

SUFFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

The **Suffolk Argus**

Volume 92

Spring 2025



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



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Butterfly Conservation

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Important: The future of *The Suffolk Argus*.

In the face of ever-rising printing and postage costs, and considerable budget constraints, the decision has been taken to make the electronic version of our newsletter our future method of communication with our members. Members with email addresses will continue to be sent a link to the PDF version which can be read on our website or downloaded for your own use.

Members who are unable to access the internet will be sent the printed version.

Anyone else wishing to receive a printed newsletter will have to actively opt-in by informing the head office membership department of your preference. We in the branch are unable to do this as we do not have access to the membership database.

Chair's Report 2024

Peter Maddison

It's been a butterfly season like no other and not just in Suffolk. We are all asking what's happened to the butterflies? Why have we been seeing so few? The Big Butterfly Count echoed people's observations with participants recording just 7 species on average, compared with 12 species in 2023 and the abundance of butterflies was much lower too. The consensus seems to be that there was poor survival (of butterflies in their various lifecycle stages) during the abnormally wet spring and early summer. Climate change, habitat destruction and the use of potent farm chemicals are considerable challenges for our butterflies and moths. Butterfly Conservation reacted to the low scores of the Big Butterfly Count by declaring a 'Butterfly Emergency', pointing out that the continued use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which kill butterflies, must end before it's too late.

Towards the end of the flight season a few more butterflies were recorded with Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood and white butterflies putting in appearances – perhaps giving hope for a bounce back in numbers next season. Some of our specialist species have not suffered too badly this year: Silver-studded Blues in most, but not all, of our heathland colonies have maintained their numbers, Small Heath has had a long flight season and latterly Brown Argus in my part of the county has been noticeable. I've seen good numbers of Grayling in the favoured parts of the Sandlings, but this autumn I've hardly recorded a Holly Blue, and the disappearance of the Small Tortoiseshell remains an enigma.

We conducted a programme of field events and thanks are due to those members of the committee who organised and led the walks. Particular thanks to Bill Mayne for guiding us around his farm at

Burgh where invertebrate friendly, re-generative farming is being practised, and to Lucie Pascoe, Trudie's daughter, who kindly opened Priors Oak garden for the July butterfly day with proceeds being generously donated to the Suffolk Branch.

We were saddened to hear of Trudie Willis's passing in January this year. Trudie had been a generous friend of the Branch and for many years had opened her garden at Priors Oak, Aldeburgh with donations being passed to the Branch. Her generosity resulted in thousands of pounds being donated to Suffolk BC over the course of many years. A tribute to Trudie appears in the Summer Argus.

The Suffolk Argus has been published on three occasions. Thank you to Trevor Goodfellow for your work in editing the newsletter. Many of our members read the electronic version on the website where an archive of back copies is available. We are grateful to these members as printing and postage costs, which continue to rise, are redirected to Branch conservation work. If you receive the hardcopy and consider that the website version would fulfil your need, please get in touch with our membership secretary Liz Cutting. Conversely, if you do not receive a hardcopy, but would like to receive one, contact Liz.

Thank you to Liz Cutting for the part she plays in being the contact point for our members. In September our membership stood at 639 members. Richard Perryman manages the Branch website. There's plenty for him to do, particularly during the flight season when the Sightings page becomes extremely popular with our members

and the public. Richard also administers our X account (Formally Twitter). I would be keen to hear from anyone within our membership who would be interested in developing our Facebook and Instagram presence.

Early in the year I appealed to members to suggest butterfly conservation projects with which we might become involved. Several ideas were put forward and we made a start by making wildflower seed available at a meadow at Shingle Street, the start of a verge project at Rushmere St Andrew and seed for a meadow at Fornham St Genevieve. Part of the bank of a reservoir in West Suffolk is being considered for wildflower improvement and in villages to the west of Stowmarket - Onehouse, Harleston and Chedburgh - Mark Brewster has been supporting communities with their conservation work and wildflower areas. Our project work continues, and we intend to advise and help at other sites next year.

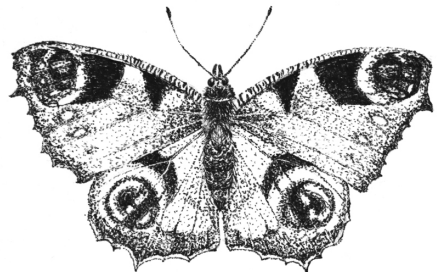
Thanks to Twm Wade in his roll as the co-ordinator of transects and the WCBS scheme. Our recorders are largely members of BC and for their dedication to the rigors of transect monitoring we thank them. Their records in the national database will help to inform the picture of butterfly successes and failures this year. James Corton, our County Butterfly Recorder, appreciates all records that are sent in to him whether they be through iRecord or the casual recording spreadsheet. The 2023 Report was published in the Summer Argus and the full Report with Annexes will be published in Suffolk Naturalists' Society Transactions. In due course species map will be added to the website.

We thank John Lepley for his commitment to communicating with Forest England at Theberton Wood. John resigns his position as an Associate

Committee Member but will continue to work at Theberton and to liaise with the Branch.

