

SUFFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

The **Suffolk Argus**

Volume 87

Summer 2023



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



The Suffolk Argus



A potential predator of Brimstone larvae,
a spider on purging
buckthorn by Graham Jackson



Speckled Wood with worn-out spots
by Joe Myers



Coleophora conspicuella - case on
Knapweed by Trevor Goodfellow

Members' Afternoon & AGM

**Saturday 7th October 2023
2.30pm**

**Stowupland Village Hall
IP14 4BG**

After a short business meeting we will hear from our invited speakers.

Liz Cutting - Photography

<https://www.lizcuttingphotos.com/index.html>

Bill Mayne - Rewilding

Bill is in the process of rewilding his East Suffolk farm.

Roger Gibbons - Butterfly Behaviour

Roger is a keen photographer and tour guide,
and shares his butterfly images and in-depth knowledge on his
Butterflies of France website.

There will be **Refreshments**, a **Raffle**
and our annual **Photographic Competition**
(See our website for Competition details)

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Butterfly Conservation

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Editorial

Trevor Goodfellow

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Suffolk Argus. Although rightly dominated by the 2022 Butterfly Report compiled by Suffolk County recorder James Corton, I have added a few other varied items of interest.

Brimstones, Peacocks and Orange-tips are being joined by some Holly Blues and Speckled Woods, but the cold nights have substantially delayed other species' emergence. Where are all the Small Tortoiseshells? Go back a few years and they were one of the most common butterflies in our gardens.

After the driest February and the wettest March on (my) record, April seemed to be more 'old fashioned' but with some extra gales thrown in. Now May is 'the new April' as hot sun quickly turns to cool showery weather.

As I write this, night time temperatures have not yet exceeded 9 degrees centigrade and we are nearly half way through the year!

I noticed some photos of Green Hairstreaks online showing on 9th April. These Kent and Oxfordshire records, claimed as the earliest ever by a photographer.

Hopefully by the time you read this, it will feel more like Summer.

Thanks for your kind comments on the Spring issue and for your contributions, keep them coming in for the next issue.

Copy date for the Autumn edition is 24th September.

Front cover photo Brimstone by Mark Brewster taken at Narborough railway line.



Dingyskipper

Suffolk Butterfly Report 2022 (Summary)

James Corton



Speckled Wood (Spring brood) © James Corton

Introduction

This is my second report as County Butterfly Recorder (CBR) for Butterfly Conservation and Suffolk Naturalist Society, following on from the 2021 report where, for continuity's sake, I followed the layout of the previous CBR. Here I wish to bring in some changes to the format to reflect the way other CBRs report and how text books and field guides group species into families. I hope that it is reader friendly while still offering enough information for those who wish to study data and trends etc. A full report will follow in the New Year, published by Suffolk Naturalists'

Society and will contain additional data, maps and charts.

An amazing 104,000 individual butterflies were sighted and recorded in over 31,000 recordings by approximately 600 recorders. In truth, there were more sightings because not all could be confirmed and, also, estimates for large numbers tend to underestimate. Additionally, some records are system-rejected for various reasons. Butterflies were spotted from New Year's Day through to Boxing Day. I would like to give a big thank you to all who took the time to record their sightings. It takes your time and sometimes there are IT related issues but your perseverance is appreciated and contributes to the long-term conservation of our butterflies. The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions may have helped in reporting so many sightings, particularly with those more remote species which could not be visited many times, if at all, during pandemic lockdowns. Life has not returned to normal in a complete sense, with fewer people venturing as far as they used to. I am not sure of the reasons for this but it will have had an effect upon butterfly recording.

Now I would like to explain a little about how the verification process works. Records accompanied by photographs can be verified as '*correct*' or redetermined to the correct species. Records without

photographs can be accepted as ‘*considered to be correct*’ on the basis of location and flight period. In some instances, e.g., similar species, I will request further evidence such as photographs and/or expert witness. This doesn’t mean that I doubt anyone but is intended to be a standardised data check to maintain accuracy regarding species range, population size and flight period. This report and all such reports use data from species level identification for accuracy i.e., doesn’t use generalised identification e.g., Small/Essex Skipper, although these can still be used elsewhere.

Special thanks go to the photographers who supplied pictures for this report: *Sarah Chamberlain, Julie Durrant, Allan King and Roy Richardson*. Thanks also to *Butterfly Conservation (Suffolk Branch) Committee, Trevor Goodfellow (BC Suffolk Argus), Zoe Randle (Senior Survey Officer, Butterfly Conservation) and Suffolk Naturalists’ Society* for their support and, of course, to all those who contributed butterfly records. Records are fed through a complicated gateway of systems to a national database which is used to map long-term trends and is important for conservation, lobbying and funding.

Weather Patterns and Extreme Events

2022 was a year of records being set. Nationally, it was the hottest year on record, reaching a maximum of 40.3°C in Lincolnshire. It was also the warmest year

for average temperatures and the second warmest for average minimum temperature. It was stormier than average (Storm Eunice in February was the worst of many) but also sunnier and drier than average. The mean temperature for the whole year was 10.0°C, the first time an annual mean has reached double figures.

