

SUFFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

The **Suffolk Argus**

Volume 88

Autumn 2023



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



The Suffolk Argus

Meadow Brown by James Corton



*Brown Argus ab. snellini
by Anne and Steve Green*

*Chequered Skipper and
Flower Crab Spider
Westhay Wood
by Jane Henderson*



*Purple Hairstreak
by Trevor Goodfellow*

*One of 3 Clifden nonpareil found this year
by Trevor Goodfellow*



*Grayling at Trudie's Open Day
by Mark Brewster*



Suffolk Branch Contacts

President

Howard Mendel

Chairman

Peter Maddison

Barnmead, Fishpond Rd,

Waldringfield,

Woodbridge IP12 4QX

Tel: 01473 736607

email: prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

Membership Secretary

Liz Cutting

Tel: 01206 394184

Email: cutting.liz@yahoo.com

Treasurer

Kevin Ling

email: keving2013@aol.com

Secretary

Julian Dowding

84, Clapgate Lane,

Ipswich IP3 0RE

Tel: 01473 436096

email: julian.dowding@ntlworld.com

County Butterfly Recorder

James Corton

email: suffolkbutterflyrecorder@gmail.com

Transect and WCBS Co-ordinator

Twm Wade

email: twm.wade@yahoo.com

Conservation Officer (Butterflies)

To be appointed

County Moth Recorder

Neil Sherman

email: moth@sns.org.uk

Committee Members

David Dowding

Matt Berry

email: matt@greenwings.co.uk

Mark Brewster

Email: mark.ian.brewster@gmail.com

Website

Richard Perryman

email: richard.perryman@ntlworld.com

Newsletter Editor

Trevor Goodfellow

email: suffolkargus@gmail.com

Regional Officer, Eastern England

Sharon Hearle

Tel: 01638 484145

email: shearle@butterfly-conservation.org

Associate Committee Members

Nigel Hannay

John Lepley

email: johnlepley@hotmail.co.uk

The Suffolk Argus is published by the Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Butterfly Conservation or the Branch. © 2023 All rights reserved. For more information, see: www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk

Butterfly Conservation

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468) Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)

Editorial

Trevor Goodfellow

Wow how quickly the Summer passed by! The rain may have helped revive the previously drought ridden trees, but July and August were more like old fashioned April weather. Despite that, I hope you managed to conduct your transect walks and other recording ok, and as you will see from the events report section in this issue, we still managed to get out and about. Marvel at Julian Sydney's rare capture of a Grayling in flight showing its' upper wings!

Worcester News reported a *Convolvulus* Hawk moth (*Agrius convolvuli*) larva found at Upton Warren nature reserve! This is another migrant that may colonise in the UK due to climate change.

At home, in 10 years of recording, I have recorded the highest annual number of moth species so far this year: over 400 species of which 29 are new to my list, but butterflies appeared to be fewer than last year. Despite the overall lack of butterflies, Brown Argus 2nd brood and Holly Blue appeared

to excel, no doubt James Corton (Suffolk County Recorder) will reveal more findings in his 2023 report.

In the Spring 2024 edition, I will be including the Photo competition winners, 2023 Dingy Skipper Summary and featuring lepidoptera camouflage which might encourage members to be more observant, and much more.

As usual I would like to thank all Suffolk Argus contributors. I am already looking forward to next Spring!

Please send anything you would like to share for inclusion in the next newsletter to me at suffolkargus@gmail.com

**Copy date for the Spring edition is
February 3rd 2024**

Cover image: Small Copper by Trevor Goodfellow



Contents

Branch contacts	3
Editorial	4
Trudie's Bench <i>Peter Maddison</i>	6
Spreading my Wings <i>Nick Amor</i>	6
In Search of the Large Blue <i>David Tomlinson</i>	9
Nectar Sources for Garden Butterflies <i>Richard Stewart</i>	12
New Wildflower Meadows <i>Mark Brewster</i>	13
Gardening with Harmony <i>Dahlia Queen</i>	14
Foodplant Adaptability <i>Graham Jackson/Phillip Wilkins</i>	15
Rare Moth <i>Editor</i>	18
Still Counting <i>Editor</i>	18
Foxy Encounter <i>Editor</i>	18
Small v Essex <i>Trevor Goodfellow</i>	18
Events Reports	20



Trudie's Bench

Peter Maddison

Members will know that Trudie Willis is a tremendous supporter of the Suffolk Branch. For at least the last 17 years she has been donating to the Branch money from her annual garden open days and plus the profits from her recent garden book. In recognition and thanks for her continued support the committee has presented her with an inscribed garden bench. We thank you, Trudie - enjoy the bench!



Trudie and Ellie by James Corton

Spreading my Wings

Nick Amor

Inspired by my magical encounter with the Swallowtail in the summer of 2022, I determined to spot and snap as many new species as I could in 2023. I even invested in some new camera kit to aid me in the venture. My butterfly year started with a bang in early March. While staying with family in LA, I stood by with my grandson Arthur as two Monarchs mated on the seafront, neither of them deterred by our presence. Returning to the UK, Julia and I

found an early abundance of Brimstones in our local Bradfield Woods, and of Walls and Small Heaths along the north Norfolk coast.