Kev Ling has been our Treasurer since 2018 and has made the decision to retire from the role. The branch account is held by Head Office and Kev is to be thanked and admired for his thoroughness in checking every detail that appears in the monthly statements. We are looking for a new Treasurer, a post that is vital for the Branch, and one that is not onerous in its commitment to workload or time. No prior financial experience or technical qualifications are required. The Treasurer has to liaise with Head Office in order to: arrange the payment of invoices, maintain a spreadsheet of Branch transactions and reconcile against Head Office information, and present simple accounts for the Branch Members' Day. Please get in touch with me if you would like to know more about this role.

Ideas for new walks, projects and static events are welcome, but members of the committee already have commitments and we do need members' help in expanding and fulfilling our aim of conserving butterflies. Might you be able to inspire your community to create a butterfly-friendly sanctuary – a Wild Space where the lifecycle of some species will thrive, or perhaps you might be able to devote a couple of hours to helping with a BC stall at an event.



Peacock by Deborah Vass

Editorial

Trevor Goodfellow

I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year?

I must apologise for an oversight: the Wall brown photo on page 24 of Vol 89 taken by Robert Quadling was labelled *Pararge aegeria*, which is of course Speckled Wood. Thanks to our Argus indexer Paul Douch for spotting that. I am amazed nobody mentioned it before.

Between the covers in this edition are some interesting, some thought provoking,

and technical items looking at pesticides, foreign travel, and butterfly identification.

BC Headquarters have issued notice of various changes that affect the way that the branch will operate. These and other points are outlined by our chairman on page 3.

Copy date for the summer edition is May 24th 2025

Cover image: Photo Competition Winner – ‘Spotted Fritillary’ by Harry Faull.

SBBC Key Role Vacancies Taken Up

Peter Maddison

Welcome to our new Treasurer, Saul Moorhouse, who lives in central Suffolk and has been a member of BC for a number of years. Saul has experience of budget management and, guided by our previous Treasurer, Kev Ling, has eased into the role. Best wishes to Kev whom we look forward to catching up with at future events.

We also welcome Toby Tydeman who, as Assistant Butterfly Verifier, will be assisting James Corton who remains as our County Butterfly Recorder. A neat solution to the management of the increasing number of butterfly records received each year.

More help needed.....

We still need more help with the running of the Branch. Might you be able to lead or assist with a walk, help man a table

display at a public event, speak to garden and wildlife groups and schools about butterflies, give conservation advice in answer to members' requests, record on a butterfly transect (contact twmwade@yahoo.co.uk for available transect walks), help with publicity or with the general running of the Branch.

If you think you can assist, please contact Peter Maddison prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

Social media update

We have been using X (Twitter) for several years and now we have a Bluesky presence. They may be accessed via Search at:

X [**@BC_Suffolk**](#)

Bluesky [**@bc-suffolk.bsky.social**](#)

Suffolk Moth Group Indoor Meeting - 15th March 2025



Doors will open at 9.30am for setting up, refreshments and general chat plus looking at exhibits. The meeting will officially start from 10.15am. The meeting will continue until we have run out of talks etc, around 4.30-5pm.

The first talk will be a review of the 2024 recording year in Suffolk by myself. Following my talk there will be the chance for members to show presentations. A digital projector will be available for those with digital presentations or images. It would be useful if you are intending on giving a presentation to let me know.

Tables will also be provided for those with exhibits, or any surplus equipment/books that people may wish to sell or donate to others.

Refreshments (tea, coffee and cake/biscuits) will be provided. For those staying all day, you will need to bring a packed lunch.

There will be a request for voluntary contributions towards the cost of hiring the hall and providing refreshments.

Bucklesham Village Hall is not far from the Nacton A12/A14 roundabout to the east of Ipswich. From the A12/A14 roundabout take the minor exit after the A12 exit but before the A14 Felixstowe exit. This exit is signposted to Bucklesham and leads via a single-track road to Bucklesham Village. At the end of this road you will reach the village, at the T junction turn right into Bucklesham Road. Take the next right turn into Levington Lane and the village hall is a short distance down the lane on the right.

The OS Grid Reference for the hall is TM242417. A map of the location can be viewed by following this link.

If you need any more detailed instructions in how to get there then do get in contact with myself.

All are welcome - if you are just starting to get interested in moths this is a great event to meet up and find out all about it.

Hopefully see you there!

*Neil Sherman, County moth recorder.
(moth@sns.org.uk)*

Members' Afternoon 19th October 2024

Peter Maddison

The Members' Afternoon was held at Earl Stonham Village Hall, which is in a quite central Suffolk location, and about 40 members attended, a number that is still lower than at our meetings just prior to Covid.

We opened with a short business meeting, the Chair's Report being available in a printed form, the Treasurer was able to give us positive feedback as to the state of the accounts and for those who had opted for re-election a unanimous vote of approval was received. We said goodbye to our Treasurer, Kev Ling, who after a number of years in post has decided to step down. Kev has persevered most patiently whilst head office finance department has been undergoing major staff and communication issues. He will continue to look after our finances until a successor is found. John Lepley continues to monitor Theberton Wood and will keep us informed of proceedings but without continuing his Associate Committee Member position and, owing to work commitments, David Dowding has decided not to be re-elected.