Looking briefly at the seasons individually, I will compare the long-term averages (which cover the years 1991-2020) with each season.

Winter (December, January and February) was a little drier, sunnier and warmer than average. January was the sunniest since 1919 and New Year was unusually warm, producing several butterfly sightings including a Red Admiral in Dunwich Forest on my New Year’s Day walk. Spring (March, April and May) was about 1°C warmer than average with March being especially sunny and May having warmer nights and fewer frosts than usual. Summer (June, July and August) was almost 2°C warmer than average with lots of sunny weather during which the county recorded a new record 38.2°C maximum temperature at Santon Downham. The summer months were all drier than average with as little as half the average rainfall, much of which came suddenly with thunderstorms. Butterflies are ectothermic (cold-blooded) and it comes as no surprise that climate is an important factor in their life cycles (along with habitat requirements). Weather

patterns have at least a short-term effect on butterfly populations. It is estimated that following the drought of 1976 several grassland species of butterflies took two or three years to recover. It is also one of the reasons suggested for the extinction of the Chequered Skipper from England in 1976 and a fear that the re-introduced colony in

Fineshade Wood, Northamptonshire may suffer the same fate. Autumn (September, October and November) continued the theme of being warmer than average, in fact it was the third warmest on record. Unlike summer, it was unsettled and despite the warmth it was wetter than average.



Unusual Sightings

One of the most remarkable sightings of the year came in the Spring when an Orange-tip bilateral gynandromorph was sighted in Somerleyton (photograph later in this report). A bilateral gynandromorph is a specimen which is male on one side of its body and female on the opposite. Not all animals can produce this type of intersex variation, but butterflies can and it is estimated to occur in 1 in 5,000 to 20,000 individuals depending on species. Often it is overlooked when species have similarly marked males and females, but the Orange-tip is very sexually dimorphic.

A small population of Marsh Fritillary have been observed at Market Weston Fen (a Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve) from 2021 and I paid a visit to this site in 2022. Up to half a dozen individuals were seen on visits over a four-week flight period. The foodplant Devil's-bit Scabious is present in plentiful amounts and larval webs were also reported. It remains to be seen whether this introduced colony is self-supporting or will go the way of most introductions and fade out. Any information regarding this release will be appreciated, anonymous or otherwise.

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A big surprise was a Glanville Fritillary at Landseer Park, Ipswich in June. It was seen by at least two experienced observers, at least one of whom managed to get a photograph. No other specimens were seen, and it is unlikely that this species will get a foothold here. Introduced colonies in Surrey and Dorset have been managed to maintain the viability of the species which needs young, tender plantains for its larval stage. A single Dark Green Fritillary was also sighted at Landseer Park, Ipswich, the site where 5-10 had been seen in 2020. This could well be offspring from that release or, perhaps, a top up.

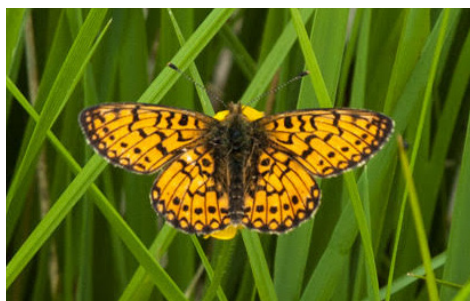


Glanville Fritillary © Allan King

Another big surprise of the year was an unexpected and undoubtedly released Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary close to the Norfolk border. This was discovered by Roy Richardson and identified by Andrew Easton, both members of the SWT Warden and Volunteer Team at Lound Lakes. A

Dingy Skipper in Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds in mid-June, some 5 or 6 miles from any known colonies was also probably a release.

East coast migrant specialties, Camberwell Beauty and Large Tortoiseshell are eagerly anticipated each year but no Camberwell Beauty were recorded in 2022. Large Tortoiseshell were reported in both Spring and Summer broods in March and then June, north of Stowmarket and also near Bury St Edmunds in June. Sadly, no pictures are available. There was one final surprise in the year in the form of a Long-tailed Blue reported in October at Felixstowe Ferry. Again, no photographs to show but this is quite a distinctive species and, despite its diminutive size, is capable of long migrations.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Roy Richardson

Swallowtail (Papilionidae)

Britain only has one endemic species from the Papilionidae family, the Swallowtail, and that is confined solely to the Norfolk Broads but the situation for us is not altogether

straightforward. Papilionid butterflies are quite large and capable of flying some distance. European Swallowtail species do sometimes disperse and find their way to Suffolk. Some are noted for their long-distance flights, although the Apollo has not been recorded since 1928, at Thorpe. Invariably, any Papilionid found in Suffolk is the Swallowtail itself (*P. machaon*) which occurs as two subspecies. Our endemic subspecies *Britannicus* is found nearby in the Norfolk Broads in fenland habitat, but its sedentary nature means it is usually the continental subspecies *gorganus* which arrives in Suffolk, and most often from the summer brood. On average these are paler, stronger flying and found in drier habitat

than *Britannicus*. 2022 was a good year for migrant Swallowtail. It was reported from the south coast and as far north as Yorkshire at Bempton cliffs. Suffolk enjoyed at least two individuals arriving along the coast, including one in a garden at Shottisham in July. Incidentally, our native subspecies is found only on 16 sites in Norfolk and news of a fatal fungal infection affecting its sole foodplant, Milk Parsley, in 2022 led to concerns about its future. Voluntary quarantine conditions seem to have defeated this threat and the butterfly, while vulnerable, seems safe once again. Perhaps one will stray into Suffolk in 2023?

