

SUFFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

The

# Suffolk Argus

Volume 81

Summer 2021



Butterfly  
Conservation

Saving Butterflies, moths and our environment



## Bill Stone, County Butterfly Recorder (retired)

*Peter Maddison*

Upon the retirement of Bill as County Butterfly Recorder a presentation of a signed Richard Lewington print was made. It was unfortunate that owing to COVID-19 restrictions we were unable to do this at a formal event, but nevertheless I conveyed the Suffolk Branch's grateful thanks for his tremendous work during 8 years in the role. Bill's commitment to amassing and analysing a quarter of a million records, written up in the annual Suffolk Butterfly Report has been outstanding and much appreciated.

Bill is keen to continue recording butterflies in the field – he tells me that Dingy Skippers in the King's Forest are next on the list of May sites for him to visit – and he will continue to assist with the handover to the new CBR, James Corton.



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Butterfly Conservation

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## Editorial

*Trevor Goodfellow*

I hope you all enjoyed the Spring Argus and that it helped to get your enthusiasm going for the butterfly season ahead and welcome to the bumper Summer edition of the Suffolk Argus which includes a summarized 2020 butterfly report by Bill Stone.

Like some of you, in February, I saw my first Brimstone in the distance while I watched a wake of 9 Buzzards and a Red Kite catching a thermal and listened to Skylarks singing. The dull short days of winter gave way to longer brighter days which is uplifting, especially as I saw my first Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock, distracting me from the gloom of lockdown III and suffering poor TV entertainment except the brilliant David Attenborough's 'Life in Colour', which featured some beautiful exotic butterflies.

I tried a couple of optimistic moth trapping sessions in late February with my actinic trap which revealed Dotted Border, Common Quaker, Brindled Flat-body, and a March moth, only five moths, four species in total, not that I expected much with the nights still freezing at that time and a full-moon on the second attempt.

My weather records show that our night-time temperatures were in single figures from November 2020 until April the 8th! not surprising therefore that butterflies had been scarce till then; 6 months of 'winter'.

The apparent national rise in interest for moth trapping and availability of traps of all kinds concerns me that 'over trapping', whilst generating records, may have some negative effect on pairing and mating but mostly, increased predation. The opinion of SMG would

be welcome. On the subject of moth trapping, SBC now has moth traps available for members to borrow, see page 28.

It is good that more people are valuing our wildlife and the outdoors, but lockdown can be seen as a double-edged sword. A dichotomy arises where nature reserves are gladly receiving many more visitors as interest in wildlife soars, but on the downside, these reserves are under financial pressures, and are suffering from badly eroded, expanded and muddy paths, increased litter, people and dogs going 'off piste' and dogs roaming off leads in SSSI sites damaging habitats, and while children are encouraged, they often appear to have missed the lecture that included: 'Shush! you will scare it away'.

In this modern age of grown men in shorts and flip-flops in public, children in trousers and hoodies, women rarely wearing skirts, and almost everyone seemingly glued to mobile phones 24 hours a day, the life I remember as a child seems so different and distant now. Perhaps there will come a time when people can say 'Brexit' not 'Bregsit' and 'Espresso' not 'Expresso', who knows? Rant over.

It feels like we are potentially on the cusp of change for the better, and just maybe the COVID crisis has, in some strange way helped us to re-evaluate our lives, re-asses our priorities, and coexist with nature in a better more beneficial way.

**Copy date for the Autumn Suffolk Argus is September 26th, 2021**

*(Front cover image: Swallowtail by David Pitt)*

### Butterfly Information Board at Westerfield Station

Westerfield Station is one of the 30 or so Greater Anglia stations in the county that took part in our Wildflower Seed Project, as reported in the Summer 2020 *Suffolk Argus*. More recently we were asked to give help with the preparation of a butterfly identification poster and in April this

year, when COVID-19 restrictions allowed, the information lectern was installed together with a similar board for pollinating bees.



Westerfield Station lecterns featuring BC ID sheet by Sandy Burn



Butterfly ID Lectern

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### What Happened to the A14 Project?

*Twam Wade*

The project is trying to do the impossible and the 5-year trial has just ended. From the trial a lot was learned and proved one thing; that a simple idea is worth pursuing.

The simple idea is that land that is not a garden or is not suitable for food production and needs a productive management strategy can be used for improving the natural environment simply and cheaply. I identified such a site on the A14 near Exning. It was one side of a deep cutting which was not scrub and I could access without going onto the A14.

My focus species was the Chalkhill Blue (CHB) which is quite common on the Devils Dyke, 2 miles from Exning. Their nursery plant is the Horseshoe Vetch (HV), so I just bought seed for HV and Birdsfoot Trefoil (BFT).

I got permission from Highway England to do the trial on the Exning site, bought seed, found a volunteer to germinate the seed and pot up the plants, found more volunteers to plant the plants and the experiment started. The first inspection of the site after planting was to see what plants survived the first winter; 40%, enough. HV grows very close to the ground forming almost a mat and we now have 8 patches along the top of the cutting. Sadly, the BFT did not survive. The highlight was in Year 4 when one female CHB was seen laying eggs on one HV plant.

Sadly, in Year 5 (2020), I did not see any CHB on site and other species were few and far between. I have concluded that what the site needs is a range of wildflower species to attract and hold CHB in the area along with other species. Since then, another volunteer came forward wanting to

promote the existence of CHB in Suffolk close to where he lives. I considered field verges, but they can get ploughed in at the whim of the owner. I considered other road verges, but we would be dependent upon the whims of an impersonal authority whose leading staff only play lip service to conservation.

Taking an ordinary OS map, I realised that East Anglia has very many irrigation reservoirs. The banks of a reservoir need to be properly managed to maintain structural integrity. Establishing a wildflower meadow would be possible and would add another dimension to an environmental feature that water creates. The banks will almost certainly be made of disturbed soil low in plant nutrients. In fact, I cannot think of anywhere better.

So, what did happen to the A14 project? It certainly did not bring in crowds of butterflies. It did show that female CHBs would fly 2 miles, find HV and lay eggs. It did show that HV can survive in an unmanaged habitat. It also showed that the idea of planting unmanaged grassland to create an area for butterflies, bees and other insects is worth trying and wouldn't cost much.

The moral of this tale is simple. Like Robert the Bruce hiding in a cave, be inspired to go out and try again but this time get as many people as possible to find a patch to try for themselves to create a place for insects. All you have to do is find your nearest irrigation reservoir and who

owns it. With the prospect that the government may pay for biodiversity schemes farmers will not need persuading, I suspect, and your Butterfly Conservation branch is here to help.



*Horseshoe Vetch Hippocrepis-comosa*  
(image from [Urbanbutterflygarden.co.uk](http://Urbanbutterflygarden.co.uk))



*Chalkhill Blues by Trevor Goodfellow*

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## How Can You Help Improve the Lot for Butterflies?

*Twm Wade*

Let me first introduce you to two elderly gentlemen who spend some of their spare time recording butterfly numbers in Dunwich Forest. One lives near Woodbridge the other at Beccles. They have been doing it for 10 years following the same route every time; known as a transect.

The walking of transects is well established across the UK and are enjoyable yet have scientific merit.

They share the weekly walk from 1 April to 30 September and the concern is they are growing



older. What they would like is to have someone else take on a regular walk and have possible successors. And it is the case of 'more the merrier'.

Butterfly Conservation have a number of ways to record butterfly numbers. Using the thousands of records that they get, they can say what butterflies are where across the UK and how many. There was little method to collecting data until 1976 when the Pollard Walk was devised. The methodology is the same for transects and the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) which was established in 2009 and only needs to be walked twice a year.

If you still wish to help with butterfly conservation but both transects and the WCBS are just not for you, how about the Garden Butterfly Survey. Once you are set up on the web it is entirely up to you how often you enter sightings and there are photographs to help you identify the species you

saw. If you have a smart phone, it can be even easier using i-Record which can also help with identification. Casual sightings can be recorded on i-Record as you walk whether in town or country.

I have already mentioned the transect in Dunwich Forest. In the same area at Darsham there is a WCBS square available. It is not the most attractive walk in Suffolk nor the shortest to get round yet if you lived there, it would be convenient.

To take up a citizen science hobby is a productive way to spend your spare time and helps conservation. Counting butterflies is best on warm sunny days and costs nothing so if you want to know more, or find out what transects are available, please contact me by email:- [twm.wade@yahoo.com](mailto:twm.wade@yahoo.com)

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## Gene Flow

*Fiona Plenderlieth (PHD Student at The James Hutton Institute and the University of Aberdeen)*

*Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) is an important component of woodland and non-woodland trees in the UK. Unfortunately, our ash trees are threatened by the oomycete *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, which causes Ash dieback. Diseased trees may be felled as they present a threat to health and safety, of most concern are the estimated 4 million ash trees along the UK road and rail network which may be removed, this could represent a substantial loss in connectivity.

A total of 955 species relies on these Ash trees to some extent, of these there are 241 invertebrates. Therefore, the aim of my research is to gain a better understanding of the consequences of Ash

dieback for landscape connectivity for some of these insects.