Sharon Hearle, our BC Eastern Region Officer, spoke to us about her work in the area which ranges from the Chequered

Skipper reintroduction in Rockingham Forest to Red Belted Clearwing exploration in East Suffolk and Dingy and Grayling work in the King's Forest.

It was good to hear what has been happening in the region.

After refreshments Neil Sherman, County Moth Recorder, gave us a fascinating and detailed resumé of the moths of the county. Members are strongly encouraged to use the Suffolk Moth Group website where a huge amount of information is available and to enter records in the Online Recorder <https://suffolkmoths.co.uk>

Neil presented the Branch with a portable moth trap which members will be able to borrow alongside other traps during the mothing season.

The meeting concluded with a raffle and the announcement of the Photographic Competition winners.

1st Harry Faull Spotted Fritillary

2nd Mark Brewster Swallowtail

3rd Harry Faull Heath Fritillaries puddling

2025 Events Calendar

(Please check website for up to date details and H&S advice)

Saturday 15th March 2025

Suffolk Moth Group Indoor Meeting **

Venue: Bucklesham Village Hall

Location: Grid Ref: TM242417 What3Words; remarking.clings.deeply

Time: 09.30am – 05.00pm

See Suffolk Moth Group website for details. www.suffolkmoths.co.uk

Sunday 4th May 2025

Pakenham Water Mill Wildlife Day **

Family event attended by Suffolk Butterfly Conservation and other Conservation groups in beautiful surroundings

Location: Water Mill Farm, Mill Road, Pakenham, Bury Saint Edmunds, IP31 2NB

Entry fee: £5 (children free) free parking.

Refreshments and family fun.

Enquiries: Ian Robertson 07876 644 611

Monday 10th to Sunday 25th May 2025

Dingy Skipper Count

Because the event is weather dependant the exact date will be known nearer the time.

Please register your interest with Trevor so that you can be contacted with changes.

Register your interest at suffolkargus@gmail.com to get updates

Where: King's Forest, Wordwell

Location reference: TL826738. Nearest post code IP28 6UR

Meet: at small car park west side of Brandon road opposite cellphone mast

Time: 10.00 am to 1.00 pm approx.

Leader: Trevor Goodfellow -

Email: suffolkargus@gmail.com , mobile 07900 696960

Saturday 28th June 2025

Northfield Wood, Onehouse

Woodland species including Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral

(Northfield Wood is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust and is accessible by the public.)

Where; Meet at Community Centre, Forest Road, Onehouse (parking available)

Location reference; Post code: IP14 3HJ; What3Words: editor.sizing.engulfing

Time; 10.30am to noon

Contact; Mark Brewster - Mobile 07759024440,

Email: mark.ian.brewster@gmail.com

Friday 11th July to Sunday 3rd August 2025

BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT **

For more details visit [Big Butterfly Count \(butterfly-conservation.org\)](http://butterfly-conservation.org)

Saturday 19th July 2025

A walk through the Kenton Hills and permissive paths of Sizewell Belts.

Meet: Kenton Hills car park

Location reference; Grid Ref TM453638; Postcode IP16 4UP; What3Words stowing.signs.vital

Time: 10.00am – 1.00pm

Contact: Peter Maddison

Email: prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk phone 01473 736607

Saturday TBC July 2025

Pakenham Wood SWF Walk

Butterfly Walk for Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admiral

Meet: car park behind St. Mary's church

Location reference: at Pakenham IP31 2LN, Grid Ref TL930670

Time: 10.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. approx.

Leader: Trevor Goodfellow

Email: suffolkargus@gmail.com

Saturday 9th August 2025

The Wall and other butterflies of SWT Carlton Marshes

Meet: SWT Carlton Marshes car park

Location reference; Grid ref TM508920; Post Code NR33 8HU; What3Words sterios.goats.trembles

Time 10.30am – 1.30pm

Leaders: Peter Maddison and Robert Quadling,

Email: prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk , phone 01473 736607

Saturday 11th October 2025 at 2.15 pm

Suffolk Branch Members' Afternoon 2025 **

at Earl Stonham Village Hall, IP14 5HJ

Pete Eeles will be our guest speaker. He is Chair of the Hampshire Branch and has recently published *British and Irish Butterfly Rarities*

There will be Refreshments (time to talk over a cup of tea), a Raffle and our annual Photographic Competition (See below).

Venue; Earl Stonham Village Hall, Post code IP14 5HJ, What3Words nips.tractor.inflamed

[Enter our photographic competition 2025 - click here for details](#)

November 2025

Butterfly Conservation National Annual General Meeting **

You do not need to contact us to attend events marked **

Important information

As with any other activity, there are hazards in the countryside and everyone taking part in an event has a responsibility (duty of care) for their own safety and that of others. We try hard to ensure that our events present no greater hazard than any other walk in the countryside, but we would encourage anyone planning to attend an event to read and act on the following advice:

- Wear appropriate footwear. If there are unusual requirements these will be noted in the event programme, but stout shoes are a minimum requirement for any walk.
- The leader will brief you on the trip before setting off, with details of any known hazards and advice on what to do in an emergency – please listen carefully.
- By their nature, butterflies are not always to be found next to the path and will offer many opportunities (temptations) to wander off the track. It's easy to be distracted and to miss potential hazards such as rabbit holes, fallen or hanging branches, barbed wire etc. Beware of wet grass or moss, particularly on sloping ground. Children are welcome at branch events but, if under 16, they must be accompanied by a responsible adult (maximum of two children per adult). If you are bringing children with you, please ensure that the event is within their capability.