Whites and Yellows (Pieridae) Chart key: Light colours = low count,
Dark colours = Higher count

The common species of Whites had a good year, being reported more frequently than in 2021 and earlier too. This is typified by data for the Orange-tip.



The Brimstone is our only native Yellow and, while single brooded, the adults are so long-lived that they can still be on the wing when their offspring take their maiden flight. This means there is a continuity of sightings throughout the warmer months but with a maximum in the spring months. The benefits of the Buckthorn Project may slowly be materialising, with a few extra sightings in the east of the county. No Pale Clouded Yellow were reported. These would be rarities even in south coast

counties and even more so further north and east. The usual number of Clouded Yellow were reported, initially on the coast but the speed at which these individuals sometimes vanished would suggest that their migratory instincts were still strong and that they continued inland. Quite a few sightings came from the west of the county where they found suitable habitat to nectar and breed in. Some stayed on in coastal locations for several days.

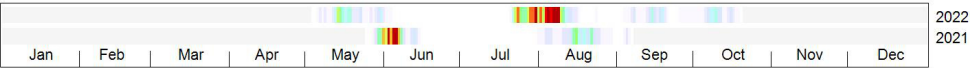


Orange-tip bilateral gynandromorph
© John and Jane Burton

Browns, Fritillaries and Aristocrats (Nymphalidae)

If the drought affected many species, then it is the Brown butterflies which were affected most. Many grasslands were devoid of butterflies during the heatwave, as observed by those of us eccentrics who ventured out in it. Some would aestivate during the heat of the day but others were found in woodland habitats flying and even breeding in shaded glades alongside the regular Speckled Wood. The lack of green grassland was a concern for many Brown butterflies. Larval survival rates could be very low for those species which need to feed before the onset of

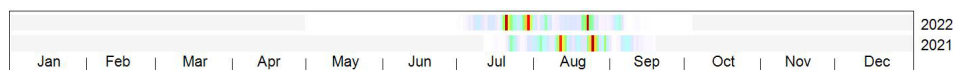
winter, either in parched grassland or in less suitable habitat. The presence of marshland, wet woodland and riverside habitat in our county did provide some good breeding sites and a base from which to expand from should there be a population decline. One species which appears to have at least survived the drought, if not thrived, is the Wall Brown. This is a Suffolk BAP species and nationally listed as Endangered with a 70% decrease in distribution 2010-2019. It emerged early in 2022 in its strongholds around Somerleyton, Carlton Colville, and also Lound and Sudbourne, then went on to produce a very strong second generation. Some of its success may be due to the fact that these low-lying marshland areas did not dry out completely. Additionally, the third generation was very small, and offspring from this generation have been found to have much higher mortality rates than those of the first and second generations, so the short-term future of this species is encouraging. The species is being closely monitored by Robert Quadling, one of our Species Champions (Wall) and he has provided high quality data on a regular basis for this species.



Wall Brown dates and frequency compared (2021 and 2022)

Grayling is another of our BAP species and nationally listed as Endangered. It emerged very early and appeared in good numbers before crashing once the heatwave reached a peak. In reality, it was seen moving from

exposed heathland and coastal habitat into nearby woodland e.g., at Minsmere. There may well have been an increased mortality rate as well. A second, smaller, peak built up after the extreme heat had subsided.



Grayling emergence and flight period compared (2021 and 2022)

Marbled White continued their northward and eastward expansion and have crossed the Stour from Essex into Suffolk near Sudbury with several reported around Long Melford. There were sightings from the west of the county too, between Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds, which also appears to be natural colonisation by range expansion. These colonies are small and the rate of expansion is slow so I am not expecting the whole of Suffolk to be populated anytime soon. It is one of the species which may have been less affected by the summer drought with larvae hatching out and immediately preparing a hibernaculum to spend the winter in. They will feed during mild spells in winter, by which time the grass is green and nutritious again. The long-established introduced population at Landseer Park, Ipswich, seemed to have a good year and there is some evidence that it has dispersed along the Orwell estuary south-east of Ipswich.

Silver-washed Fritillary had one of their best years with dozens of adults seen flying along transect routes in Minsmere and it was a similar scenario in many of

our larger and more mature woods. White Admiral also had a good season and often came down to nectar on bramble and other flowers in glades. During the hottest spells, adults were observed aestivating in hazel and other trees, occasionally joined by Grayling. White Admiral is another species which may suffer from the drought. It hibernates as a third instar larva, but many honeysuckle plants were withered and dead-looking until late summer or even autumn—far from perfect for a small caterpillar. This is a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species for Suffolk and I wait with cautious optimism to see if the 2023 season is a good one (historically it has been cold winter and spring weather which has been linked to low numbers).