This year I will be collecting a small number of samples of two ash-associated lepidoptera, the Ash-bud moth *Prays fraxinella* and Yellow-spot tortrix *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana*, from ancient woodlands across Suffolk. This will allow us to establish current levels of gene flow between these woodlands. These results will be compared with samples taken from woodlands in the South West and North West of England. This data will be most valuable for assessing which woodland characteristics and landscape features are key for maintaining connectivity

between small fragments of ancient woodland and for estimating the impact of Ash dieback on connectivity for these species. I am also interested in whether the amount of connectivity between ancient woodlands influences moth diversity, so I hope collect data on moth diversity in some of these woodlands during the summer.



*Yellow-spot tortrix by Trevor Goodfellow*

My study sites include Suffolk Wildlife Trust sites, awaiting approval from Natural England, RSPB Wolves wood, the woodlands at Euston estate (Sapiston Grove and Fakenham Magna) and a couple of Woodland Trust sites.



*Ash-bud moth by Trevor Goodfellow*

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## Burgh House Farm for Wildlife

*Bill Mayne*

Jacqui and I bought Burgh House in 2006 which included 35 acres of ancient water meadows. We were able to acquire another 70 acres of arable land from the Estate of Lord Belstead shortly afterwards.

Until a couple of years ago we ran our own herd of Red Poll cattle on the water meadows producing our own beef which we sold locally. The arable land was farmed with an arrangement with local farmer John Taylor who carried out all the cultivations and harvesting. The water meadows in particular, are rich in wildlife and plants. We have a number of rare plant species including Southern marsh orchids and mammals including Water voles and Otters. Bird life is abundant with nesting Barn owls, Kingfishers, Skylarks and Yellowhammers to name but a few.

The changes in farming policy by the government mean that farmers will no longer be paid simply to farm their land and the single farm payment system is already being phased out. In the future farmers will only receive

support if they perform a public good and improve the environment or encourage biodiversity and wildlife conservation so we decided to change the way our small farm operates. Over the next few years, we intend moving away from an arable rotation towards more grass. We are already working with Lee Byam and his partner Becky Spry who have a herd of Limousin beef cattle, and they are interested in expanding their herd as we increase the area of grassland in the farm rotation.

Unfortunately, DEFRA have yet to publish the new farm stewardship scheme, but we decided to press ahead with our plans. So, this winter we have started by planting 2.5 hectares of woodland in several blocks across the farm supported by the Woodland Trust. We have divided the big arable fields into a number of smaller fields and planted 1 kilometre of new hedging. Two of the larger woodland blocks have areas for rewilding where we have planted grass and Millet for birdlife and small mammals and wildflowers such as Birdsfoot trefoil, Vetches and Oxeye daisy. Hopefully as

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the woodland and hedges grow and the rewilded areas establish themselves we will create a thriving habitat for wildlife.

As a member of Farming and Wildlife Action Group (FWAG), in 2019 we attended an open day at the group's 'Wildflower' winner's farm in Norton who had a Suffolk Butterfly Conservation (SBC) representative there informing us about the farmland butterflies and moths. We approached the SBC person: Trevor Goodfellow and talked about the possibility of a butterfly survey. Trevor agreed to help, and kindly came to the farm several times and recorded 14 butterfly species, 10 moth species (single night actinic trapping) and 14 species of Dragonflies and Damsels as baseline records.

Given the COVID lockdown we have been working hard all winter repairing fences restoring hedgerows and replanting the Spooky Wood well known to our dog walkers. We have also replanted the banks on the edge of the water meadows with native trees with support from the Sicon Foundation a Suffolk based IT company who are keen to provide trees to landowners.

Finally, we have seeded a new green lane across the farm which will allow access to all the fields for farm vehicles and moving cattle - Jacqui and I hope that Burgh House Farm will develop into a special place for wildlife giving even greater enjoyment to us as custodians of the farm and to those who enjoy walking on our

public footpaths. We ask that walkers please keep to the public footpaths which will be clearly marked as it is important to maintain the wild areas for wildlife species to become established.



*Burgh House Farm*



*Comma by Trevor Goodfellow*



*Green Vined White by Trevor Goodfellow*



*Small Copper by Trevor Goodfellow*



*Old Lady moth by Trevor Goodfellow*



## Tick Information

### BC HQ

Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including humans. They can vary in size with larvae being as small as a freckle, to adults being similar in size to a baked bean. (see photo below).

They live in many habitats but are particularly found in long grass and leaf litter in woodlands, grassland, moorlands, heathland and some urban parks and gardens. They attach to skin when a host passes by and will feed for several days before dropping off. Ticks are found throughout the year but are most active between spring and autumn.

#### What are the risks?

Ticks can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease. It is important that you remain aware, even if you are not aware that you have been bitten. Symptoms of Lyme disease can include:

- A red “bullseye” rash
- Flu-like symptoms
- Fatigue
- Muscle and joint pain
- Migraines

If you have been bitten or have any concerns that you may have been bitten, it is important to seek medical advice from NHS 111 or your GP.

#### What can I do to avoid being bitten?

To avoid being bitten, you should try to stick to clear paths and avoid brushing against vegetation.

Ensure you have fine tipped tweezers or a tick removal tool on you whilst you are out. You should try to wear long, light coloured clothing so that you are able to see any ticks that may get onto your clothing. In particularly high-risk areas

consider wearing protective clothing such as full body overalls. Repellents containing DEET will minimise the risk of any ticks biting your skin and you should always carry out a full check of your clothes and body after your outdoors activity.

*Hint: it is best to use a tick fork but, to remove a tiny tick, after dabbing with alcohol or after-shave, you can nip it with tweezers close to your skin and pulling quickly. With larger ticks, there is a risk of its jaws detaching and left in the skin, they can cause infection, therefore I usually hold the tweezers firmly, twist my hand around in a clockwise direction, grab the tick as close to the skin as I can then twist anticlockwise 360 degrees then it should release. To attach well, the opposing jaws overlap, the twisting forces them apart. Avoid squeezing larger ticks' abdomens when removing as this potentially carries infected blood from the tick back to the skin. When they first attach to you, you may not realise for a day or two until you feel a slight irritation, so always particularly check backs of legs and other regions below the waist. Keep to main tracks and take care in long grass and along narrow deer runs through undergrowth. Ed.*



Deer Tick

## Encounters with Apollos

David Tomlinson

I was given a copy of Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* for my ninth birthday, rather more years ago now than I care to recall. I was fascinated by the number of birds that were rare or didn't occur in Britain, but Plate 46 was my favourite, with its depictions of Bee-eater, Roller, Hoopoe and Kingfisher, all birds of unimaginable colour and glamour. In subsequent years I was lucky enough to see all four while travelling in Spain on holidays with my parents. I was keen on butterflies too, but at the time there were no similar field guides to Europe's butterflies. (Higgins and Riley's *A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe* wasn't published until 1970.) I can't for the life of me recall what reference book I used to identify the butterflies I encountered on those holidays, but I do remember being just as keen to see an Apollo as a Roller or Hoopoe.

Frustratingly, I never did see one, though our holidays did take in the Pyrenees where, many years later, I finally came across these splendid insects. Quite why I never saw them before will always remain a mystery, because their flight period is a long one, extending from late April to September. I can only think that I was too busy looking skywards for Lammergeiers, but how could I have overlooked a butterfly as big and obvious as this?

Apollos don't occur in Britain but can be found in suitable habitat in Norway and Sweden, as well as the Alps and Pyrenees, along with much of eastern Europe. There are a number of old British records, and even one from coastal Suffolk (caught by a Mrs

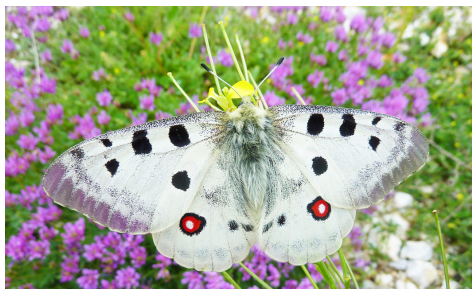
Webb at Thorpeness on 10 September 1928). However, these are sedentary butterflies, their flight somewhat blundering and clumsy, and the chances of such an insect travelling several hundred miles and crossing the English Channel or North Sea to England seems highly improbable. I don't think that any modern lepidopterists take the British records seriously.

My most recent encounters with Apollos have been in Bulgaria, in the Eastern Rhodopes, a beautiful and largely unspoilt mountain range. Here the butterfly watching is the best that I've encountered anywhere in Europe, with an impressive variety of species to be seen. Apollos are by no means common even in the Rhodopes, but localised and restricted to their favoured habitat. The best site I found for them was a rugged, south-facing slope where sunshine induced a few to take to the wing. My observations suggest that they only fly when the sun shines, and that it takes warmth to make them active. Rarely have I found butterflies that appear so unaware and approachable. I persuaded the individual in my photograph to walk onto my finger, and then transferred it to a more photogenic background. It seemed happy to oblige. The explanation for their lack of wariness is apparently because they are foul-tasting.