- Dogs may be allowed at some of the events. Please contact the leader in advance to find out if the event is suitable.
- If you are uncertain about any aspect of an event or activity, please contact the leader in advance.

Contact details can be found with each event entry. Do let the leader know if you need, or can offer, a lift. If you decide to leave early, please tell the event leader. Please note that persons who take part in these events do so entirely at their own risk and The Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation cannot accept liability for any injuries or losses during the course of an event.

Binoculars, cameras, field guides and notebooks are always useful. For moth nights bring a torch and eye protection (i.e. polarised sunglasses or wide-brimmed hat). Remember, most nature reserves do not permit dogs. Map references are based on the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger series and are approximate. They refer to the rendezvous, not the site. Anyone is welcome to come along, Branch members or not.

Photography Competition

Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation (SBBC) [Photographic Competition](#)

At the 2025 AGM there will be our annual photo competition for photos taken by a member of SBBC.

This year the theme is -

'Best of British - Including Rarities' - Enter your best Butterfly or Moth photographs, taken in the UK
This can be any stage of the life-cycle.

Competition Guidelines

A maximum of five entries per person.

Maximum size for photographs is 12" x 8".

The winning entries will be published in a future edition of the 'Argus'.

There will be a prize for the overall photograph that gains the most votes.

In the event of a tie, the competition organiser shall have the casting vote.

Whilst every care is taken with entries, the BC Suffolk Committee cannot be held responsible for any damage or loss of photographs.

Enjoy your Summer of Butterflies and we look forward to seeing your photographs at our AGM.

Get looking through your archives and amaze everyone with a wide range of photos from Britain and beyond.

Kevin Ling

An Incident in Wolves Wood

Richard Stewart

The recent edition of our national ‘Butterfly’ magazine gave a bleak analysis of 2024, particularly the Big Butterfly Count. To put it into a personal response here is a summarised analysis of my own records in 2024:

18/5 - Small Tortoiseshell in the Fynn Valley TM 1947- the only one seen all year.

24/5 - 4 Holly Blue, 4 Small Heath, 1 Peacock at Alton Reservoir TM 1435, 1535, just 9 butterflies.

1/6 - 3 Dingy Skippers after a long and extensive search in the King’s Forest TL 8372, 8373.

14/7 - just 8 Silver-washed

Fritillaries and no White Admirals in Wolves Wood TM0543, 0544.

17/8 - 1 Wall and after a long search just 10 Gatekeepers-Carlton Marshes TM 5092.



Emperor at Wolves Wood by Richard Stewart

Mediterranean Tigers

David Tomlinson

If you have travelled in Africa, India or even Australia, there’s a good chance that you will be familiar with the Plain Tiger. Its alternative name of African Monarch tells you what to look for: a large butterfly, not

quite as big as a Monarch, but with very similar warning colouring, for it’s a butterfly that is unpalatable to birds. This is because the caterpillars feed on Asclepiadaceae, the poisonous milkweed family of plants.



Like the Monarch, the Plain Tiger is a handsome, eye-catching butterfly with a powerful flight. It has a wingspan of between 35-45mm (the Monarch goes up to 50mm), but while its general shape and wing colouring resembles its larger cousin, it lacks the latter’s black veins and has conspicuous white spots on the forewings. In my experience it never settles

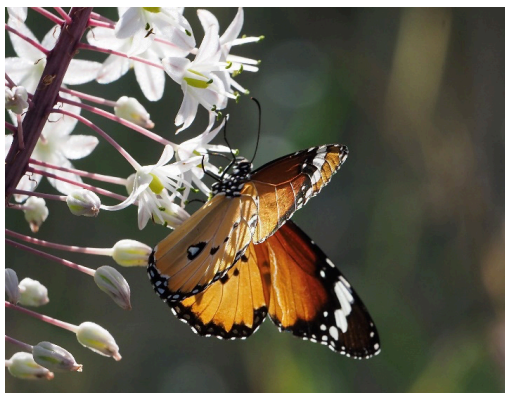
with its wings completely flat, but usually in a gentle V. The male is smaller than the female and more brightly coloured. He has a fourth spot on the lower hind wing which is white with a thick black border and bulges slightly. This holds the scent scales and is lacking in the female which has only three spots.