Painted Ladies were seen in reasonable numbers, but it was nowhere near a ‘Painted Lady year’ as 2019 was. A wave of migrants arrived and were seen on 17th May, mainly on the coast but further inland too within a few days. Red Admirals were also seen in reasonable numbers and, like Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow, these warm weather butterflies would have been

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very much at home in our hot summer. The Small Tortoiseshell displayed some unusual behaviour which may well be climate related. The spring was milder than 2021 and this led to more early overwintered sightings and an earlier first brood. Expectations of a second and possible third brood disappeared along with the adult butterflies. It is quite feasible that many went into early hibernation, much like Peacock butterflies, to avoid the heat and possibly because their foodplants (Common and Small Nettle) were not sufficiently healthy enough to tempt them to breed. There is also growing evidence that the species is moving towards a single brood due to the effects of parasitism on summer broods.



White Admiral © James Corton

Coppers, Hairstreaks and Blues (Lycaenidae)

Many species of this family are multi-brooded and it was a surprise for many of us to witness a first generation decline on the previous year with nothing to indicate this would happen. The nadir was so dire that in many locations no Blues or Coppers were recorded. Brown Argus, Common Blue and Small Copper were those appearing to be most strongly affected. Thankfully, a partial recovery was heralded by the arrival of the next generation. Single brooded species, such as Hairstreaks did not seem to be as affected, particularly the Spring flying Green Hairstreak. Many Purple Hairstreak were seen at ground level, possibly because their flight period was during the drought and there was little nectar in flowers as they conserved their own moisture with ever greater parsimony. Hairstreaks are also known to obtain nutrients from the ground for successful breeding. Both Purple and White-letter Hairstreak were seen far away from breeding areas, suggesting a heat-driven dispersal. The only known Brown Hairstreak sightings came from the introduction site at Piper's Vale, Ipswich, with a couple of individuals being reported. This may have been due to a lack of observers rather than a shortage of butterflies.



Small Blue © Sarah Chamberlain

Skippers (Hesperiidae)

Suffolk's four species can be split into grassland Skippers and Woodland/Downland Skippers. The Dingy Skipper is our only representative of this second group and in Suffolk is a woodland specialist. It is a BAP Priority species but appears to be stabilising nationally. Locally, it is at great risk of extinction due to being restricted to only a couple of tetrads in the King's Forest. The exact locations vary over time due to Forestry England works and cleared areas are often colonised within a year or two. In 2022 a survey was carried out and 71 were counted by Trevor Goodfellow and John Lepley on 14th May. This suggests the species is holding on but the situation is always precarious due to the shortage of breeding areas.

Our grassland Skippers are undoubtedly under-recorded due to the difficulty in separating Essex and Small Skipper in the field. Both seem to be county-wide and have stable populations. The no-mow theme is beneficial to these species and the Large Skipper so long as some grass is left standing year long. Where grass is cut, e.g. with an end of summer cut, Skipper eggs (Essex Skipper) and larvae (Large and Small Skipper) which are higher up the grass stem perish. Skippers are then noticeably less abundant than Brown butterfly species whose larvae will be at the base of grass plants and less at risk of mowing.

Looking Forward

2023 has begun with average temperatures which disguise the lack of days with higher temperatures. It has been a wet start to the year and butterfly species seem to be late starting to emerge and generally few of them to be seen per transect data. An encouraging sign is the size and distribution of the first brood of our Coppers and Blues, re-populating sites where they were absent from last year. Wall Brown is also showing signs of having a good first generation and being reported from sites outside of its strongholds, suggesting it dispersed somewhat in 2022. Orange-tip is doing well and Green-veined White are being seen in good numbers but both Small White and Large White are thin on the ground so far, as is Comma. This may point to a summer with fewer butterflies due to the effects of

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drought last year on summer flying species, but it is too soon to predict in any detail. As the drought of 1976 led to a shortfall of grassland butterflies for a few years until numbers stabilised again, so the extreme weather of 2022 may have an adverse impact on species such as Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet and grassland Skippers. Not all species react equally to extreme events and it can become an opportunity for some. Legumes such as Bird's-foot Trefoil and Kidney Vetch and some other plants, such as Common Sorrel, resisted the drought better than other plant species and

have capitalised on this by becoming more abundant in some areas. As nectar sources and food plants this may lead to a good year for those butterfly species dependent upon them. Time will tell and the topic will be discussed in-depth in the next report.