Apollos are highly variable, with several forms and sub-species, making them popular with collectors. They have declined widely throughout much of their European range; today they are protected in most countries but collecting is probably not as great a threat to these butterflies as habitat loss.



*Rhodopes*



*Apollo by David Tomlinson*

2020 BUTTERFLY REPORT  
(Summary)

*The* **Suffolk Argus**  
Volume 81 Summer 2021



Common Blue by Paul Claridge



**Butterfly  
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## 2020 SUFFOLK BUTTERFLY REPORT

*Bill Stone*



*Peacock by Bill Stone*

### **1. Introduction**

This 2020 Suffolk Butterfly Report acts as a farewell from me as County Butterfly Recorder, a role I have held since 2012. The 2012-2020 period has been a busy one and has resulted in over **275,000** records being received, mapped, and reported. Suffolk records have been included in many academic papers and butterfly journals and our county records have been widely shared to improve knowledge of not just Suffolk butterflies but of those across the UK and Europe.

I have learnt a lot about Suffolk's butterflies and the various habitats and environments unique to our county. I have also shared some fantastic moments with others watching feisty Dingy Skippers in the Kings Forest, being covered in Graylings at Dunwich, witnessing mass movements of "whites" along the coast and watching in awe of male Silver-washed Fritillaries power-flying through Bradfield Woods defending their favourite thistles!

Even in my short time as county recorder technology has moved on apace and many of you have moved from trusted notebooks to smart phones with digital applications and access to cloud-based recording platforms. Gone too are the trusted and tatty(!) field guides having been replaced with digital versions giving access to videos and high-resolution photographs of butterflies from all sorts of angles. Some of this is a good thing but call me old-fashioned but I will continue to crave a decent field guide.

I am incredibly grateful to the support, advice, and expertise that many of you have given me over the years. Also, for the many miles that have been walked

by you in response to my requests for increasing county coverage by visiting the county's grey and black holes- achieving 98.7% of county coverage for the 2015-2019 recording period was a brilliant result.

James Corton, who is based in Lowestoft now takes over for 2021 and I wish him well for the future. Please support James as you have supported me and help him where you can to ensure that your Suffolk butterfly sightings are accurately recorded.

### **2. Overview of the UK weather in 2020**

2020 was warmer than average for the UK and ranks as the third warmest year in a series from 1884. 2006 and 2014 were warmer, and 2011 was almost as warm. It was also the sixth wettest year in a series from 1862, and the eighth sunniest since 1919, so is remarkable for being ranked in the top ten for all three variables. Having said that, all top-ten warmest years in the historical series have occurred this century.

Notable extreme events during the year included several heavy-rainfall events in February, and numerous incidences of flooding in the autumn and early winter. Ten named storms affected the UK during 2020. Towards the end of the year flooding was exacerbated as further rainfall fell on already saturated ground. Also noteworthy were several short hot spells, including the Easter bank holiday weekend as well as during the summer.

The provisional UK mean temperature for 2020 was 9.6 °C, which is 0.8 °C above average. Much of the winter and spring were relatively warm, and July was the only month with temperatures generally below average. There were several short hot spells during the summer, and 31st July was the third warmest day on record for the UK with a temperature of 37.8 °C at Heathrow. On six consecutive days in August 34 °C was exceeded somewhere in southern England, and temperatures exceeded 30 °C somewhere in the UK on 13 days during the summer, including one final hot day on 15th September. There were several nights on which minimum temperatures of 20 °C or above were recorded somewhere. Fewer frosts were experienced than usual, and the lowest temperature of the year, -10.2 °C, was recorded on 30th December at Dalwhinnie (Inverness-shire).

It was a rather wet year, with the wettest February on record, all summer months being wetter than

average, and October and December also notably wetter than average. The provisional UK rainfall total for 2020 was 1308 mm, which is 114% of the 1981-2010 average. Western areas were generally wettest relative to average, especially western Scotland and north-west England. However, some eastern coastal fringes were slightly drier than average for the year.

A record sunny spring was a major contributor towards it being a sunnier year than average. The provisional annual UK sunshine total was 1495 hours, which is 109% of average. England fared best relative to average, with all areas boosted by the sunny spring – only three summers have actually been sunnier than this spring was. ([www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk))

## 3. Recording and Geographic Coverage in 2020

The Butterflies for the New Millennium (BNM) recording scheme remains the key focus for general distribution and numbers of butterflies. 2020 was the first year in the new five-year (2020-2024) recording period. Nearly, **45,000** records were received for 2020 and butterflies were recorded in **798** county tetrads (2km x 2km squares), representing 73% county coverage with an average of 11.7 species recorded per tetrad.

## 4. Residents, Winners & Losers

See **Annex A on page 22** - Scarcity for species seen in Suffolk in 2020.

Although we still managed to achieve significant county coverage and a large number of butterfly records were received some caution needs to be shown in respect of how records are interpreted. The first COVID-19 lockdown ran from late March into the middle of May, so impacted directly on the start of the butterfly season. However, this situation, perhaps in a positive way, directly led to an increase in garden sightings and recording from

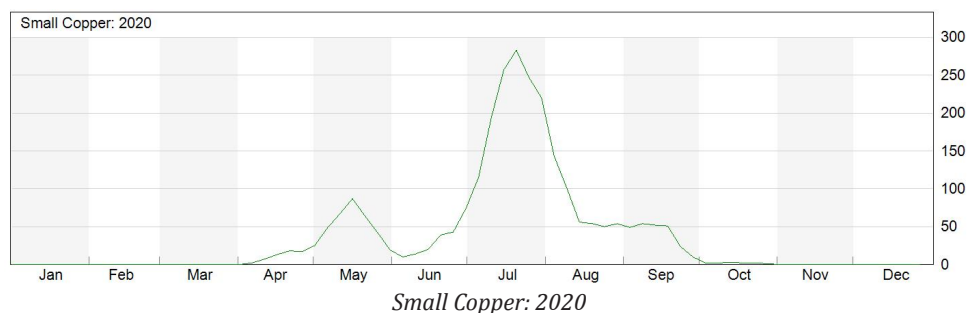
areas visited by way of “Local Exercise Walks” (LEW). Many recorders reported being surprised as to what they found on their “doorstep” through undertaking LEWs with several “local patches” being adopted for future nature observation.

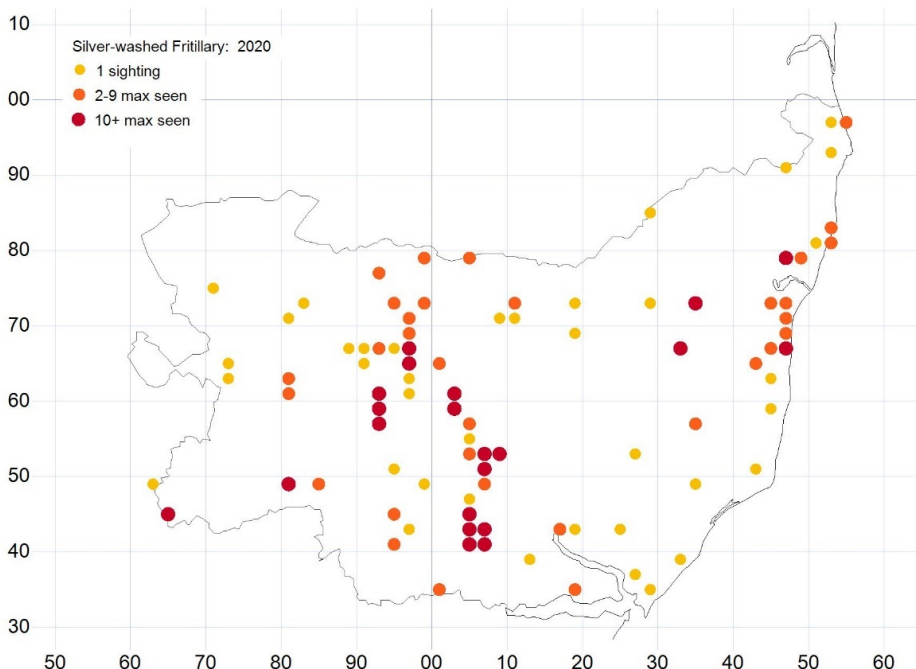
With reference to Annex A, the most common butterflies seen in the county and shown as a % of the tetrads (2km x 2km squares) visited were 1<sup>st</sup> Peacock (84%), 2<sup>nd</sup> Small White (83%), 3<sup>rd</sup> Large White (82%), 4<sup>th</sup> Meadow Brown (77%), 5<sup>th</sup> Red Admiral (76%) and 6<sup>th</sup> Gatekeeper (72%).

Being a hibernator, the Peacock was seen early in the year with the first record recorded on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January and the last sighting on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December. A significant spike in July is the Summer generation.

After Peacock, Small and Large White were the most widely reported butterfly species in the county and of note both featured as the most recorded butterflies in the Big Butterfly Count. Given the good start to the year it appears that both species benefitted, and the second broods were significant.