It's a common and successful butterfly



It's a butterfly that until last year, I'd only seen twice before in Europe: in Sardinia in October 2018, and in Kefalonia, Greece, in October 2023. On both occasions I only encountered single specimens. However, that all changed in the southern Peloponnese (Greece) last year, where I found Plain Tigers to be one of the commonest and certainly the most conspicuous of the local butterflies. They were everywhere along the coastal strip, and sufficiently large to be noticeable even when driving. It wasn't unusual to find 20 or even 30 butterflies clustered around a favourite nectar plant, such as sea lavender. My sightings were in late September and early October, which is when numbers peak.

throughout much of its range, which now extends north to include coastal Mediterranean Europe. Here its abundance varies greatly from year to year, but until recently it was generally thought to be resident only in the Canary Islands. Its presence elsewhere depends on migration, but there is growing evidence that our warming climate is enabling it to establish permanent colonies elsewhere in Europe.



I was staying south of Kalamata, where the land rises steeply from the coast. It was on the narrow coastal strip that I found these butterflies, with some even on the shore if there were nectar plants to attract them. Not perhaps surprisingly, I didn't see any away from the coastal strip in the surrounding mountains.

Like that other great migrant, the Painted Lady, the Plain Tiger has a very quick life cycle. In Africa it is continuously brooded, producing up to 12 generations in a year, though in cooler regions it may have only one or two broods a year. Whether this abundance of butterflies in the Peloponnese was due to migration or the fact that they

were breeding locally I don't know, but in nearby Corfu it's known to breed, but isn't thought to be resident.

Despite being highly migratory, it hasn't, as far as I am aware, ever been recorded in northern Europe - Peter Eeles makes no mention of it in his book *British &*

Irish Butterfly Rarities. However, if you are holidaying anywhere around the Mediterranean next summer, it's a butterfly to look out for.

(Plain Tiger photos by David Tomlinson)

Transects and WCBS in Suffolk

Butterfly Emergency in Suffolk. Twm Wade

What made 2024 different from previous years was the announcement of a butterfly emergency. We in Suffolk have evidence of that emergency by using records of transects and WCBS returns. In my summary of 2024, I will try to demonstrate to you the mathematics, the statistics that illustrate what we all experienced, the drop in numbers of butterflies.

The scientifically accepted method of counting butterflies is known as 'transects'. The same methodology is used for the WCBS, and the numbers are recorded on UKBMS. The difference between Transects and the WCBS is that the location and route of the former is chosen by the sponsor whereas the location of a WCBS is randomly selected. Also, the former is walked weekly but the latter only needs to be walked once in July and once in August. Some are walked four or five times a year. In trying to assess the difference between this year and the normal I needed expert advice. To have a fair statistical comparison between the years, I sought the help of BCHO.

Their suggestion was to find an average of how many butterflies were counted in each survey. They suggested I took a sample of nine years, to establish a 'normal' against this year's count. I could use UKBMS to provide me with total numbers of butterflies seen and the number of surveys done each year. For each year I divided the grand total by the number of surveys done to get an average of butterflies counted during each survey. It takes a little time to consider and realise what is not affecting the outcome.

The intention is to get a fair comparison year on year. We know there are peaks and troughs but given a period of nine years, we get a feel for 'normal'. We all know that in 2020 less surveys were done due to Covid. We can safely accept that the grand total was considerably lower than previous years (nearly 17,000 compared with 34,203) whereas the average per survey gives a truer comparison. Using the same process we can compare transects with WCBS sites.

See figures on page 15:

TRANSECTS		WCBS	
Year	Average	Year	Average
2015	62.8	2015	75.1
2016	54.0	2016	69.3
2017	61.1	2017	61.2
2018	63.2	2018	62.4
2019	69.9	2019	67.2
2020	46.7	2020	11.9
2021	49.5	2021	75.0
2022	57.7	2022	57.9
2023	61.0	2023	79.0
2024	39.1	2024	49.3

I hope you agree that these numbers demonstrate what you and your fellow volunteers experienced in practice. On average you were seeing less butterflies during each survey you did. The sudden decline added to the near annual reduction is alarming. And it is not just butterflies, there are moths and other insects and those species that predate them. An emergency in our time.

Most Abundant:

The most abundant species of butterfly was the Meadow Brown with 6607 recorded. Butterflies were most prolific in the middle of July with an average of 4308 per week. During the year 30,524 were recorded. All

this information becomes available because there are volunteers who go out on mostly warm sunny days to walk a set line of a set area. We are always looking for volunteers

Twam Wade
Transect & WCBS Co-ordinator
Suffolk Branch Butterfly Conservation
07743 305363

(UKBMS - United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme)

(WCBS - Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey)

(BCHO - Butterfly Conservation Head Office)

2024 - A Personal Analysis

Richard Stewart

My detailed butterfly survey at Holywells Park Ipswich TM 1743 consisted of sixteen visits between 6th April and 3rd October. 216 individual butterflies were seen, giving an average of 13.5 per trip. Despite the abundance of water I counted just 8 Ringlets, a species usually found in damper habitats. Several searches of sunlit oaks at the right time failed to produce any Purple Hairstreaks. And I didn't see any Common Blues, Small Tortoiseshell or Painted Lady despite the sunlit garden area having an abundance of seasonal nectar sources. In my own garden at Westerfield Road Ipswich TM 169461, despite having well over fifty nectar sources and different varieties of buddleia I counted just 16 species, with no Ringlets, Skippers or Small Tortoiseshell.