My hunt for new species began on 29th April, the famous day that Ipswich secured promotion to the Championship, when I met my first Green Hairstreak on Devil's Dyke. It ended just under three months later, admiring the Queen of Spain Fritillary in a field at East End. In all, I was fortunate



Female Lulworth Skipper by Nick Amor

to spot twenty-one butterflies that I had not previously seen – not quite Patrick Barkham pace, but enough to give me a warm and enduring glow of satisfaction for the remainder of the summer. Had the August rains not arrived, there might have been a couple more. Highlights were four uncommon Blues: Adonis (Devil's Dyke), Small (Totternhoe Quarry, Bedfordshire), Silver-studded (Purdis Heath) and Large (Daneway Banks in Gloucestershire); another four Fritillaries – Marsh (Market Weston), Heath (Hockley Woods), and Dark Green and High Brown (Aish Tor on Dartmoor); two more Hairstreaks – Black (Brampton Wood) and White-letter (Alners Gorse, Dorset); three scarce Skippers – Dingy (King's Forest), Grizzled (Stoke Ferry) and Lulworth (Durlston Country

Park, Dorset); and Marbled (Devil's Dyke) and Wood White (Hazelborough Wood, Northants). I am conscious that my encounters in Suffolk with two species of Fritillary were more the result of human action than course of nature, and I understand why artificial releases are frowned upon, but it was still a delight to see them. All in all, it has been an odyssey that has given me great happiness and taken me to some of the most beautiful parts of our country. The many insect bites that I collected enroute are long forgotten.

So, what has this odyssey taught me about butterfly hunting? First, perseverance – even with our esteemed editor's kind support, it took six trips to find the Dingy Skipper, but just as hope was fading, there it

The Suffolk Argus

was, posing for a photo. Second, an ability to swallow disappointment – I spent several hours on a sunny day in early June, in all the right places at Totternhoe Quarry, hunting for the Duke of Burgundy without joy. Next year, I must go to Incombe Hole instead. A month later, I spent several more hours at Collard Hill, armed with a map of the Large Blue butterfly trail, finding all the transects but not one of these elusive creatures. I then drove two hours to Daneway Banks where it was waiting for me the moment I climbed out of my car. I enjoyed a week walking in Scotland, including a visit to Glasdrum Wood NNR, and barely saw a butterfly, let alone any of the Scottish species. Nevertheless, these disappointments make the successes all the sweeter. Third, the importance of homework – my daughter Rosalind has kindly gifted me several books on butterflies which have fully repaid



Heath Fritillary by Nick Amor



White Letter Hairstreak by Nick Amor

the reading. Martin Warren's volume, *Butterflies*, proved particularly helpful and enlightening. The on-line records of sightings, of which our county's is among the best, are another invaluable tool. I still sometimes get muddled about what species goes with which plant or tree, but I am learning. Fourth, talk to fellow enthusiasts because they are invariably happy to share their knowledge with you. It was a great pleasure to attend a couple of Suffolk BC events and to admire the work that has been done at Purdis Heath which is truly impressive.

I have now spotted forty-nine species of British butterfly – if you allow me the Monarch and the Queen of Spain Fritillary – and have twelve yet to see. My enthusiasm is undimmed and my sense of wonder at encountering new species remains. I have already prepared a list for 2024 that includes the Duke of Burgundy, Chequered Skipper, Large Heath, Brown Hairstreak and Silver-spotted Skipper. I know where and when to look for them and can only hope that the butterfly gods will bless me as they have done this year. Whether I shall ever find

those other elusive Scottish species remains to be seen, but who knows. Perseverance may pay dividends in the end. Rosalind has given me Paul Kirkland's volume, *Discovering Scotland's Butterflies*, so I owe

it to her to try. Come what may, the book of my butterfly photos that I have silently promised my grandson Arthur remains the ultimate aim.

In search of the Large Blue

David Tomlinson

For butterfly enthusiasts of my generation, the large blue is a near-mythical creature. I'm old enough to remember its decline and eventual extinction in England - it disappeared in 1979, before I'd even seen one. Its extinction was due to loss of habitat, and the fact that at the time, nobody really understood its extraordinary lifestyle. If I recall, one of the last known colonies was surrounded by a rabbit-proof fence to protect it, but the rabbits helped create the right habitat for the red *Myrmica sabuletti* ants to thrive, and without these ants the butterflies were doomed. Putting up the rabbit fence was, we now know, the worst thing that could have been done. Tall, dense turf is a disaster for the large blue, as the *Myrmica* ants soon disappear, their nests taken over by other species of red ants. And when the ants go, so too does the large blue.

The Large Blue's association with ants was already well-known, thanks to the studies of such eminent entomologists as Frowhawk and Purefoy a century ago, but at the time conservationists simply didn't know enough about the species, or its ant hosts, to halt its extinction. Fortunately,

the extinction was the catalyst for several conservation organisations to come together to reintroduce this beautiful butterfly. Habitat, on a site on Dartmoor owned by the National Trust, was prepared, and in 1983 the first introduction trial commenced, using butterflies from Sweden that appeared identical to the lost native insects.

That initial introduction proved a success, so much so that further introductions were made to other West Country sites, and by the 1990s there were a number of flourishing colonies, though their locations were kept secret in order to protect them. It was in the 1990s that I was invited by Butterfly Conservation to a press day at Collard Hill, a National Trust property near Somerton in Somerset, to see large blues. This site now supported a flourishing colony, so the chances were high that we would see them.