Further reading is recommended. Butterfly Conservation has published, *'The State Of Britain's Butterflies'* and *'The Red List Of Butterflies in Great Britain'*. Both of these can be viewed via the BC website at <https://www.butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies>



Green-veined White, Spring brood © James Corton

Garden Nectar Plants for Butterflies-S is for Sweet Rocket, Sweet William. Strawberry Tree and Sedum

Richard Stewart

Sweet Rocket is also colloquially known as Dames' Violet and since I covered it in volume 76, 2019 I will just repeat that this early summer flowering plant attracted nineteen species in the much-quoted national survey for BC by Margaret Vickery. Particularly, it attracted the three whites and Orange Tip. Sweet William is best summarised by the late Geoff Hamilton in 'Cottage Gardens'. This former presenter of Gardeners' World wrote that it was a 'lovely old-fashioned flower making a large head filled with individual florets like auriculas'. However, flowering in midsummer makes it an awkward customer so it's now rarely grown, with the preference for longer-flowering half-hardy bedding. If you can find room for at least a few they're well worthwhile 'Margaret Vickery's list runs to twenty-two different species, especially Small Skipper and Small Tortoiseshell. In the long front border on the edge of Strumpshaw Fen both plants are grown and since Sweet William usually flowers about

two weeks later they get an extended series of visits by Swallowtails.

Strawberry Tree was covered by a separate article in a previous edition and though it only attracted six species in the 'top twenty' list that is a good total for a tree that usually attracts very late butterflies, normally flowering from December onwards. Its potential of six usually restricts it to front gardens. The best late-flowering Sedum is the pink variety *spectabile*, second only to *buddleia* in Margaret Vickery's list with twenty-five different recorded species and particularly favoured by Red Admiral, Small Copper, Small Tortoiseshell, Small White and Speckled Wood. Trudie Willis in her ten-acre garden at Aldeburgh once counted thirty Small Tortoiseshells feeding on just one sunlit *Sedum spectabile*. That was admittedly back in the 1980's and with such a concentration of just one species they had probably crossed from the continent and were desperate for a nectar source.



*Sweet Rocket -
fragrant and attractive*

Let's hear it for the Underdog!

Kev Ling

As we enter the warm summer months, our minds wander towards the more exotic species about to take flight. Scouring the woodland canopies for a brief glimpse of a Purple Emperor, or the reedbeds of the Norfolk Broads for the spectacular Swallowtail. These species provoke such excitement, and the thrill of the chase can be just as addictive.

But what about all those other butterflies that contribute towards a great day out in the countryside. The underdogs, the species that we are sometimes guilty of ignoring, in our quest for the superstars. Those brown things that sometimes only get rewarded with a passing glance.

The Chinese philosopher Confucius once said, "Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it" and could be said of butterflies. Often, a species can be seen flitting in the distance, coming to rest on a Blackthorn flower. Is it a Hairstreak perhaps? No, it's just a Meadow Brown. We've all said it, or at least heard it from others. Well, they are not just making up the numbers and deserve much more credit and closer inspection.

The Meadow Brown enjoys one advantage over most other UK species, in that its numbers remain relatively stable, with a wide distribution. That's not to say that it has not suffered habitat loss, but in any

grassy area in mid-summer you can expect to see good numbers on the wing. In a larger meadow, the count could easily enter the hundreds, if not thousands and it is one of a select number of species where you can enjoy a kaleidoscope of butterflies (a gathering of butterflies in large numbers).



Ringlet by Kev Ling



Ringlet and mating Skippers by Kev Ling

Although not necessarily the most striking of species, the female Meadow Brown is generally brighter in colour than the male and I find a newly emerged example to be quiet striking with bright orange markings and a larger black eyespot. It is

not too dissimilar to the Gatekeeper and can be confused for them in flight. When breeding, the female hunkers down in the grass, hiding its forewings for camouflage, deterring predators. The eyespot comes into play if an attack is imminent. She will lower her hindwing to give a flash of the eyespot, thus scaring any would be predator away. The Meadow Brown is commonly seen basking with wings wide open on plants such as Thistle, Knapweed and Scabious. But they are easily alerted to movement and can be deceptively difficult to photograph. I find it's close relative the Gatekeeper slightly more patient. This is a wonderful little butterfly with striking orange wings in both sexes and black eye spots that differ in the number of white dots contained within. The Gatekeeper appears on the wing a little later than the Meadow Brown and therefore has a shorter flight period. However, unlike it's relative, it maintains its bold colouration throughout, whereas a worn Meadow Brown can be quite indistinct. In my urban garden on the edge of town, I have regular visits from Gatekeepers, and they are particularly attracted to Marjoram. Meadow Browns on the other hand are rarer visitors.

Another common species found alongside the Meadow Brown is the Ringlet. Although easily confused in flight, a resting Ringlet is quite unique with its series of rings on both the fore and hindwing (Black with a white dot and a subtle orange surround). I was lucky enough to see a freshly emerged male Ringlet one summer's morning and was

taken aback by how beautiful it was. It's bold brown colouring, taking on a velvety look (see photo).

Other stars of grassland meadows are the golden Skippers (Large, Small and Essex). The Large Skipper is generally first on the wing in May and has striking two tone orange markings in both males and females. Distinctive black sex brands on the male are an easy way to differentiate them. When basking, they have a unique stance with fore and hindwings set at different angles. This allows them a swift take-off when disturbed.