Despite the warm spring most species were seen at similar levels to last year with only a few showing slight upturns in numbers recorded. Nationally, Holly Blue was reported to have had a very good year with numbers recorded at an all-time high. However, this was also perhaps reflective of the early lock-down period where the first generation received greater observer attention in gardens and on LEWs. Indeed, from the Big Butterfly Count it was the species seen to have the greatest increase with numbers up by 48%. From a Suffolk perspective, it showed only a small increase being seen in 349 tetrads in 2020 compared to 329 in 2019. This species is certainly one to watch going forward as its numbers and success are closely associated to the parasitic wasp *Listrodomus nycthemerus*. This wasp parasitises Holly Blue caterpillars and a good year for the wasp can





**Map 2: Silver-washed Fritillary 2020**

mean a disastrous one for the butterfly.

Locally, Small Copper enjoyed a good year (see flight chart page 15) and was able to improve on its first brood with records being received through to early November. Its Lycaenidae cousins, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Green Hairstreak all had average years. Again, perhaps due to LEWs and garden recording a few recorders commented on seeing their first Green Hairstreaks for many years.

Some of the woodland butterflies seemed to struggle this year including White Admiral and White-letter Hairstreak, Purple Emperor sightings were also down, however, this is likely to be due to observers no longer actively searching new woods, instead relying on the few woods with established populations. However, Purple Hairstreak appeared to buck the trend with a small increase in numbers being seen in 135 tetrads as opposed to 104 in 2019. Interestingly, the earliest Purple Hairstreak county sighting was recorded in 2020 in May and from a Dingy Skipper survey! Another woodland butterfly, Silver-washed Fritillary appeared to do very well, and it was more widely recorded than in any previous year.

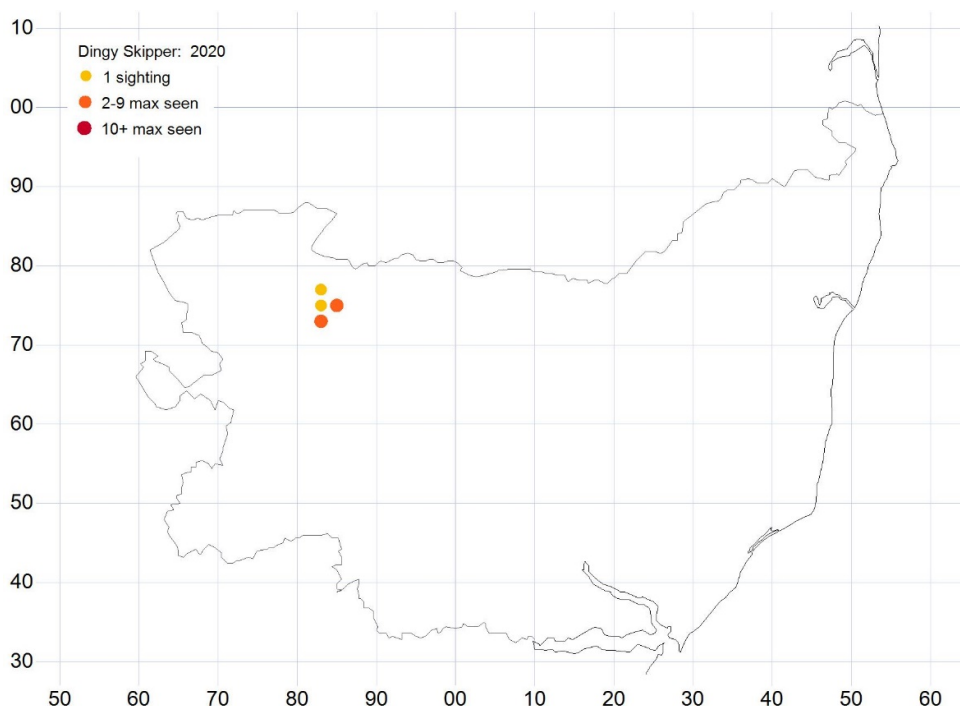
It was recorded in an astonishing 91 tetrads compared to 62 in 2019 and was even a welcome addition to many recorder's garden butterfly list! It was first seen on 14<sup>th</sup> June and last reported on 20<sup>th</sup> August. The highest count of 64 was made at SWT Bradfield Woods on 26<sup>th</sup> July. The map above shows how widespread it has become in the county and when on the wing can effectively be encountered in any habitat.

Grassland butterflies such as Meadow Brown, Ringlet, and the golden Skippers (Large, Small and Essex) showed an average year despite some long sunny summer days. Ringlet had a poor showing in the Big Butterfly Count with numbers down by 18% on 2019. Research reported by Butterfly Conservation shows that wet winters can have a negative effect on species such as Meadow Brown and Ringlet. Perhaps we were lucky with these species given that February 2020 was the wettest on record.

## 6. Analysis

Of note, the rolling 5-year figure (2016-2020) covers 1058 tetrads and shows an average of 16.2 species per tetrad which is the highest level seen





**Map 3: Distribution of Dingy Skipper, 2020**

since this 5-year comparison began. This is no doubt a direct reflection of improved recording and reporting capabilities.

## **7. Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan- Priority Species**

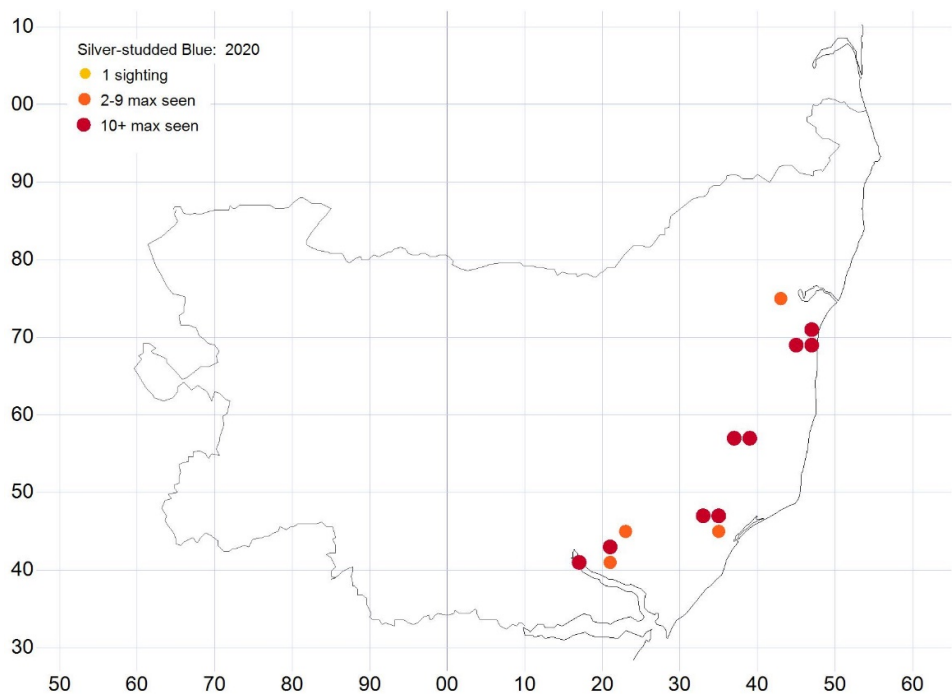
Seven species of butterfly occurring in Suffolk are listed as UK BAP priority species. These are Dingy Skipper, Silver-studded Blue, White-letter Hairstreak, White Admiral, Grayling, Wall and Small Heath. Brief 2020 summaries are provided for each species below.

**Dingy Skipper:** Given that this species normally flies in early May, coverage for this species was severely impacted by the travel and access restrictions alongside an understandable reluctance for some recorders to undertake surveys. As such, the records received only came from the Kings Forest area, however, this did represent comprehensive coverage from within the forest including both sides of the B1106 and along Chalk Lane. Despite the pandemic, significant levels of forestry work had been undertaken. Many forest areas and rides traditionally

associated with this butterfly were seen to have been damaged by the piling of logs or subjected to significant ground disturbance due to large plant use.

The first sighting was on the 7<sup>th</sup> May from the Wordwell area and the final sighting made on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, again from Wordwell. The highest numbers seen were on 17<sup>th</sup> May with a total count of 21. The map above shows the Kings Forest coverage achieved. Hopefully, 2021 will allow wider areas to be accessed in order to regain an understanding of the status of this incredibly vulnerable species.

On a national basis the UKBMS Summary of Changes table for 2020 shows the Dingy Skipper was recorded as having an above average year with a 20% increase on 2019 records. That said, it still remains of concern with a -12% decrease over the 10-year trend and -11% over the long-term series trend (45 years). **Silver-studded blue:** This species was first seen on 20<sup>th</sup> May at Purdis Heath, peaking in mid to late-June with a few small numbers seen in late August. The last reported was on 1<sup>st</sup> September at Black Heath.



Map 4: Distribution of Silver-studded Blue, 2020

The map above shows reported sightings for the county.

Overall, the season appeared to be an average to good one with the butterfly seen in 13 tetrads, the same as in 2019. Nationally, the UKBMS Summary of Changes showed a 29% increase on 2019 with a 55% increase over the last 10 years. However, within the county this species remains vulnerable and suitable sites are few and far between with many becoming more vulnerable each year.