As luck would have it the press day was cool and largely sunless, but fortunately a single individual was found (there should have been scores on the wing, if not hundreds): sufficient to be admired by the small group of journalists, of which I was

one. I even managed to take a reasonably sharp photograph, on Kodachrome 64 transparency film, to remind me of the sighting.

I didn't see another large blue for another decade. This individual was in Northern Greece, on a trip I had organised for members of Butterfly Conservation Suffolk. It was discovered by Rob Parker, but I recall it was the only one we managed to find during our week around Lake Kerkini.

However, such has been the success of the large blue reintroduction that there are now several sites in the West Country where butterfly enthusiasts are free to go and see this species for themselves. Collard Hill is one where visitors are welcome. This year I decided to make the effort to look for large blues, so in late June I drove to Gloucestershire to stay with a friend, Ian, who is lucky enough to have large-blue colonies close to his house.

You may recall that June was largely warm and sunny, but the weather broke at the end of the month, and on 1st July, the day of my Large-blue hunt, it wasn't looking good. However, I'd come so far that I wasn't going to be thwarted at this stage. Ian drove us to a site called Daneway Banks, a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust reserve near the village of Sapperton. According to the Trust's website this "is a fantastic example of limestone grassland, which is managed in partnership with the Royal Entomological

Society (RES) both as a nature reserve and a place of ecological study. Its slopes are rich with wildflowers and home to a variety of butterflies and is widely regarded as one of the best places in the world to see the Large Blue butterfly."

The site looked rather better than the weather, and my spirits plunged when a sudden shower drifted through the valley. Fortunately, it departed as quickly as it had arrived, and we were cheered by a few brief bursts of sunshine. The hunt for the large blue could begin. There were a few others at the site already seeking the Blues, and we were encouraged to hear that one couple had enjoyed a brief sighting half an hour before our arrival. We started looking hopefully, enjoying the abundance of marbled-white butterflies that seemed happy to fly even when the sun wasn't shining.

After 20 minutes I was feeling frustrated, as not a blue of any description had I seen. Then there was a shout from a couple of fellow hunters (from Surrey) who had found one. They were a couple of hundred yards away, but the butterfly was still there by the time we arrived, and another was soon located. Both were pristine, having probably emerged that morning, and both were quite content to pose for their photographs to be taken.

Large blue is something of a misnomer, for this is a butterfly that is hardly any bigger than a Chalkhill Blue, but thanks

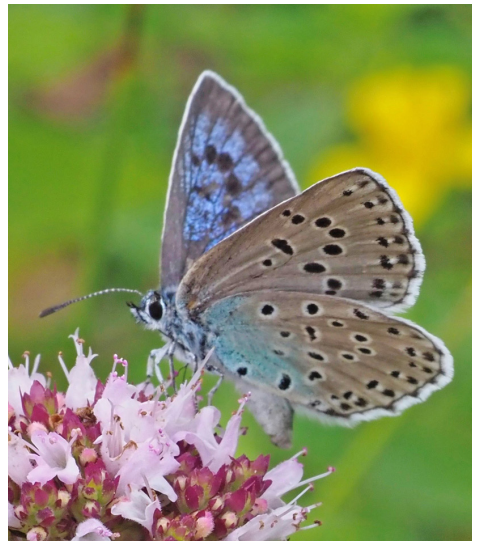
to the handsome spots on the forewings it's instantly recognisable, and impossible to confuse with any of our other native blues. The sexes are alike, but the female has a slightly wider black margin to the forewings, and rather more spotting. They are exceedingly handsome insects.

I admit to being a trophy hunter, so it was exceedingly satisfying to point my camera at my quarry and capture the photographs you see here. For photographers who might be interested, I use an Olympus E-M1 Mk II camera with a 100-400mm lens. This is a long lens that lets me work at a distance from the butterfly so as not to disturb it - my pictures were taken at 400mm, which is the equivalent of 800mm on a 35mm camera. Depth of field is essential, as it's irritating to have the butterfly's wings sharp but not its body or antenna, so I close the lens down to anything between f9 and f16. I invariably

come home, look at my photographs and think I could have done better, but I was pleased with my shots.

Walking on, we saw several more individuals, though the weather was such that none seemed inclined to fly. I chatted to a researcher, working as an ecologist for the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, who told me that he expects to see his first Large Blue of the season in the first week of June, the last at the end of July, so the flight period is rather longer than I had thought. Choose a suitably sunny day in late June or early July and you would be extremely unlucky not to see Large Blues at this attractive and easily worked site.

Incidentally, if you want to celebrate your sighting, the attractive Daneway Inn sits at the foot of the Banks and is just the place for a drink or lunch. My companion and I



The Suffolk Argus

did just that, raising a glass to a very special butterfly. I don't know whether there's any historical records of Large Blues in Suffolk, but wouldn't it be wonderful to

see them established on the Devil's Dyke? Just a thought. (Large Blue photos by David Tomlinson)

Nectar Sources for Garden Butterflies: T is for Thrift, Teasel, Tobacco Plant and Thyme

Richard Stewart

Thrift is usually associated with maritime habitats, especially on cliff edges near seabird colonies. However, our back garden clump has survived for many years but so far has only attracted female Orange Tip and Green-veined White. It is worth growing for its early summer flowers and the much-quoted national survey by Margaret Vickery listed fourteen different species.