To partially balance that negativity both Holly Blue and Speckled Wood had good counts at Holywells Park 43 and 31 respectively. At Christchurch Park Ipswich TM 1645 we counted 21 different species including Brown Argus, all three Skippers and Small Heath but all were in low numbers. Our best day was undoubtedly at Tangham TM 3547, 3548 on 26th July with well over 150 butterflies, including White Admiral, Painted Lady, 10 Grayling and well over 100 Gatekeepers. Finally, although Red Admirals didn't match their abundance in 2023 there was a late abundance on sunlit and open ivy umbels; 8 on ivy climbing up a tall sycamore just outside our back garden on 5th October and 12 at Holywells Park on 14th September.



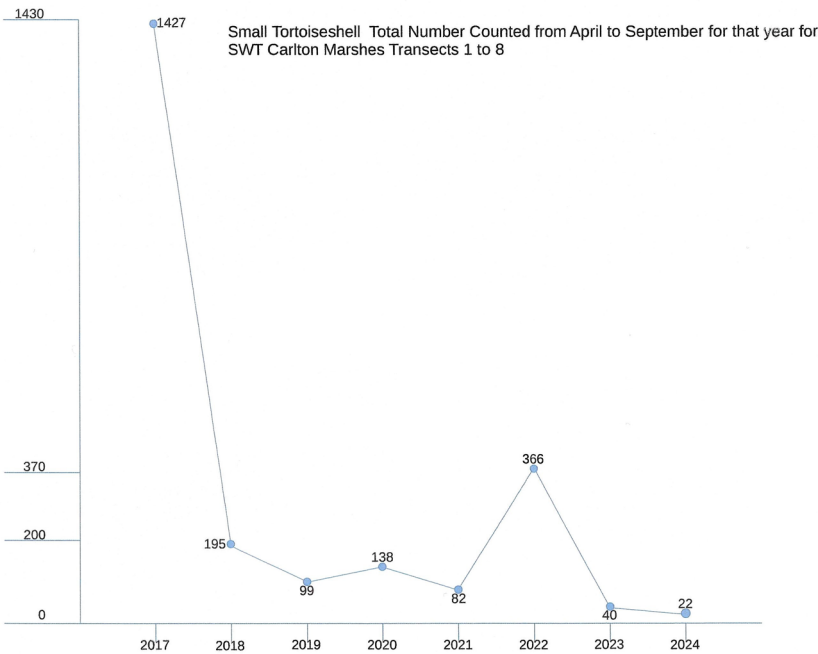
Holywells Park

The Decline of Some of Our Common Nymphalids

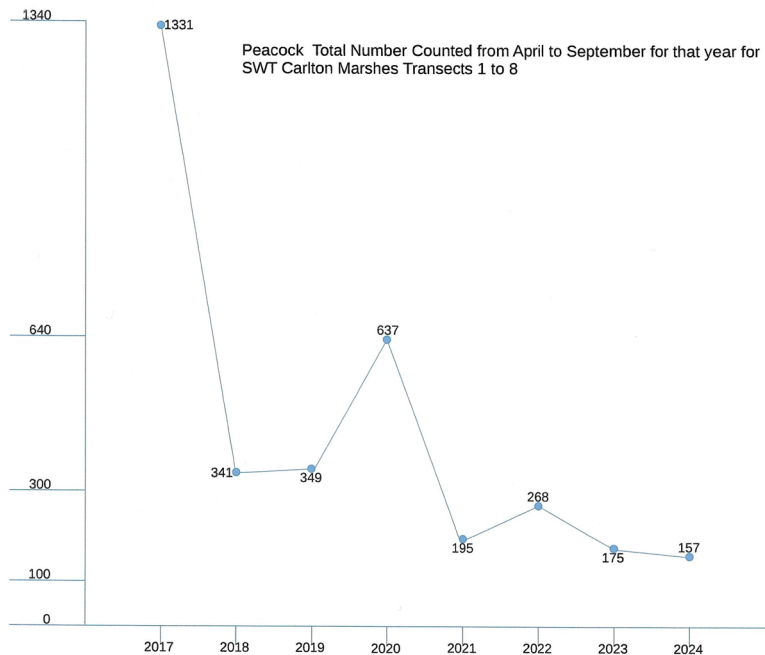
James Corton and Robert Quadling

An end of year meeting with a transect recorder led to a conversation about the demise of our common species of butterflies. We are all aware from press releases that it has been a difficult year for British butterflies. Robert and I wondered if there would be data to back up the impression that some of our most common butterflies have been in decline for several years. Robert conducts transects on Carlton Marshes and Lound Lakes as well as helping with Somerleyton surveys.