**White-letter Hairstreak:** In 2020, the butterfly was first recorded on 11<sup>th</sup> June at Monewden. The butterfly was last recorded on 1st August at Poker Wood, Framlingham. The maximum count received was of 13 butterflies in Elms alongside the A14 at Trimley St Martin/ Mary on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. It has been recorded in 45 tetrads. This is down 6 tetrads on 2019.

Within the county, the long-term trend is still of concern with no real significant increases noted and I describe the White-Letter Hairstreak population as being “weak but stable”. On a

national level, the UKBMS Summary of Changes table reports the percentage change between 2019 and 2020 as a slight increase of 7%. From a long-term position, this species is, however, described as suffering from a “very highly significant” fall in abundance. This comes from the UKBMS 1976-2020 trend period which reveals an alarming fall in White-letter Hairstreak abundance of -78%.

**White Admiral:** The butterfly was recorded in 51 tetrads as opposed to the 57 in 2019, a disappointing fall.

Overall, the White Admiral had a poor year in 2020. In recent years there has been a partial second generation but as with 2019 this was not the case in 2020. The Summer generation flew from 15<sup>th</sup> June (SWT Bradfield Woods) until 2<sup>nd</sup> August (SWT Bradfield Woods). The highest count reported was of 30 butterflies on 23<sup>rd</sup> June at SWT Bonny Woods. Several other counts of 20 butterflies were received on several dates 26<sup>th</sup> June to 6<sup>th</sup> July from SWT Bradfield Woods and SWT Bonny Woods.

Despite the species appearing to be stable in the county, albeit, in low numbers the national position is very different. The UKBMS Summary of Changes table describes the species as suffering from a “very highly significant” fall in abundance. This is based on the UKBMS 1976- 2020 trend period which reveals a general fall in abundance of -61%.

**Grayling:** In 2020, an appeal for an increase in recording coverage, particularly in the west of the county led to the Grayling been seen in 48 tetrads, 2 more than in 2019. It was first seen on 5<sup>th</sup> July at Rushmere Heath and last seen on 23rd September in Dunwich Forest. The highest count reported was 70 on 26<sup>th</sup> July at Upper Hollesley Common, a long way short of the many hundreds that we used to enjoy. Most “high” counts were only between 30 and 50.

There is a county divide in distribution, and this is representative of the Breckland habitat in the west of the county and the Sandlings habitat in the east. This species is now struggling in the county and appears to be almost lost in the west. Loss of habitat and intensification of farming methods along with misuse of pesticides have no doubt had a major impact on this specialist of heathland. Nationally, the Grayling also struggled and the UKBMS Summary of Changes table shows that it remains of concern with a -40% decrease over the 10-year trend and a highly significant -71% over the long-term series trend (45 years).

This species has become restricted and some focussed Grayling surveys need to take place in the west of the county.

**Wall:** Over the last few years, we have seen the range of this beautiful butterfly diminish significantly in the county. It has continued its slide eastwards towards the coast and is now only recorded in two key locations: a small area around Orford/ Sudbourne and various sites throughout the Waveney Valley, in particular SWT Carlton Marshes.

In 2020, the Wall was seen in 23 tetrads, an increase of 1 tetrad upon 2019. As in recent years the vast majority of records were from the Waveney Valley area. The Wall was first recorded in 2020 on 29<sup>th</sup> April in Gunton Warren and last seen again at Gunton Warren on 17<sup>th</sup> October. The highest counts received were all from SWT Carlton Marshes with the highest being 25 on 2nd August. Most records received away from SWT Carlton Marshes were of single butterflies.

A review of all the records received helps to identify the generations seen within the county. This showed 29<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> June as being almost two weeks earlier than in 2019 and 19<sup>th</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> August, this being almost identical to that seen in 2019. A third generation was again noted this being between 16<sup>th</sup> September to 17<sup>th</sup> October. This is slightly longer than seen in 2019 but notably weaker. Three generations with a stronger second being noted.

Sadly, the Wall continues its decline in Suffolk and this position is reflected throughout the UK and parts of Europe. A percentage change from 2019 to 2020 as -10% and the long-term series trend (1976-2020) as -87% decline. As such, this decline is classified as “very highly significant”. It is, therefore, essential that the county population is monitored very closely and both range and abundance recorded accurately. On this point, credit must go to Lowestoft based recorder, Robert Quadling for his incredible efforts to accurately capture and map records for the SWT Carlton Marshes reserve. The detail and level of recording will be of significance going forward.

**Small Heath:** The Small Heath was recorded in 216 tetrads this year which represents an increase of 1 from 215 in 2019. Traditionally, this species normally appears in the west of the county a few days ahead of those in the east. But this year, the first records came on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May from sites in across the county. The maximum numbers recorded for the year was 50 at SWT Bonny Woods on 15<sup>th</sup> June. It was last reported on 30<sup>th</sup> September at Southwold, the same date as 2019.

Strongholds of this butterfly are the heaths of the Sandlings in the east of the county and of the Brecklands to the west. However, the butterfly continues to be seen in many new areas including, parks and gardens reminding us that it is highly adaptive and can be found in a variety of grassy habitats.

This species has shown a -5% change in abundance compared to 2019. The long-term trend for Suffolk is still “weak and vulnerable” and the UKBMS series trend (1976-2020) shows -46% for the Small Heath population and this fall in abundance is classified as being “highly significant”.

## **8. Migrants and Rarities**

Migrants were represented by smaller numbers of Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady although some noticeable movements of Small/Large Whites and Red Admirals were reported. Rarities reported

## The Suffolk Argus

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came in the form of Large Tortoiseshell (4 records), Long-tailed Blue (1 record), Swallowtail (3 records) and a probable Monarch (1 probable record).

**Clouded Yellow:** This species was seen in 30 tetrads this year, one less than in 2021. However, many recorders did not see one at all during the year and it appeared to be present in much lower numbers. It was first recorded on 31<sup>st</sup> May at Alton Water and last seen on Sizewell Beach on 9<sup>th</sup> October. Most sightings reported were of singletons with the highest count reported being only 3 at East Lane over several dates in September.

**Painted Lady:** Given that 2019 was a good year for this species it wasn't a surprise to see numbers significantly reduced in 2020. It was still seen across the county being reported in 185 tetrads as opposed to the 591 in 2019. The first sighting was on 10<sup>th</sup> April in Trimley St Mary, and the last sighting was on 19<sup>th</sup> September at RSPB Boyton Marshes. The highest reported number seen was of only 12 at Lindsey on 20<sup>th</sup> July.

**Red Admiral:** As mentioned above, this species was recorded as being the 5<sup>th</sup> most abundant in Suffolk in 2020. Over wintering evidence was again seen with the butterfly first recorded on 9<sup>th</sup> January and then throughout February and March. It was also seen regularly throughout November until 27<sup>th</sup> but no December records were received. Some immigration was noted with a noteworthy count of 40 butterflies seen flying inland along the River Orwell at Chelmondiston on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

**Large Tortoiseshell:** Four records were received, and all involved individual butterflies seen on 17<sup>th</sup> March, Shottisham; 9<sup>th</sup> April, Crown Farm, Leiston; 19<sup>th</sup> April, RSPB Minsmere and 1<sup>st</sup> July, Orford.

Records of this species are starting to rise, and this is perhaps indicative of the increase in numbers on the near continent as reported through social media in 2020. Despite its large size and powerful flight this is a species that can be easily overlooked often out of view basking in the sun. Some are likely to be migrants, however, we need to remain open minded about the possibility of localised breeding particularly sightings in late June/ July which could be the progeny of spring adults.

**Long-tailed Blue:** A single butterfly was seen in a garden in Trimley St Martin on 4<sup>th</sup> September. A photograph was taken, and this showed it to be a female. This sighting coincided with reports of

this species being seen along the south-east coast. Of note this is the sixth year in a row where this butterfly has been seen in Suffolk.

**Swallowtail:** Three records were received, and all involved individual butterflies seen on 1<sup>st</sup> August, Hoist Covert, Walberswick; 6<sup>th</sup> August Eyke and 7<sup>th</sup> August, Waldringfield. Given the locations and proximity to the coast then these sightings are likely to relate to the continental race *gorganus*.

**Monarch:** A butterfly, strongly believed to be a Monarch was seen to fly in off the sea at Dunwich Cliffs on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Unfortunately, it could not be photographed but the observer was familiar with the species and a rare butterfly form was submitted in support of the sighting. Contact with Richard Fox of Butterfly Conservation revealed that no other UK sightings of Monarch were reported in 2020. For recording purposes this will be shown as "probable".

### **9. Other species of note**

**Chalkhill Blue:** Monitoring of the west Suffolk site was limited this year, but the butterfly appeared to be maintaining its hold in the county. It was seen on the wing between 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 13<sup>th</sup> August in similar numbers as 2019. The first date represents an earliest date for the county.

### **10. Releases/ Introductions**

The **Marbled White** continued to fly in central Ipswich at Landseer Park and nearby at Pipers Vale, Orwell Country Park. These butterflies are known to originate from unauthorised introductions and anecdotal evidence received suggests that they continue to be "topped-up". The first record was on 15<sup>th</sup> June and the last on 7<sup>th</sup> August. A max count of 40 was reported on 25<sup>th</sup> June.