Teasels are best grown at the back of a border and in the already mentioned survey

there were reports of visits by sixteen different species. I always associate it with Peacock butterflies and if left until autumn it may attract charms of goldfinches with their well-designed long and sharp bills to extract the seeds.

Tobacco flower or *nicotiana* is also a tall plant and Margaret Vickery's survey listed a surprisingly high total of nineteen species of butterflies using it as a nectar source. It has, like honeysuckle, buddleia, mock



orange and many others, a fragrant perfume best appreciated on a still summer evening. Its strong scent attracts many moths.

Thyme had a high total of twenty-eight visiting butterfly species in the national survey and was particularly favoured by Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Copper and Small Tortoiseshell. In our garden it grows next to Marjoram, which usually flowers a few

days before Thyme. In our garden it has attracted, as well as the species already mentioned, Green-veined White, Essex Skipper, and Comma. Our total of eight species is well below our Marjoram garden total of seventeen but Thyme definitely has the edge in attracting bee species. Like Marjoram it grows in a sunny spot and sometimes it has been impossible to accurately count the numbers of visiting bees.

New Wildflower Meadows

Mark Brewster

Thanks to Committee members: Mark, Peter, Julian and Kevin, all of whom were involved with the new wildflower areas being created in a private paddock in Onehouse.

In nearby Harleston, parishioners have been pushing on with their own wildflower areas (see below).



They originally sowed an area on the village green, south of Cutlers Lane. Six months later they sowed a second area, across the road with a butterfly-specific seed mix, but both have delivered in terms of visiting pollinators, especially butterflies.

This spring, they have extended both areas, with SBBC due to contribute £150.

Hazel took the first shot in the morning, looking south-east across the second extended area (it had been sowed and raked earlier).

If only other parishes had the vision of

Andy and his team in Harleston.

The first couple of wildflower areas were funded jointly by Harleston Parish, with the support of Shelland.

The local Green Party district councillor sourced funding from Mid Suffolk, plus the continued support of a private benefactor.

The extensions this year are being funded by the same benefactor and the parish group. SBBC are to contribute £150 towards ground preparation, as the benefactor is once again paying for the seed. *(All photos by Mark Brewster)*

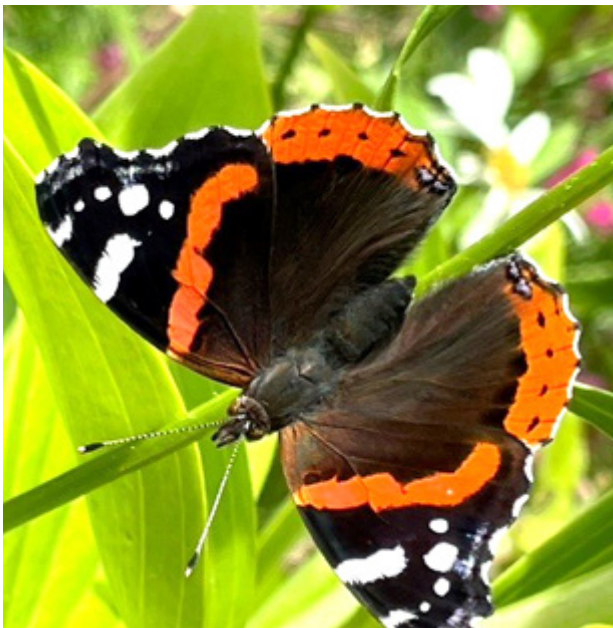
Gardening with Harmony

'Dahlia Queen'

I invite you all to visit my website gardeningwithharmony.com which has several butterfly posts where I push for everyone to garden for pollinators and to join the Big Butterfly Counts.

Much better numbers on the count for me this year so I am hoping this will be the same across the UK.

Red Admiral by Dahlia Queen.

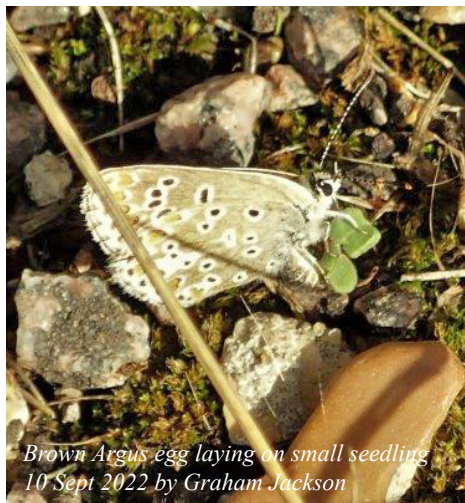


Foodplant adaptability

Brown Argus

by *Graham Jackson*

Last year we had only 3mm rain total for July and August combined. An area over the back fence became desiccated as it is basically a pan of hardcore & asphalt (i.e. little or no soil) left by builders in 2016. It rained early September and by the 10th, lots of germinated small leaves appeared, they are - to the best of my knowledge - Black Medick - *Medicago lupulina*. They dominated the area and, although other Clovers and Vetches do occur there, I thought they were a likely food-plant for the Common Blues also seen on site. Until I saw Brown Argus (BA) apparently ovipositing on Black Medick, I had thought it most likely that they used *Geranium molle* on site. This Crane's-bill occurs on site and there are probably others too. I did wonder if the drought had left the BAs no other viable alternative food-plant so perhaps they adopted the potential of masses of newly germinated Black Medick. I would add that recently it has become very dry here this May/June. Further away and beyond the hardcore/asphalt patch the field was apparently raised with say 1 to 2 metres of brought in soil, now also desiccated and plants going yellow. On our side of the fence our lawn's do have *G.molle* but last year's mowing - and desiccation - would have minimised availability for BA larvae.