Small Skippers emerge in June, a week or two earlier than the Essex. If your timing is right and you get to witness their mass emergence, as I was lucky enough to do at Landseer Park in Ipswich, then the grass seems alive with butterflies. A memorable spectacle.

They have similar characteristics when basking and the males of these species also have sex brands as opposed to the female. Despite its name, the Small Skipper is the largest of the Skippers, second only to the Large Skipper. Once the Essex is flying it can be tricky to tell them apart from Small Skippers. The most notable difference between them is the colour of the antennae. The tip of the antennae is black on the Essex, as though they have been dipped in ink. The Small Skipper on the other hand has a black top side, but orange underside. Viewing both species head on will help determine this and from my experience, early evening is a good

time to observe them closer, as they prepare to roost. One feature of the Small Skipper that I like are the eyes. When I observed a pair in copulation, they reminded me of pieces of liquorice (see photo). Beauty can really be found in the smallest of details.

The final species I am championing in this article is the Speckled Wood. True to its name, you can be guaranteed to see this butterfly as you enter any woodland path. It is often the first non-hibernating species you encounter in the spring. What sets this species apart from any other, is that it overwinters in two stages, either as third instar larva or a pupa. This produces a double stage emergence in spring and early summer and the total flight period of the species can be anything up to eight

or nine months, with three broods. As you wander along woodland paths, you will be easily rewarded by Speckled Woods, landing at low level, to bask on any number of plants with wings outstretched, showing its beautiful brown and cream markings.

All of the above species are hardy souls too, in that they will brave cloudy and damp conditions and still be seen in good numbers.

As butterfly numbers sadly continue to decline, we must give credit to everyone we see, especially the underdogs. You'll miss them if they're gone.

Mark Brewster's article about Monarchs in the Spring 2023 issue brought back happy memories. Long before seeing them, I had

More About Monarchs

Richard Stewart

read one of the books he mentions 'Wings In The Meadow' and realised that it was first published in 1967, which was nine years before the National Geographic magazine revealed to the world where the Monarchs overwintered. In an article entitled 'Found At Last: The Monarch's Winter Home' Fred A. Urquhart claimed he had discovered this though of course local residents would have known about it for centuries. For some years we tried to go and see them but at this time we were not aware of any holiday companies going there and everyone we asked who had been, wasn't planning to go

again. Finally, on one of those memorable butterfly weekends to different parts of the country, organised by the Johnsons, we found someone who could help. He put us in touch with Joe Cocker (no, not that one) and we eventually reached El Rosario which is a large overwintering colony among Oyamel pines in the mountains of Mexico. My wife Ann-Marie accompanied me as we travelled there on a country bus, having to endure Abba for most of the journey plus many untreated potholes. At the town of Anganguero, we then had to hire a truck with an open back where we sat, picking up

all the dust from the vehicle in front and, on turning a blind bend, had to pay a toll to enterprising locals who had stretched a chain across the bumpy path. In addition, when we got to the top, instead of finding just a few people there, we realised it was a Mexican national holiday with many visitors and a long line of stalls selling somewhat gaudy Monarch merchandise. It took Joe all his skills as a seasoned traveller to get us in quickly but Marie by now was feeling unwell as, besides the other unsettling factors already mentioned, we were also at an altitude of 10,500 feet. She insisted I went on and stayed at the bottom of the trail where she did see a few Monarchs. The wardened trail was not very wide and it was difficult not to tread on Monarchs settled on the ground. We were kept strictly to the trail and I was able to reach the main area where they hung in great numbers from trees. There have been many records of branches breaking from the sheer combined weight of their numbers. I also discovered that when the sun breaks through they do actually feed on tall American golden rod, contrary to what I had heard beforehand.

Obviously, it was disappointing for Anne-Marie but two years later Joe had again included the visit in a different itinerary and this time, continually repeating the mantra ‘Go slowly’ we both reached the main area, even though it was at a higher altitude than before. This time many were congregated

around a small stream which crossed the path and one of the wardens, seeing my camera, allowed me to venture a few steps off the path for a close-up photo. We were also helped by not having to contend with a national holiday this time. Those visiting El Rosario are probably not aware that there are other sites nearby, but these are restricted to visits by researchers.



I would certainly advise anyone to go if they can as this is definitely The number one ‘butterfly experience’ in the world and several companies now organise trips. In addition to the books Mark mentioned can I add these Two: *Four Wings and A Prayer* by Sue Halpern (pub. Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2001) and *Nomads of the Wind* by Ingo Arndt (pub. Papadakis 2008). Monarchs only feature in part of this book, but the format is larger than the first book which means there are several superb photos of Monarchs.