Records continued to be received for **Brown Hairstreak** from the Pipers Vale and Belstead areas of Ipswich both from winter egg counts and flying adults albeit in small numbers. The first adult record was on 27<sup>th</sup> July with the last on 8<sup>th</sup> September. The highest number reported was 5 flying adults on 1<sup>st</sup> August at Pipers Vale.

Landseer Park, Ipswich also played host again to a small population of **Small Blue**. From records received it is likely that a small second generation was achieved. It was first reported on 6<sup>th</sup> May through to 14<sup>th</sup> June and then again between 15<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> July. Highest counts of 10 were received



on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> May.

Records of **Dark-green Fritillary** were again received from Landseer Park, Ipswich between 13<sup>th</sup> June and 20<sup>th</sup> June. The maximum number reported was 4. Another butterfly believed to be this species was seen along the Mill River, Foxhall on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June. As this is only 3km north it is likely that this Dark-green Fritillary originated from Landseer Park. Again, given the site location and with no other county records for comparison these butterflies are strongly suspected of being deliberate releases.

A **Dingy Skipper** was also reported on 31<sup>st</sup> May from another central Ipswich site, and this is considered to be yet another release. The recording position on these presumed releases of Marbled White, Brown Hairstreak, Small Blue, Dark-green Fritillary and other specific species at central Ipswich sites is that they will not be submitted to Butterfly Conservation for inclusion in national data sets. Local monitoring will be undertaken, and records will be maintained at a county level in order to assess population and range changes. However, this stance will also need to be considered and reviewed by the new County Butterfly Recorder going forward.

### **11. Distribution Maps**

These are available along with a full report published by SNS.

### **12. UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS)**

**Transects-** Transects are very effective at monitoring habitat specialist butterflies and

lowland semi-natural habitats. They are resource intensive but give a sharp view of butterfly trends. The 2020 results from those transects walked in Suffolk have been added to the Suffolk database and are a useful addition as they reflect consistent, sustained and focused recording within the county.

### **13. Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme (WCBS)**

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

The records generated from the scheme are included in the Suffolk data set and represent a significant contribution both in terms of record numbers but also in respect of the locations involved. There are always WCBS squares available for adoption in Suffolk and if you are interested in getting involved with butterfly surveys then please consider this type of activity aspect. The Suffolk Coordinator, Twm Wade would be very pleased to hear from you.

### **Summary of Annexes:**

All the annexes not listed here are available in the full report published by SNS.



*Dingy Skipper by Bill Stone*

## Annex A- Scarcity for 37 species seen in Suffolk in 2020

**Tetrads per Species –2020** (Species listed in order of scarcity in 2020)

**Note 1:** Swallowtail includes P. m. britannicus and P. m. gorganus

**Note 2:** Central Ipswich records of Small Blue, Dark-green Fritillary and Brown Hairstreak not included in comparison. Marbled White not included.

**Note 3:** Reported Monarch sighting considered probable but not definite.

\*cf last- Indicates change against last year's coverage when compared with current year.

% of 827 Tetrads	2019 Tetrads	Species	2020 Tetrads	% of 798 Tetrads	*cf
0.1	1	Long-tailed Blue	1	0.1	1.00
0.2	2	Chalkhill Blue	2	0.2	1.00
0.3	3	Swallowtail	3	0.3	1.00
0.9	8	Dingy Skipper	4	0.5	0.55
0.2	2	Large Tortoiseshell	4	0.5	2.50
1.5	13	Silver-studded Blue	13	1.6	1.06
2.6	22	Purple Emperor	17	2.1	0.80
2.6	22	Wall	23	2.8	1.07
3.7	31	Clouded Yellow	30	3.7	1.00
6.1	51	White-letter Hairstreak	45	5.6	0.91
5.5	46	Grayling	48	6.0	1.09
6.8	57	White Admiral	51	6.3	0.92
9.0	75	Green Hairstreak	78	9.7	1.07
7.4	62	Silver-washed Fritillary	91	11.4	1.54
12.5	104	Purple Hairstreak	135	16.9	1.35
15.4	128	Essex Skipper	140	17.5	1.13
22.2	184	Brown Argus	174	21.8	0.98
71.4	591	Painted Lady	185	23.1	0.32
26.3	218	Small Skipper	192	24.0	0.91
22.9	190	Large Skipper	196	24.5	1.06
25.9	215	Small Heath	216	27.0	1.04
40.1	332	Orange-tip	303	37.9	0.94
44.8	371	Brimstone	332	41.6	0.92
40.3	334	Common Blue	345	43.2	1.07
39.7	329	Holly Blue	349	43.7	1.10
33.2	275	Small Copper	360	45.1	1.35
48.8	404	Green-veined White	395	49.4	1.01
53.2	440	Speckled Wood	400	50.1	0.94
49.3	408	Ringlet	420	52.6	1.06
52.1	431	Small Tortoiseshell	450	56.3	1.08
61.3	507	Comma	481	60.2	0.98
65.9	545	Gatekeeper	579	72.5	1.10
76.2	631	Red Admiral	614	76.9	1.00
69.5	575	Meadow Brown	616	77.1	1.10
75.9	628	Large White	660	82.7	1.08
78.8	652	Small White	666	83.4	1.05
74.2	614	Peacock	677	84.8	1.14

## Garden Nectar Sources for Butterflies: 'I' is for Ivy

Richard Stewart

To some people ivy is a parasite and from the garden perspective it can cause problems by weakening a wall with loose mortar. It can also be invasive as ground cover and a tree, lashed by rain and strong wind, could well succumb if garlanded by rain soaked ivy. That said the native Ivy *Hedera helix* is one of our most valuable wildlife plants, especially from autumn to spring. Late flowering Ivy umbels are so attractive to wildlife that on my former Fynn valley transect the larger sunlit clumps could literally be heard before being seen; bees buzzing- there is actually an Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*), a relatively new coloniser- plus wasps, beetles flies, hunting hornets and mainly two butterfly species, the Red Admiral and Comma. All will be feasting on possibly their last banquet before the onset of winter.

In addition, a deep Ivy clump is ideal for roosting and hibernation. The Brimstone often uses Ivy and bramble, whose fading leaves give it good camouflage. The late ripening berries are important winter food for mammals and birds. Woodpigeons were still feeding on ivy at the bottom of our garden well into March. Ivy is also of course for egg laying by the Holly Blue later in the year, the eggs usually being laid at the base of unopened flower buds, as also with earlier holly. I have seen one also using an ornamental Ivy.

In Margaret Vickery's national survey which I have mentioned before she lists thirteen species using ivy, with Comma, Holly Blue, Red Admiral and Speckled Wood listed as 'a favourite plant', which matches our garden records.



Holly Blue by Mark Brewster



Ivy - *Hedera helix* by Trevor Goodfellow

## White Admiral Observations

Kev Ling

As I cast my mind back to being a child in the late 1970's, my initial memories are of the sight of Red Admirals feasting on my father's Buddleia. With other members of the Nymphalidae family in great abundance too, my love affair with Butterflies had begun. Very soon my parents gifted me my first book, George E. Hyde's- Spotter's Guide to Butterflies. I excitedly thumbed through the pages, imagining what other species I could see in the meadows and woodland that lie on my doorstep at the time. Without a bicycle, I relied on what I could see within walking distance of home.

One butterfly that did intrigue me was the White

Admiral – *Limenitis Camilla*. I used to refer to it as the cousin of the Red Admiral – *Vanessa atalanta* and could never quite understand why it was not attracted to the sweet smell of our Buddleia in the same way. As I would learn with experience, the two species are quite different and so are their life cycles and preferred habitats.

I never did find a White Admiral when I was younger, but later in life when my passion for all things lepidoptera was re-ignited, this would become my sought-after species each summer.

It is pleasing to see its reliable increase in Suffolk,

## *The Suffolk Argus*

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with many woodland rides that have honeysuckle (the larval food plant) and nectar sources such as Bramble, abundant with them between mid-June and August. The sight of a freshly emerged, blemish free adult is an exciting prospect and one that I look forward to every summer. I love to watch them glide amongst the trees on the shaded edges of woodland, stopping to nectar on adjacent Bramble or just to bask in the sunshine on an oak leaf. It is here that the photographer is rewarded with an easy opportunity to capture the splendour of both the upper and underside of the wings. Both of which are unmistakable from any other British species.

I am fortunate to have a couple of colonies close by on the outskirts of Ipswich. Wherstead Wood and Old Hall Wood are my favourite and most reliable locations and I have seen them there for many years. Nearby Cutler Wood in Wherstead has also yielded small numbers recently too.

One unusual feature of the White Admiral, when compared to other Nymphalidae found in Suffolk is the life cycle from ovum to adult, which lasts up to 11 months. The female will lay her eggs, mostly singularly to a honeysuckle leaf situated in full or partial shade within a few feet of the woodland edge. Look for the stragglier stems of Honeysuckle around trees as opposed to thick bushes, as this is where you are more likely to find the immature stages of this butterfly.