*Brown Argus egg laying on small seedling
10 Sept 2022 by Graham Jackson*

Holly Blue

Graham Jackson

In common with the national pattern (Rachael Conway: Butterfly Conservation, Garden Butterfly Survey, Summer Newsletter 2023) I recorded many more Holly Blues in the first half of this year compared with last year. Not only did they become my most commonly sighted species, but they provided a surprise observation.

On 20th and 21st May I saw female Holly Blues laying a few eggs on flower buds of a Ceanothus growing within 2m of my front door. Subsequently, eggs hatched, and larvae developed through stages (instars) of which there are four. None were found after 21st June consistent with the reported interval to pupating. Whether pupae developed I do not know. I did wonder if Holly Blue females are better adapted to detect those erumpent flower buds – regardless of species – that

The Suffolk Argus

will provide optimum nutrients for the next generation of larvae.

Holly Blues are known to use a wide variety of foodplants, but *Ceanothus* is not usually mentioned. Sue Kelly uploaded a photograph in 2019 of a Holly Blue in the posture of egg laying on a *Ceanothus* flower bud but does not mention egg laying ([flickr.com/photos/134278129@N02/33878087618/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/134278129@N02/33878087618/)). I have seen a Holly Blue adopt the egg-laying posture on a Stinging Nettle flower bud but without evidence of eggs laid. Others have reported similar behaviour on several other plants. *Ceanothus* is an evergreen garden shrub which tolerates various conditions including drought. Although Holly and Ivy are the preferred Holly Blue foodplants for the spring and summer broods respectively, the species is known to be polyphagous, thus it can use other plants such as dogwoods and buckthorns. I doubt I will be able to verify if adult Holly Blues emerge from the larvae found on my *Ceanothus* but the plant is of the buckthorn family; so maybe they will.



Holly blue larva on Ceanothus
by Graham Jackson



Holly Blue on Dogwood
by Trevor Goodfellow



Holly blue larva tended by ants
by Graham Jackson

I did try shining UV light on the larvae but with no effect. Subsequently I was informed (Barry Henwood, personal communication) that UV light, particularly at 365nm wavelength, is effective but only at night [in the dark]. Too late to try this time but an added complication is that there is a streetlight some 12m from the *Ceanothus*. Such are the tribulations for the urban naturalist.

Holly Blue

Philip Wilkins

2023 has been a good year for Holly Blues (*Celastrina argiolus*). We have several large Holly bushes and plenty of Ivy in our garden in Stockton, near the Suffolk - Norfolk border. So, it is no surprise to see Holly Blue regularly. However, this year has had higher numbers than usual. Most of these Holly Blues have displayed typical behaviour - flying strongly, particularly around trees and shrubs. On 18th May, I observed a blue butterfly acting differently. It flew low and was seeking out Bird's-foot-trefoil plants (we have quite a few of them). It settled on some and I decided to film it, thinking it was my first Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*) of the year. I was surprised to find that it was a female Holly Blue. She also seemed to be seeking out the unopened inflorescences rather than those in flower.

I reviewed the video footage and she seemed to be exhibiting egg laying behaviour. Over the next few days, at least two females were acting in the same way on Bird's-foot-trefoil. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any larvae on subsequent searches.

The video footage is posted on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/shorts/v14BkD_BIIM

End of Summer Results:

BA sightings in 2022 were on 41 days (8.7.2022 - 14.9.2022), whereas for 2023 to date: 31 days (3.6.2023 - 14.9.2023). The huge drop off in numbers this year so far is the Small Copper (SC). Today my second sighting on site this year turned up. SC sightings in 2022 were on 52 days (9.5.2022 - 19.9.2022), whereas for 2023 to date: 2 days (25.6.2023 & 14.9.2023).

Last year Common Blues (CB) topped my list for most days sighted on compared with other spp. CB sightings in 2022 were on 93 days (6.5.2022 - 26.9.2022), whereas for 2023 to date: 22 days (3.6.2023 - 7.9.2023). In fact, only on 3 days to 2 July with the rest only after 30th July 2023.



Holly Blue laying eggs on Bird's foot trefoil
by Phillip Wilkins

Rare Moth

Editor

On the 17th of June 2023, a Dusky Clearwing – *Paranthrene tabaniformis* was seen near Fordham, Cambridgeshire after it was thought to be extinct here; not being recorded for nearly a century. On the 18th it was also recorded in West Suffolk. The photo on the right is of a specimen lured to pheromone in Transylvania taken by Bob Eade.



Still counting

Editor

While walking unused cow meadows at Great Blakenham, Anne and Steve Green counted 10 butterfly species with a high

count of Meadow Browns and Essex Skippers, including a lovely Brown Argus aberration (photo on page 2).