Mini Marvel

Trevor Goodfellow

Described as having a 'Local' distribution, the diminutive Mottled Purple leaf-miner moth - *Eriocrania sparrmannella* (see below) has a forewing length about 5 or 6mm and is a Suffolk species that has been recorded in the west of the county but mainly coastally. It requires genitalia dissection for identification conformation as it resembles other *Eriocrania* species. *E. sparrmannella* is single brooded flying during April and early May. The larvae mines Birch leaves (*Betula*) from May to July. Thanks to Patrick Clement for the photos.



Microscopy

Mary Lindsey

I use a Bresser Biolux NV which includes interchangeable lenses for up to 40x magnification and a maximum of 1280x using a Barlow lens. This is basically, a student's model, but good quality and fine for what I want. The vignettted photos are taken with the camcorder handheld against the eyepiece at various magnifications. But the rectangular photos are taken with the

microscope connected to the PC, which has greater magnification, but light can be a problem especially as they are 'thick' specimens, not prepared slides.

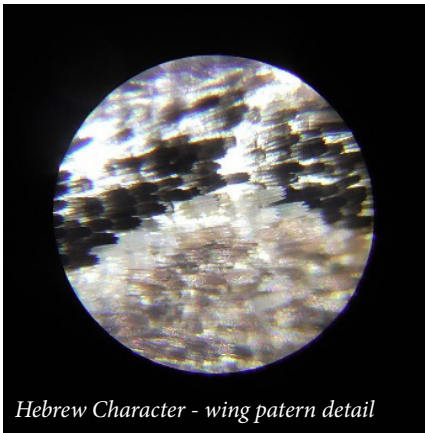
The unknown moth is an old dried-up specimen I found in the shed and just used the best parts that were left!



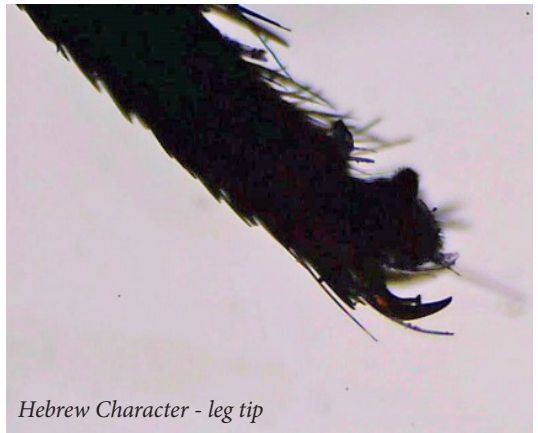
Brimstone moth leg



Unknown Moth Tip of foot & scale



Hebrew Character - wing pattern detail



Hebrew Character - leg tip

Readers..... You can help butterflies!

Peter Maddison

Recently much has been said about volunteering in the community and I'm sure we have many members who do just that. Your spare time might be taken up already, but there will be others who have a feeling that they would like to take part and are wondering how they might be able to make a contribution.

What about butterfly recording? There are opportunities.

We have teams of surveyors who walk fixed routes (transects) in many parts of the county and these teams are always looking for new recorders who can share in their survey rotas.

Don't be too concerned if your identification skills are not great, at first you'll be accompanied by an experienced recorder and your confidence will soon grow.

If you are interested contact our Transect Co-ordinator, Twm Wade twm.wade@yahoo.com

An opportunity to help out has arisen at

the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's new reserve at Martlesham Wilds. A butterfly recording route is being set and help is needed for surveys. This is an exciting opportunity to monitor the butterfly population as, in the coming years, the organic farmland and meadows are rewilded. If you think you can help, contact me for more information - prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

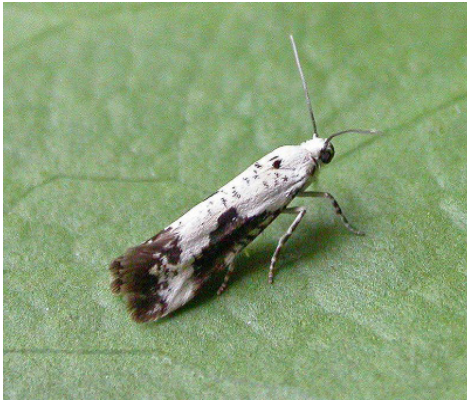
It's late spring – early summer. What does your garden look like now? Have you left a space for nature? Have you created a wild corner for butterflies to lay eggs, provided food plants for caterpillars, shelter for chrysalis and nectar for adult butterflies? I hope so! Then, make sure you register your Wild Space on the BC website at <https://butterfly-conservation.org/wild-spaces>

Do you record the butterflies in your garden? The Garden Butterfly Survey is an easy way of making your records count. Register your garden and enter your sightings.