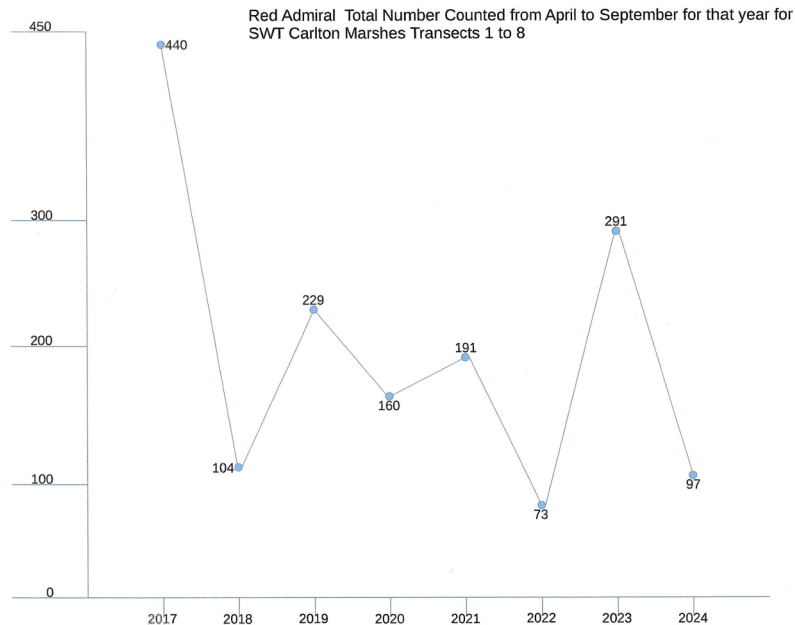
Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Red Admiral numbers at SWT Carlton Marshes were assessed by Robert, using the entire April-September transect period. Small Tortoiseshell numbers show a precipitous decline from 1,427 in 2017 to a mere 22 in 2024, a startling decline of 98.5%. Only a brief and partial resurgence in 2022 goes against this worrying trend.



Peacock showed a similar but less dramatic trend, falling from a healthy 1,331 in 2017 to a low of 157 in 2024, an 88.2% drop. It had a brief resurgence in 2020, again for one year only.



Red Admiral numbers fell in the least dramatic way, from 440 in 2017 to 97 in 2024, a 78% decline. This is more complex in there being large variations from year to year.



Three factors are known to have a profound impact on all species of butterfly - weather, habitat and chemicals - but these primary causes seem unlikely. The most likely cause is mortality from parasitoids, notably the recently arrived *Sturmia bella*. Since the late 1990s this has targeted our nymphalid species and spread northwards. A new host-parasitoid relationship is characterised by an initial collapse in the host, followed by wide fluctuations as it develops resistance strategies. Ultimately, a new steady-state is found but the population will usually be lower than before (the Holly Blue began one such relationship with a wasp and, some decades later, is showing signs of stability once again).

S. bella is more active in the warmer summer months and it is thought that the Peacock avoids parasitoidism better than

the Small Tortoiseshell by producing one brood per year in late spring and early summer. The double-brooded Tortoiseshell has its second brood decimated by this large tachinid fly. Red Admiral usually lay their eggs singly and this would require the fly to spend much more time searching for larvae, hence it is less affected. N.B: Comma is doing well and, although double-brooded also lays eggs singly.

Many of us who were butterfly watching pre-1990s will remember the days when flowering buddleias were festooned with Peacocks and Tortoiseshells – sadly, those days are unlikely to return. For me, it's a lesson to never take our fauna and flora for granted and every butterfly including the much-maligned 'Cabbage White' is welcome in the garden.

The Wood Wide Web

BBC 4 TV (20/11/24)

An excellent program about fungi where singer Bjork of all people tells the viewers that 90 out of the 15,000 fungi species are bio luminous and that the deforestation

in the area covered by the program was occurring at pace, so quick that we are given the ubiquitous yardstick of 'the area of a football pitch' is destroyed every 2 minutes!

Musings of a Butterfly Recorder

James Corton

Small or even dwarf butterflies have always existed, as have their giant counterparts. I do not mean small species like the Little (Small) Blue but, rather, the small individuals within a species that we occasionally encounter as genetic variants. In the past two or more years, I have had heard of far more dwarf butterflies than gigantism. I have seen several diminutive individuals myself, including a Meadow Brown

the size of a Small Heath and a Brown Argus which could vie for the title of Britain's Smallest Butterfly (I thought it a micro moth at first). With most 2024 data processed I reflected upon this increasing occurrence. I made the unhappy connection with the UK's continued use of neonicotinoids. These nicotine-based pesticides are toxic down to a few nanograms per litre and are systemic, working into every part of a plant or

tree. Even trace levels produce harmful effects such as deformities, sterility, shortened lifespan and...dwarfism. Perhaps these cute and curious looking butterflies are just some of the many affected by this class of neurotoxin? Perhaps another part of the answer to the question, *Where Have All the Butterflies Gone?*

Meanwhile, following two winter storms, I also wonder how our hibernating butterflies survive such high winds? Brimstone and Comma rarely come indoors like the Tortoiseshell and Peacock do, so what do they do to escape the worst of it? Has anyone found them hibernating safely after such storms?

Beauty Sells

(excerpt from New Scientist)

Tens of thousands of butterflies are sold on eBay each year and endangered species covered by trade restrictions command some of the highest prices, an analysis has found.

Harvard University monitored sales of dead butterflies on eBay for one year starting in September 2020 by an automated search of 150,000 butterfly names on the site.

