 10th June** was awful and with an equally poor forecast for the day a phone call to participants brought agreement to cancel the long drive to Northamptonshire. A last minute weather forecast suggested better weather so a few of us drove to Salcey. Wood Whites were the target species and although some were seen on the rides to the south of the Horsebox car park more were seen during the afternoon to the north, which brought the total of Wood Whites to 17. It was very breezy, even within the woodland, and other species were limited to Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Brimstone and Orange-tip. We had a chance meeting with the warden who suggested that for Black Hairstreak we check the blackthorn at the rear of his cottage. BH had not been seen there as yet this season, but the opportunity was too good to miss so we spent some time in the most sheltered place we could find, although this was to no avail.

We joined the Norfolk Branch for the **Swallowtail Open Day at the Ted Ellis Nature Reserve, Wheatfen on the 11th June**. This was well attended by members of the public, all of whom hoped to see and perhaps photograph the various stages of the Swallowtail. The wind was strong over the reed beds and good, close views of Swallowtails were infrequent, the norm being for them to fly low and fast, and then promptly disappear into distant patches of flag iris or milk parsley. The attention of visitors was drawn to early instar larvae on some of the milk parsley. Red Admirals, whites, Speckled Wood, Peacock and early Meadow Browns were seen along the pathways and more wooded areas.

To be continued.....

A future Suffolk butterfly - Southern Small White (*Pieris mannii*)

Bill Stone, Suffolk Butterfly Recorder

Introduction

One of the interesting aspects of my role as County Butterfly Recorder is monitoring movements and changes in the ranges of butterfly species in the UK and Europe. This is particularly important in order for myself and others to make reasonable and balanced judgements about the provenance of any new butterfly species that may occur in Suffolk. As an example, think back a few years to what happened when Scarce (Yellow-legged) Tortoiseshell, *Nymphalis xanthomelas* was seen to move rapidly through NE Europe. The prospect of this butterfly arriving in Suffolk was unheard of, then a real possibility before becoming an incredible reality.

One species that is also on the move and which I believe is likely to arrive in Suffolk from Europe is Southern Small White, *P. mannii*. *P. mannii* will be a familiar butterfly to many from holidays in southern Europe being very common in Southern France, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Its range also extends south to northern Africa and eastwards as far as Turkey and Syria. It is a butterfly that often flies with Small White, *Pieris rapae*, with both species sharing similar habitats. *P. mannii* like *P. rapae* will nectar from a wide variety of flowers and as such is a common sight in

European gardens. The larval foodplant for *P. mannii* is predominantly Candy Tuft, *Iberis sempervirens* but it also uses Bladderpod, *Alyssoides utriculata*.

Over the last 10 years, *P. mannii* has been closely monitored by a number of European butterfly organisations and experts. I too have kept a close eye on reports in recent years as this butterfly has been recorded as expanding in a northerly direction at a rate of 100 km a year. Contact with Chris Van Swaay of De Vlinderstichting (Dutch Butterfly Conservation) via social media and email has led me to believe that the arrival of *P. mannii* in south-east England and particularly Suffolk is a real possibility in the next 2-3 years.

It is unclear how *P. mannii* might deal with a large expanse of water such as the North Sea but clearly Large White, *Pieris brassicae* and *P. rapae* are regular migrants and manage this crossing easily in suitable weather. There are some verbal references to *P. mannii* being seen crossing the Mediterranean Sea but by comparison the Strait of Gibraltar is only 14km wide. That said, *P. mannii* is a robust and hardy butterfly being able to exist in a variety of habitats and climates. It proves this by coping well with high altitudes and is in found at heights of up to 2000 metres

above sea level in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco.

Chris Van Swaay is actively monitoring events in Holland and a number of records have been made this year in the south of the country. The map (page 19 Fig. 1) provided to me by Chris Van Swaay shows the expansion of this species northwards over the last few years. The map also reflects a Spring sighting at Enschede, Holland in May 2017. Remarkably, another was seen just recently on 25th September 2017 at Wageningen, Holland. This latest sighting is some 80 km north of Enschede and only 375 km east from Landguard Common or East Lane, Suffolk!

The expansion of *P. manni* is in some way due to it being polyvoltine (multiple-brooded) in suitable conditions and typically having up to at least three generations each year. It has been noted that where *P. manni* has colonised southern Germany the earlier generations are largely sedentary with minimal movement noted. However, it is the third generation emerging in September that are the real pioneers and it is these butterflies that are pushing out further across European landscapes.