Foxy Encounter

Editor

Artist Deborah Vass (deborahvass.com) was out sketching between showers and had a pleasant encounter: ‘But no sooner had I started, I spotted this huge and hairy caterpillar of the Fox moth, crawling along

by my chair (and I confess I am easily distracted by bugs and creatures.) I feared I might accidentally squash him, so I moved him into the safe arms of the tree and soon became absorbed by drawing again’.

Small v Essex

Trevor Goodfellow

This year I have been asked many times ‘what is the difference between the Small and Essex Skippers?’ I have written about these with Rob Parker in a previous issue, but for those readers who missed that edition I will attempt to clarify the main points here.

In Suffolk we have four native Skipper species: Dingy, Small, Large, and Essex, the latter three are often referred to as ‘Golden Skippers’.

In the hand, the Essex Skipper is slightly smaller than the Small Skipper but not easy to tell in the field.

There are three key features to look out for, all shown in the Essex Skipper photo below: 1) antennae tips, 2) male gender mark (sex brand), and 3) underside of forewing tip. '3' is not diagnostic on its own, as you can see from the photos.

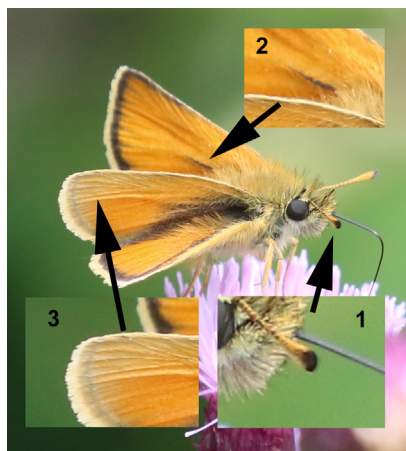
You will need a close-up view of the specimen, not easy sometimes, so a good photo is useful.

There are variations of each Skipper species which may present some overlapping features, but as a rule: the Essex has 'dipped in ink' black tips to the antennae which is visible from below. This feature is not always, but usually striking and appears blunter and club-like than the Small. Usually, if in doubt, it's a Small Skipper. The male gender brand (black line on upper forewing) is short and straight. The

underside is usually a uniform colour.

The Small usually appears more orange coloured than the paler Essex and has more blurred paler antennae tips that are dark, but often graduated in grey or brown ending with a curved point and pale underneath. The underside of the forewing colour fades to greyish colour near the tip, although some Essex may show this in varying degrees. The male gender brand is longer and has a dogleg appearance although care should be taken to get a good view in case the long thoracic hairs obscure the basal half.

The females of both Small and Essex do not have a gender brand so the only features are venation and wing border and colour, but with a bit of experience, you will soon get the Essex's jizz.



Right, clockwise: Essex Skipper, Small Skipper (M) showing long dogleg sex brand and pale wing tip, Essex Skipper (M) showing short straight sex brand, Small Skipper (F)



Events Reports

5/6/23 Leaflet drop. Mark Brewster and Trevor Goodfellow

A copy of ‘Gardening for Butterflies’ and ‘Identifying Garden Butterflies’ leaflets were delivered by hand to about 150 homes in Thurston.



In addition to these, a custom printed flier inviting residents of a new housing estate to love butterflies and create garden space for them and their host plants. We believe that well managed gardens with some wilderness, can be more beneficial than the monoculture of the site's previous agricultural use.

The Denbury Homes development (formerly Hopkins Homes) adopted butterfly names for the streets and some individual homes, as reported in previous Suffolk Argus editions. Unfortunately, SBBC were unable to help save a row of Elm trees destined for

removal during the site's construction where White-letter hairstreaks were recorded. The last two trees were recently cut down, deemed unsafe.

SBBC succeeded in negotiating the inclusion of disease resistant White Elm trees – *Ulmus laevis* in the development's planting scheme.

The developers have done their best to plant as many trees and shrubs as possible along with landscaping around the surface water runoff lagoons with various paddock mixes and wildflower seeded areas. Drought stricken trees that didn't survive 2022 will be replaced as a matter of course.

A few homes are yet to be built and landscaping is not completed so we look forward to seeing the green spaces alive with butterflies next summer – fingers crossed.

Thanks to Alison in the sales office for being accommodating by sharing planting schemes with us and kindly offering to include our Butterfly Conservation leaflets with the new home buyers' welcome packs which will be given to the owners of the homes not yet completed. We commented favourably on her Butterfly print dress.

We are hoping the leaflet distribution will also generate new SBBC memberships.

14/6/23 Green Farm Butterfly Walk led by Trevor Goodfellow

A couple of weeks ago, I thought it would be cold and wet with no butterflies to see on the walk. Thankfully I was wrong and with the sunshine and 25 degrees centigrade with a light cool breeze all was well on the day.

11 members attended and given a quick history of Green Farm in the 'briefing room' (den).

We started with a walk around the lake watching the fish and the many dragonflies and damselflies, then someone spotted a Barn owl hunting. The owl was quickly intercepted by a Kestrel which robbed it of its prey.



I pointed out a couple of *Podocarpus* trees that had suffered the stress of supporting Lunar Hornet moth larvae as we headed for two groups of mature Alder Buckthorn trees. Several Brimstone larvae were found feeding on their leaves.