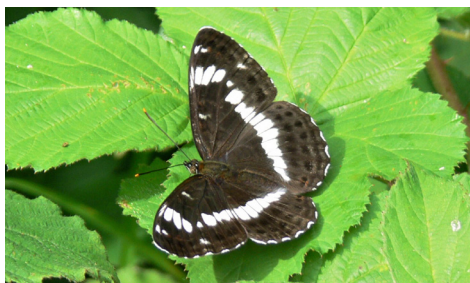
The early instar larva feed on the honeysuckle leaves, nibbling them from each side, whilst leaving the midrib intact. They also produce a silken home for themselves on that leaf, where they rest between feeding. In 2015 I visited Wherstead Wood in attempt to find some early instar larva. As I set out it seemed like I was looking for

a needle in a haystack, as the wood in question has quite a large quantity of honeysuckle. Call it beginner's luck if you will, but I very soon struck lucky and observed the tell-tale signs of leaf damage created by a feeding caterpillar. I had found a second instar larva. This is similar to that of a third instar, except that its head is still black, as opposed to brown in the latter (see Photo below taken in Wherstead Wood of second instar larva and evidence of silk home).

In early autumn, the larva fashions a home for itself from a Honeysuckle leaf. This is called a hibernaculum. It is within this shelter that the third instar larva remains for the next 6-7 months, emerging in spring to continue its feeding. As the larva moves through its fourth and fifth instar it becomes one of the most beautiful of any species, turning bright green with red spines. By the end of May/early June, a pupa is formed on the underside of a honeysuckle leaf and so ends the long, slow development of this larva.

Within three weeks, the adult emerges and takes flight. Once again, the woodland rides reward us with this stunning butterfly (See Photo below left) Together with other species such as Silver Washed Fritillary, Purple Hairstreak and if you are lucky Purple Emperor this really is a most exciting time for a walk in the woods.

On Saturday 3rd July 2021, I will be doing just that at Northfield Wood, Onehouse. I would very much welcome your company (please see events page on our website for details and contact me prior to the event to ensure that Covid restrictions and weather allow the event to go ahead).



*White Admiral by Kev Ling*



*White Admiral Larva by Kev Ling*



## Northern Impersonator

Steve Holmes

My wife and I are the local butterfly recorders for our area in Suffolk and we were recently sent extracts from 'Suffolk Argus' vols. 79 & 80 by friends of ours who knew of our lepidopteran interests. The extracts concerned the "white halo" variant of the Brown Argus (*aricia agestis*), often called var. *snelleni*. We too have some experience of this variant, as recorded in our 1 acre, flora rich meadow in Laxfield.

I maintain a website for the meadow, which has a sub-section describing the butterfly species we have recorded there, together with numerous photographs. You are invited to see photos of "our" var. *snelleni* and read the accompanying descriptions. Go to <http://www.holmesfamily-UK.net/washmeadow> Select the "Butterflies" link in the lower section, and then "Brown Argus" from the matrix of butterfly

species. Scroll to the bottom of the page, and finally select the link at bottom right.



Brown Argus - *snelleni* by Steve Holmes

## Unexpected Butterflies

Richard Stewart

I can vividly remember the surprise and quick reactions of those gathered in the Tattingstone car park for a Branch meeting some years ago. Suddenly a Clouded Yellow, almost certainly the rarest species to be seen that day, passed through, even before the meeting had officially started. My own surprises over the years have included a dew drenched Green-Veined White on a dawn chorus and a Swallowtail passing through our Ipswich garden, origin unknown. Two White Admiral sightings were memorable, the first feeding with other species on Buddleia at Beccles railway station. These Buddleias had colonised an unused platform over the years but subsequently it has been renovated and the Buddleias removed. That was back in 2005 but in 2018 as my wife and I were walking along Westerfield road, I suddenly saw a butterfly on the pavement. It took a few seconds to identify it as a White Admiral as it was fluttering with closed wings. This to my knowledge was the closest this species has been to central Ipswich, but it was obviously damaged,

probably in the slipstream of a passing car. All I could do was catch it with cupped hands and place it over the railings of nearby Christchurch Park.

On several occasions late Red Admirals have been seen in the heart of Ipswich, one flying over the bus shelters at Electric House on 23rd December 2019. Even more surprising was one on the pavement at the entrance to Sainsbury's, a perilous place from the point of view of many passing feet. This was on 20th December 2008, but I managed to quickly catch it and place it somewhere safer and much quieter, in nearby Lower Brook Street. However, the most unexpected Red Admiral sighting was in the plural. Our garden pine tree sometimes harbours hibernating butterflies, but it was still an incredible surprise, looking out of my upstairs study window, to see two Red Admirals emerge together from the pine, flying closer to me before rising to clear our roof.

It was not just a memorable sighting but also a memorable date- 1st January 2000.

## The last Days of Summer

*James Mann*

With my cancer treatment slowing my walking, the threat of a long cold winter, for here, and the threat of a lockdown, I decided to have a last walk before restriction prevented it. So, on Thursday 29th October I decided to have a short afternoon walk. I parked at the old St. Jean Pla De Corts railway station and started along the concrete cycle path which is the start of the 4hr Vives walk. The first part was through, what used to be vineyards, but is now overgrown scrubland, providing a haven for wildlife from Sanglier (Wild boar) to tiny insects. Over to my left, across the plain the Alberas mountains rise up to Roc de France at over 1300 metres on the Spanish border, part of the way up I could see a wavy line where the evergreen Cork Oaks finished and the Chestnuts, now turning golden started. Beside the path my eye was taken by flitting yellow butterflies, easy Clouded Yellows. The flitting white butterflies were not so easy for they refused to settle and moved off when I came within several metres of them, what I could see was that they varied from almost pure white to almost marbled white, I am still confused. To my left among the scrubland flowers, I saw a small dark butterfly I followed it, but it made better progress than me as it moved deeper into the ever-thickening scrub, so I had to give up, I put it down as either a Small Copper or a Small Heath. On the way back, at the same place I had a definite identification of each, so it was only academic. Turning right up a rising wooded path I found the ever-present Speckled Woods, leveling out at the top I passed between a crop of hay on the right and a newly planted olive grove on the left. Olives are a long-term investment but give a better return than vines. I was still entertained by regular sightings of Whites and Clouded Yellows On reaching Mas Thérèse, now separated into 6 dwellings, I was harassed by a Red Admiral, it did the same on the way back. I continued along the rising track

towards the village of Vives, hard to believe this was the main road until after the 1st World War. Up on the bank in the sunny brambles I could see several flitting blues, one basking some three metres into the brambles looked almost purple! As I climbed higher down in the valley to my left, I was looking down on Mas de Sant Miquel where the present owners are turning it back to what it was some 100 years ago, areas of olives, vines, root crops, cereal and grazing land, each year the move a bit further into the scrub perhaps the future for more of our abandoned land. After I had climbed some 150metre I had had enough so I sat on a convenient rock to rest. Looking at the steep sunny bank opposite I saw a little group of Green Hairstreaks dancing around, O.K. it was the wrong side of winter, but they were on gorse, were dark on top and were doing Green Hairstreaks do. Of course, they were some species of Blue, but I could not get close enough to determine which. Having rested I wandered back down seeing the odd Blue, Yellow and White. On a rough count I had seen over 20 Clouded Yellows, over 20 various Whites a dozen or so assorted Blues plus a few others I was very content. The following week we were locked down again.



*Map courtesy of the web*

## Photo Finish

*Kev Ling*

The Suffolk Branch Photographic Competition held in Feb/Mar this year was a success with 80 photographs submitted by our members. Unfortunately, Covid restrictions dictated the cancellation of the 2020 AGM, so our members didn't get to view the entries as usual in person. We trust that this online alternative was a more than suitable alternative. A large number of the entries received votes and we are pleased to announce that David Borderick is the winning photographer with his

image of a Hummingbird Hawk Moth. In joint second place was Paul Claridge's Common Blue pairing and Robert Quadling's Wall Brown. Third place goes to David Pitt's Swallowtail.

The standard of entries was very high, making it a closely run vote. Thank you to everyone who took part. We look forward to your photographs from 2021 when our competition returns next time.



66 - Hummingbird Hawk Moth by David Borderick



15 -Common Blue by Paul Claridge



35 Wall Brown by Robert Quadling



Swallowtail by David Pitt

### The Butterfly Effect

Here are some star-rated butterfly and moth items spotted in magazines and papers etc:  
'Country Life' (June 2020): An informative article about the importance of Stinging Nettles included a photo of a White Admiral on nettles as an example of insects' reliance on them (?).

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'Country Life' – (September 2020): in a feature 'Britain's Bogs' a Large Heath is pictured but not connected to any of the text, so the reader is given no information.

\*

'Country Life' – (March 2021): 3-page article by Ian Morton highlights women entomologists and their historic battle for recognition from their peers. Lady Glanville (her name given to Glanville fritillary) and more recently Professor May Berenbaum are described in the interesting feature including images of illustrations by Maria Sibylla Merian.

\*\*\*\*\*

'Which Gardening' magazine: Orange-tip on the front cover and a whole 3-page feature on early butterflies including Brimstone, Orange-tip and Peacock with concise descriptions of each including foodplants and lovely photos.