Identification overview:

So, the obvious question is how to recognise *P. manni* whilst out and

about in Suffolk. The first thing is to be confident in your identification of our “common” white butterflies *P. brassicae*, *P. rapae* and Green-veined White, *P. napi*. I still find myself double checking many white butterflies as some can look very different to what you expect. Many can be worn or appear either larger or smaller than normally expected. Establishing the “norm” will help reveal the “odd”.

From my own experience of watching *P. manni* regularly in Europe it always seems to be very slightly smaller than *P. rapae*, is tidier in appearance and at times seeming delicate like Wood White, *Leptide sinapis*. The upper-wing colouring always reminds me of the white seen on *P. napi*. This shade of white colouring contrasts nicely with *P. manni*'s under-hindwing colour which is normally a lemon-yellow.

Having eliminated *P. rapae* and *P. napi* and a small *P. brassicae* there are a number of key things to look for before happily identifying *P. manni*:

1. Apex mark and veining - In *P. manni* the black apex mark is larger and more extensive than *P. rapae*. It extends down the wing often reaching as far down or lower than the large black discal spot. There can also be an element of “greying” along the vein into the wing which has the effect of making the overall wing tip look darker. These points can all be seen (page 19 Fig. 2).

In Fig. 3 a male *P. rapae* is attempting to entice a female *P. manni*, the raised abdomen shows rejection. The photo is useful as it shows the differences in the extent of black on the forewing apex marking and the size of the black discal spot. Note also how far down the wing the apex mark extends and the element of grey veining into the wing towards the discal spot.

2. Shape of wings - In *P. manni* the wing tips appear rounded rather than pointed as with *P. rapae*. Being a small butterfly, this also has the effect of making the butterfly appear “rounder” in overall shape (page 20 Fig. 4).

3. Underside of hindwing - In the field, the grey speckled, pale yellow of the underside hind wing is a good indicator as can be seen (page 20 Fig. 5). This is very noticeable especially in spring, when the grey underside scaling is generally darker and more complete.

4. Vein forking - In *P. rapae*, on the leading edge of the upper wing the vein (referred to as Vein 7) is forked but this is absent in *P. manni*. This point can be very difficult to see if dealing with a restless butterfly so a photograph of this area will be very helpful for species determination. It is best looked for on the underside of the wing as the fork can be lost in the black wing tip marking.

5. Crescent marking on hind wing leading edge - In *P. manni* there is an interesting small black outwardly curved mark that looks crescent shaped. This is quite noticeable when the butterfly is newly emerged and especially if the wings are held flat.

Summary

I hope this brief article will allow you to start to look a bit closer at our “small” white butterflies and assist with recognising something out of the ordinary. A number of keen Suffolk based naturalists are actively looking for *P. manni* and I am sure that this butterfly will be seen in the next couple of years if not sooner. If you do find a possible *P. manni* then please try and take lots of photographs or video in order to capture the above identification points.

Credits - I would like to thank Guy Padfield and Chris Van Swaay for their comments on *P. manni* expansion and identification. This article represents some of their expert opinion from a Suffolk perspective. If you are interested in further references for this species then please visit the excellent websites listed below:

www.butterfliesoffrance.com

www.guyadfield.com

www.eurobutterflies.com

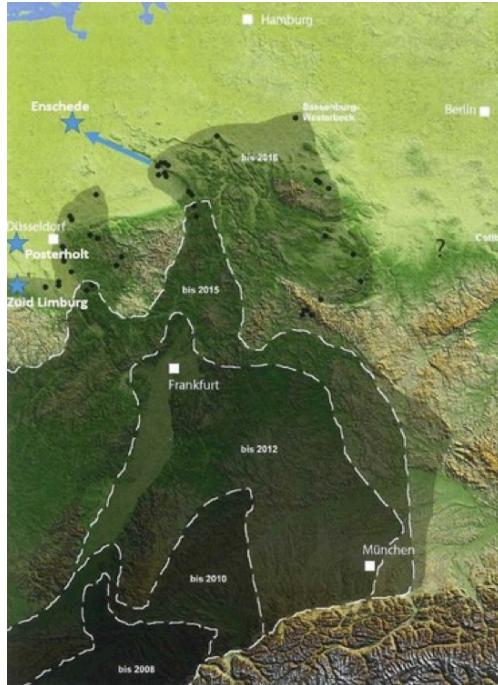


Fig. 1. Map showing expansion of *P. mannii* (image courtesy of Chris Van Swaay)



Fig 2. *P. mannii* female (image courtesy of Chris Van Swaay)



Fig 3. *P. rapae* male v *P. manni* female (image courtesy of Chris Van Swaay)



Fig 4. *P. manni* side/ underside (image courtesy of Chris Van Swaay)



Fig 5. *P. manni* underside (image courtesy of Chris Van Swaay)