Passing along a hedgerow of Blackthorn and Bramble, we startled a Muntjac on the way to the first meadow. As we entered, we spotted a Green-veined White and occasional micro moths.

In 2017, this meadow of just under 1 acre was sown with paddock mixed grasses and a margin of wildflower seeds around. It is now planted with young trees. The margins are dominated by Greater Knapweed with occasional Sainfoin and Viper's Bugloss. A mixed native hedge along the field side shields the view of distant new housing and serves as a windbreak. Apart from annual hedge trimming, this area is unmanaged.

Paths criss-cross the area mostly defined by game trails favoured by a few Small Heath for basking. Several Bee Orchids were in bloom, many of which had appeared for the first time.

The Greater Knapweed bloom coincided with the Large Skipper emergence. At least 4 were seen. Several Meadow Browns skipped amongst the long vegetation and the occasional Common Blue caught our eyes together with Holly Blue and Brimstone to add to our tally. Some Scabious and lots of Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil providing a

The Suffolk Argus

good intermediate nectar source along with some Sainfoin climbing over some longer grass. Loved by all the pollinators, they also provide colour for most of the summer. The Bird's-foot Trefoil is host to Six-spot Burnets that feed on the leaves and Six-belted Clearwing moth whose larvae feed on the roots.

We proceeded through a gate, past poplar trees showing signs of Hornet moth activity, to the second 1-acre meadow. Cut once a year in the Autumn, usually with a rotary 'topper' but more recently with a flail, and not cleared away. The springtime Cowslips had given way to a dominating display of Ox-eyed daisies and occasional Cranesbill and Knapweed. Several Pyramidal orchids were just discretely breaking bud. In the centre of this meadow a garden rubbish pile was surrounded by a bank of Stinging nettles where a web of Peacock larvae had started feeding. We spotted one Red Admiral as we walked through the gardens. A total of 8 species spotted plus Speckled Wood and Brown Argus seen later that day. Cinnabar, Mother Shipton, Burnet Companion, Yellow Shell moths also noted.

17/6/23 Purdis Heath SSSI for SSB led by Julian Dowding

Despite the weather, a good turn out for a walk around the heath in search of the Silver-Studded Blue. Several sightings made the day worthwhile.



Purdis Heath photos taken by Mark Brewster

1/7/23 Northfield Wood walk led by Mark Brewster (By Kev Ling)

A cloudy start to the day, did nothing to deter a strong turnout at Northfield Wood in Onehouse for Butterfly Conservation's latest field trip, led by Suffolk BC committee member and raconteur Mark Brewster. Living on the edge of the wood, Mark had an intimate knowledge of the habitat and accompanying species that could be found and his pre-walk briefing whetted everyone's appetite. A dozen guests, including some new members, set off just as the sun started to put in an appearance.

As we approached the first bank of bramble on the woodland edge, Small and Large Skipper were seen, along with the first Gatekeeper of the year. They were soon joined by Meadow Brown Ringlet, Green Veined White and Large White. As one would expect in such a habitat, it was not long before Speckled Wood appeared too. It was nice to see some fresh looking Commas and a single Red Admiral, a species that for many of us would come to define the summer in Suffolk, with it being seen in such large numbers.

The sun skirted in and out of cloud for much of our time in Northfield Wood, but with a little perseverance, there were several sunny glades that eventually attracted some of our target species. The first Silver Washed Fritillary and White Admiral sightings of the year were had by Mark just prior to the event and we were blessed with

a nice number of each on the day (6 White Admiral & 4 Silver Washed Fritillary). In a brief return to the wood in the afternoon, I observed a pair in a courtship routine, which sadly did not end in copulation on that occasion.

Trevor Goodfellow was spotted with his camera focusing on some low hanging branches, a moment to share a Purple Hairstreak close up (see photo). This was a very nice addition to our tally of thirteen species for the morning.



In addition to the butterflies that were seen, it was nice to network with so many members, recounting their own butterfly encounters. Mr Brewster shared his Purple Emperor story with the group (Mark had a close encounter with His Imperial Majesty at Northfield Wood in 2021 and again in 2022, and deserves to dine out on that experience a while longer I think). The walk was a resounding success, and the location was perfect, with a diverse range of butterfly species on show, as well as a nice selection of wildflowers, including orchids.



*Northfield wood
by Mark Brewster*



*Male Purple Emperor
by Lucinda 2022*



*White admiral by
Trevor Goodfellow*



*Female Purple Emperor
by Audrey 2019*

As we departed Northfield Wood, a small number of us moved on to the nearby village of Harleston, to catch up on the excellent conservation work being carried out by the Harleston Parish Meeting, chaired by Andy Wilks. In collaboration with Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council's Biodiversity Action Plan, who funded the initial supply of wildflower seed, Andy and his dedicated team of volunteers have driven a Jubilee wildflower meadow planting project on part of the village green (see page 13). This has been extended in 2023 with Suffolk Butterfly Conservation sponsoring the cost of additional seed. Many species frequent this meadow, with the welcome addition of Common Blue and Brown Argus (observed by Mark Brewster on his regular butterfly

counts). The former being seen copulating on Red Clover.