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'The Oldie' magazine: Unfortunately, Patrick Barkham was unable to shoehorn a butterfly reference into his wistful item 'My Great Expectations of Swanscombe' piece.

\*

'Gardeners World Winter Specials' BBC 2: A good selection of plants, especially night scented ones like Evening Primrose and Nicotiana, that attract moths. Several macro moth species featured including Lime Hawk, White Satin, and Humming-bird Hawk.

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'Butterflies: A very British Obsession' – BBC2: Repeat of the brilliant episode close to our hearts. With excellent photography, narration, and species varieties it really hits the spot.

Features Mathew Oates and Neil Hume competing on an *Iris* hunt.

\*\*\*\*\*

'British Dragonfly Society' newsletter 79: Jessie Wormwell writes about dragonflies in the Argyll valley and her observations of 4-spotted Chasers' territory coinciding with Chequered Skipper colonies. With a peak count of 254, the Skippers, were observed predated by the Dragonfly.

\*\*\*\*\*

'The Brits' – ITV: Abysmal award 'ceremony' but a perfectly tolerable Olivia Rodrigo sang a song surrounded by a wonderful special effect of Monarch butterflies. Maybe if I was a 13-year-old girl I would have loved it.

\*\*

'Suffolk View' - Suffolk Preservation Society magazine: Front cover featured a large photo of a young person with a Small Tortoiseshell resting on her nose. Inside featured articles supporting greener developments, energy, and biodiversity.

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'Wild Suffolk' - Suffolk Wildlife Trust Magazine: Steve Aylward's four page 'Beguiling Butterflies' feature headed with a double page Purple Emperor photo was striking. A general account of how butterflies are faring and descriptions of many species with a reminder to leave weeds like nettles in your garden. Disappointing to see 'Alamy' stock photos throughout the issue when there are so many local photographers who would be glad to donate their photos for free.

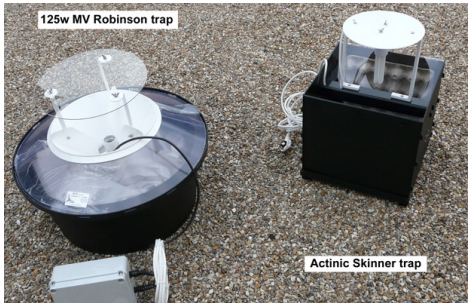
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'N Photo' – Nikon Magazine: Wildlife in the garden feature includes a pleasing but small photo of a Small Tortoiseshell with attached hints on how to attract them to your garden.

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## Newsround



*Moth traps*

### Are you intrigued by moths but haven't dived into a moth trap?

*Peter Maddison and Trevor Goodfellow*

The Branch has purchased an MV Robinson moth trap and an Actinic Skinner moth trap for our members to use during this summer season. The intention is that those with limited experience, or who are beginners in the moth world, can borrow a trap for a period up to one month for use at their own location, and they must enter their moth records into the Suffolk Moth Group Online Recorder.

The traps are accompanied by instructions, safety guide and moth species identification guide.

If you would like to take part in this scheme and would like more details, email Trevor Goodfellow at

[trevor@greenfarm.org.uk](mailto:trevor@greenfarm.org.uk) then you will be sent a loan application form to fill in and return, giving us your preferred dates and contact details etc. email a photo to Trevor if you need any extra help with identifying the trapped moths. The offer has had a good number of keen members applying so always have second choice dates in mind when you send a request.

**AmazonSmile donation notification** Butterfly Conservation, recently received a quarterly donation of **£390.58** from AmazonSmile, thanks to customers shopping at [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) or with AmazonSmile turned ON in the app. This is a massive proportion of their total donation of **£1,340.49** to Butterfly Conservation, indicating surge in shoppers signing up to the scheme maybe.

### Neonics

*Worldwide web*

Insects and other wildlife may have won a temporary reprieve and could now avoid being poisoned by a toxic pesticide due to the recent snap of very cold weather killing off virus-transmitting aphids which can attack sugar beet crops.

The Government will not be granting an emergency authorisation for the use of a banned neonicotinoid on Sugar beet this year. Tests have found that the level of virus infection forecast is 8.37%, which is not enough to meet the threshold for the use of the *neonicotinoid*, *thiamethoxam*, to combat the virus which affects Sugar beet. [British Beet Research Organisation]

### Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)

*Defra, Gov.uk*

This scheme will apply to farmers. It will pay them for actions they take (going beyond regulatory requirements) to manage their land in an environmentally sustainable way. Actions will be grouped into simple packages set out as standards, to make it as easy as possible for farm-

ers to identify those actions that are best suited to their land and their business. The Sustainable Farming Incentive will be open to all farmers, but initially it will only be open to Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) recipients. The aim is to make it attractive and straightforward for everyone to take part, including the many farmers who are not currently in an agri-environment scheme.

Local Nature Recovery: This scheme will pay for actions that support local nature recovery and deliver local environmental priorities – making sure the right things are delivered in the right places. The scheme will encourage collaboration between farmers, helping them work together to improve their local environment. This scheme may be competitive.

Landscape Recovery: This scheme will support the delivery of landscape and ecosystem recovery through long-term, land use change projects. This includes projects to restore wilder landscapes in places where that is appropriate, large-scale tree planting, peatland, and salt marsh restoration projects. These projects can deliver a wide variety of environmental outcomes and support local environmental priorities, while making an important contribution to national carbon net zero targets. This

scheme is expected to be competitive. More detail on the future schemes is set out in Defra's [Agricultural Transition Plan](#) and in the [Farming is Changing](#) booklet, published in November 2020.

### **Nightmare on Elm Trees II**

*Trevor Goodfellow*

I have previously mentioned in the Suffolk Argus, the loss of hedgerows and trees due to housing developments.

About 150m of roadside Elm trees, some of which were aimed to be saved 'where possible' by the developers Hopkins Homes, hosted a good colony of White-letter Hairstreaks (WLH).

As site works progressed it became apparent that all the Elms were being removed as the site layout changed and housing squeezed against the road and a new footpath. You can see the outcome from the photos below.

Included in the planned planting layout that I managed to see, European White Elm has been included amongst Rowans, Maples, Cherries, and other ornamental species. The addition of Elms would not have happened were it not for the intervention of Rob Parker, our Conservation Officer, along with my support at the time of



*Sandpit lane Thurston (before)*



*Sandpit lane Thurston (after)*

outline planning submission. A lesson for all readers. I shall be checking out the planting during the summer.

At the far end of this site, which includes allotments, is an area for surface water capture which is a planning requirement. These two pools, one overflowing into the other, will be surrounded by naturalised planting and therefore could be a lot better for wildlife than the previous monoculture use, if the area doesn't get abused.

On the same side of the village - sorry - town (the village now doubling in size to well over 2000 homes) there are thankfully other good amounts of healthy Elm trees, some apparently disease resistant, successfully supporting WLH.

## Spring Events Report 2021

*Editor*

Events that went ahead within government COVID guidelines:

**April 17<sup>th</sup> - Spring Scything Experience**, unattended.

**April 24<sup>th</sup> - Early Spring Species**, Barnham Cross Common.

Warm day with cool breeze, no takers for this event. Rob Parker and Trevor Goodfellow walked the route and ended early spotting one Peacock on return to the car park.

I assume that members have not yet got their social confidence back.

**May 29<sup>th</sup> - King's Forest for Spring Species** (*Rob Parker*) At last! a fine sunny start to the day. A troupe of 7 members turned up for this pre-planned field meeting. Just enjoying the fresh air and sunshine was a pleasure. In the morning, the whole group saw 8 species - 9 if we count the Green

Hairstreaks seen by Trevor before we set off: Orange Tip plentiful, Small white, Small heath, Small copper, Speckled wood, Brimstone (just 1) Peacocks, and a Holly blue, plus green hairstreak, making a nice tally of 9 for the morning, not counting the single Cinnabar moth. However, nothing was in abundance, and the forest had a "silent spring" air about it. After all, May had been an awful month!



*King's Forest Walk May 29th*

## The Wildlife Garden at Aldeburgh

This remarkable story of the development of Trudie Willis's garden, written by Richard Stewart with photos by Liz Cutting is available from:

Aldeburgh Bookshop

Dial Lane Books, Ipswich

Browsers Bookshop, Woodbridge

Woodbridge Emporium

Victoria Nurseries, Ipswich

and from Richard Stewart, 112, Westfield Rd., Ipswich, IP4 2XW

price £7.50

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*'So, naturalists observe, a flea hath  
smaller fleas that on him prey and these  
have smaller fleas to bite 'em  
And so, proceed ad infinitum'.*

Jonathan Swift 1667-1745



## Some Day Flying Moths



*Yellow Shell by Paul Kitchener*



*Small Yellow Underwing by Paul Kitchener*



*Mother Shipton by Paul Kitchener*



*Glyphipterix simplicella by Paul Kitchener*

*Six-spot Burnet by Trevor Goodfellow*



*Five-spot Burnet agg. by Trevor Goodfellow*