Make your sightings a part of this national survey at <https://gardenbutterflysurvey.org>

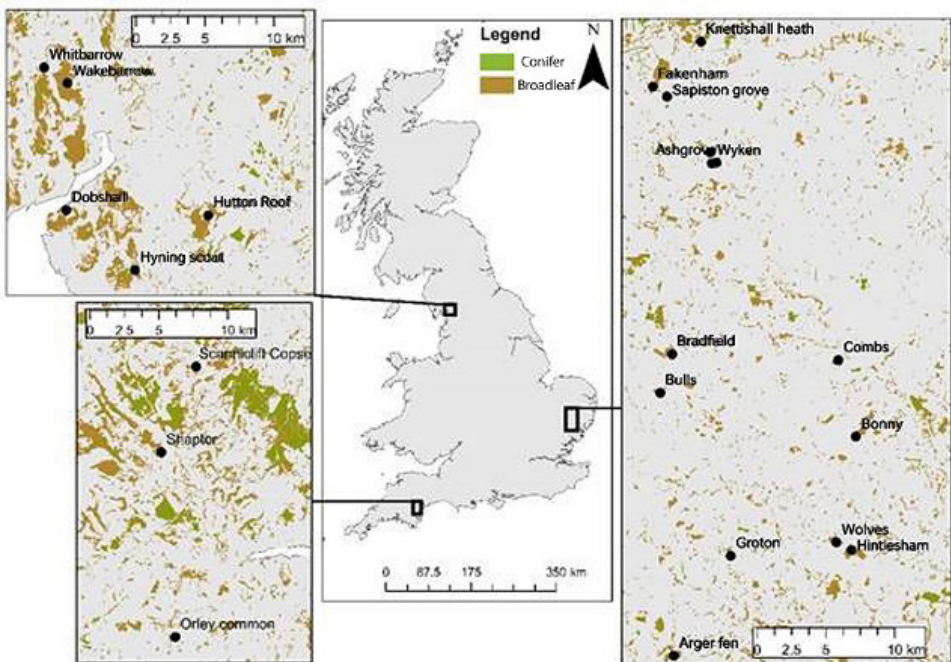
Ash Bud moth Dispersal

Fiona Plenderleith (PGR)



Prays fraxinella by Paul Kitchener

The map of the study sites below is where I managed to collect samples. Overall, there was no evidence of genetic structuring at local (up to 44 km) spatial scales. At regional scales (up to 426 km) we found evidence of mixed ancestry and long-distance dispersal. Given its high level of gene flow between woodland fragments, the Ash Bud moth - *Prays fraxinella* may show some resilience to some future tree losses under ongoing Ash dieback outbreaks.



Event report:

25th February 2023 Purdis Heath work party

Led by Julian Dowding, about 18 people from SBBC and Greenways cleared up and burnt cut gorse creating new openings between scrapes which will encourage connectivity for the SSBs.

We look forward to NE granting permission for us to resume conservation work in the autumn.



Purdis Work Party by Mark Brewster



Purdis Work Party time to pose by Mark Brewster

17th May 2023 SWT Martlesham Wilds

Peter Maddison

Ten of us met in the car park for this early season walk and it was good to see old friends and some new people joining the group. For many this was a new site to visit and after a brief introduction: Martlesham Wilds is a new reserve for SWT on the west bank of the River Deben. It is just under 300 acres of grazing meadows, organically farmed land, and woodland, and is to be rewilded once this year's crops are harvested.

JJ, the reserve warden joined us for a short while to make an appeal for butterfly surveyors for the transects that it is hoped will be developed soon.

Walking along the south-facing hedgerow

to the west of the car park, both male and female Orange-tips were seen. There was little Garlic Mustard, but a female was watched paying close attention to Shepherd's Purse. A Large White, eagerly spotted by Julian, shot through at speed and was gone. A descent through the Bluebell wood to Martlesham Creek and then east past the boatyard and a meadow of long grass and yet-to-flower wildflowers brought us to a small copse and for some a brief sighting of a Speckled Wood. A good panoramic view of much of the reserve and the river was had from close to this point and then following the riverbank footpath, Red Admiral and a Peacock were spotted.

The northeast breeze was cool here and by this time the previously broken cloud had become a dense sheet of grey – not butterfly weather!

Across the meadows we came to a sheltered alley of gorse and broom but, disappointingly, Green Hairstreak was not on the sighting list today. A protected corner produced a very mobile dragonfly which Tony identified from his photo as a Hairy Hawker. From nearby a Cetti's Warbler regaled us 'loudly' from the trackside which

led to a relatively recently planted small plantation of mixed tree species, where the long grasses and growing wildflowers showed great potential for the summer butterfly generations.

The final section of the walk took us past a magnificent veteran oak and on through St Mary's churchyard, which looked wonderful in its dense carpet of Erodium, Daisies and Alkanet, to the car park. The only Holly Blue recorded was spotted by a member who arrived late for the walk.

30th May 2023 Pakenham Water Mill Wildlife Day

Mark Brewster & Trevor Goodfellow

SBBC Stall was popular with the public. A record turn-out on a cool but fine day. As we set up, an Orange-tip flew by. Lots of interest from the children, some of which were surprisingly well informed. We both answered many questions from those keen to learn about butterflies' life cycles and promoted BC's Wild Spaces initiative.



Pakenham Water Mill Wildlife Day

Speckled yellow - Pseudopanthera macularia
by Trevor Goodfellow



Dingy Skipper by Nick Amor



Marsh Fritillary by David Tomlinson



Orange-tip by David Tomlinson