The project is also benefitting a wider range of species too, including insects and mammals, which in turn may encourage birds such as Barn Owl to the area.

In addition to the wildflower meadows, there is also a communal herb garden. During our visit we were treated to a Painted Lady, enjoying the varied nectar sources on show.

There is also a small copse adjacent to the village green that is also on the radar for active conservation management. As this country continues to lose its wildflower meadows at an alarming rate, it is refreshing to see such positive work as this, helping

to turn the tide and give the land back to nature. If any of our members are aware of similar initiatives, we would love to hear from you so that we can consider adding our support and contributions to such projects.

12/7/23 Bradfield Wood, privately arranged butterfly walk led by Trevor Goodfellow

‘Trevor very kindly spared a morning to share his love and knowledge of butterflies and moths with our butterfly enthusiast 5-year-old daughter. He took us on a walk at Bradfield Woods and we spotted 12 species of butterfly and 1 species of moth. His knowledge was extensive, and we learnt so much. He even spotted a Purple Emperor for us which was what my daughter was hoping for! He was also so kind and my children felt very at ease around him. We are so grateful for his time and for sharing his passion. So important to see all different generations sharing their love of wildlife together, giving each other the desire to care and look after our precious planet and equally precious butterflies and moths. Thank you, Trevor.’ *Orla Thornton*

30/7/23 Aldeburgh, Trudie’s Garden Open Day by Richard Stewart

The weather was variable with a few spots of rain, plenty of cloud cover but also some good spells of sunshine. The last mentioned accompanied the large group I took round at the beginning of the day. With the later help of other observers, the day total was eighteen different butterfly species, namely

Essex and Small Skipper, Brimstone, Large and Small White, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common and Holly Blue, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Speckled Wood, Grayling, Meadow Brown and about twenty Gatekeepers. The ones mentioned so far were in small numbers, but I estimated at least fifty Peacocks and well over seventy Red Admirals, possibly over a hundred, almost all in excellent condition. The buddleia avenue was full of butterflies and all of my group had good views of a feeding Humming-bird Hawk-moth. One visitor also managed to get a video sequence. Sharp eyes also noted a Wasp spider and wrapped up prey plus a bee nest unfortunately in the centre of the path running alongside the hedge of native species. Care was taken not for potential stings but because the small hole seemed in danger of being adversely affected by passing feet. Later in the day I couldn’t find it. Birds included swallows and swifts plus a calling green woodpecker and Trudie has earlier in the year heard both nightingale and turtle dove, both declining species. Amorous tortoises, goats and sheep added to the visitor experience and excluding butterflies the insect of the day, in my opinion, was a superb Great Green Bush-cricket -*Tettigonia viridissima* posing very conveniently for photographers on the back wall of the chalet.

Two moth traps set the previous night were opened and Trevor Goodfellow and Tony & Sandy Fox photographed the hundreds

The Suffolk Argus

of moths for identifying later. They also engaged the visitors with the species names, life-cycles and foodplants etc. Both young and old were impressed by the variety of shapes, sizes and colours of the moths but the main stars were the Elephant Hawk-moth, Jersey Tiger and the Buff-tip with its amazing camouflage. 67 species of moth were recorded in total (some of which were nationally scarce) and verified by the Suffolk Moths online recorder. Some people were concerned about the moths' welfare as they were retained in small pots and jars for display. Most moths have a short natural lifespan, and the air in the containers easily supports them for many hours, however,

those moths which became agitated and risked damaging their wings were released sooner than the rest which were carefully placed into nearby trees and bushes.

Peter Girling attracted many visitors with his bee display and honey for sale and Mark Brewster, Anne-Marie Stewart, Alan Johnson, Peter Maddison and Paul the gardener are to be thanked for their help during the day. Once again, we are indebted to Trudie for giving Butterfly Conservation such a warm welcome. Donations on the day amounted to £502 and the current profit on the book about the garden is £769-20.



*Peacock by Mark Brewster
at Trudie's*



*Grayling on
Bruce's shirt by
Alexese Scott.*



Buff-tip by Trevor Goodfellow



Great Green Bush-cricket - Tettigonia viridissima by Trevor Goodfellow

1/8/23 Grayling search in Rendlesham Forest led by Peter Maddison

The weather forecast wasn't ideal, only 5 of us turned out to find Grayling in Rendlesham Forest. Within 300 metres of the car park, we had passed along a shady ride to one of the main forest tracks and it was there that our first Graylings were seen, cryptically camouflaged, and hunkered down along the

edges of the track. At first, one was spotted, then another and then they were everywhere. Careful where we walked, the butterflies rose up at our feet and flew on a few metres only to land again, and then, turning at right angles to the sun, leaned over to present as much surface area to the warming rays as possible. Here and there were self-seeded buddleia bushes which were magnets for Red Admirals and Peacocks in particular,

but Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers were in the trackside grasses, as was an occasional faded Ringlet – they haven't been so numerous this year. A Small Tortoiseshell was a bonus, but the Graylings were the star of the show and throughout our steady morning walk they were rising from beneath our feet on most of the tracks. 10 species were recorded, a little sunshine helped.



Grayling in flight by Julian Sidney

*Clockwise: Poplar Hawk, Elephant Hawk and
Lime Hawk moths caught by
MV Robinson trap by Trevor Goodfellow*