They recorded more than 50,000 transactions involving 3767 species (nearly a fifth of all known butterfly species).

Only 2 per cent of those species traded on the site were considered endangered, but they include 4 out of the top 10 most expensive species in the transactions analysed.

Most of the butterflies sold on the site originate from South-East Asia and Latin America but appear to be sold by traders located in Europe and the US.

Laws vary between countries, but many require permits to collect butterflies or ban the collection of the insects from certain protected sites. The sales of some endangered butterflies require permits or are prohibited outright. No permits were displayed on the eBay listings.

You might expect that collectors just want the 'rare' specimens, but studies show that a butterfly collection is more like a home decoration piece, people are buying butterflies because they are

beautiful it is suggested.

Collecting can be good for conservation as the high value of some specimens promotes conservation of rare species and captive breeding. It is financially beneficial not to allow an extinction.

But Tim Shreeve at Oxford Brookes University, UK, says there is some risk in further legitimising the butterfly trade. "This type of trade could lead to more exploitation with people incentivised to collect the rarest type of butterflies, potentially threatening the insects' existence," he says. "Moreover, you have to actually make sure that the money goes to the Indigenous population collecting these butterflies and not profiteering middlemen."

An eBay spokesperson said the site has strict policies and guidelines to regulate the listing of animal products and the company promotes the protection of wildlife.

"To reinforce our regulations, we have global teams dedicated to upholding standards on our marketplace. eBay is a founding member of the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online and we work alongside organisations such as WWF and IFAW [the International Fund for Animal Welfare] to continually update our measures," the spokesperson said.

Photo Competition

Congratulations to the winners of the 2024 AGM photographic competition (below).



*2nd Place - Swallowtail
by Mark Brewster*



1st Place - Spotted Fritillary Harry Faull



3rd place - Puddling Group (Heath Fritillaries) by Harry Faull

Separating Difficult to Identify Species (Part One)

James Corton

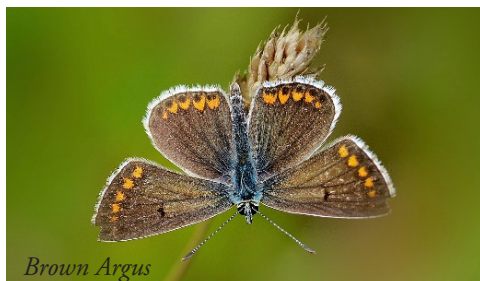
Suffolk has 38 breeding species of butterfly which includes new arrivals such as Marsh Fritillary and Small Blue as well as regularly encountered migrants such as Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady. Most of these are quite distinctive and therefore easy to record. There are a few exceptions to the rule, however, and this series of articles sets out to help recorders identify challenging pairs of species. The species most commonly causing confusion are Brown Argus/Common Blue, Holly Blue/Small Blue and Essex/Small Skipper. Here I will try to show the diagnostic differences between Brown Argus and Common Blue. Aberrant forms exist

in all species and that can make ID harder but for our purposes, I shall assume the nominate form. I strongly recommend getting a good field guide too.

Female Common Blue occur in blue form and brown form, and it is this brown form which most resembles Brown Argus. Note that Common Blue always have some blue scales on their wings, at the base, whereas Brown Argus have nothing more than a bluish sheen. They also have some white around the orange hindwing lunules which the Brown Argus does not.



Female Common Blue



Brown Argus

The undersides are a little easier, perhaps, if you can get close enough. Note the circle of white-bordered black dots on the hindwing of the Common Blue. In Brown Argus they are interrupted by one being above this line, forming a 'figure of eight' close to the leading edge of the hindwing (circled on photo). Additionally, they lack the forewing spot closest to the body, but this is not always visible, particularly when roosting.



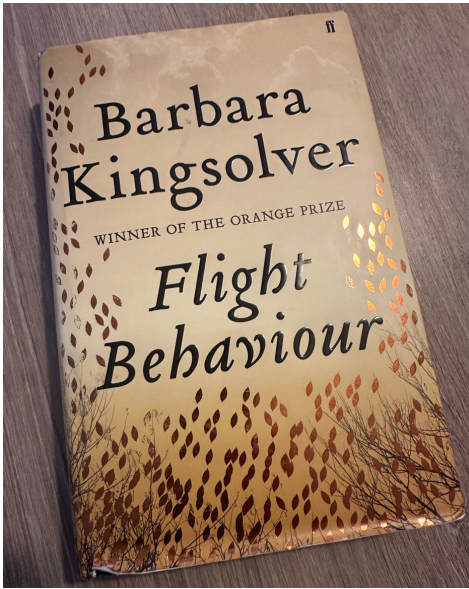
Common Blue



Brown Argus

Book Review: Flight Behaviour by Barbara Kingsolver

Mark Brewster



Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* is a novel, and as such, this review is surely something a little different for these pages. I found myself reading it last year after seeing it referenced in a non-fiction publication—not that I can recall which one.

Having purchased a reasonably priced, very good' hardback copy, I made a start on its 400-plus pages, but what initially piqued my interest and why would I choose to submit a review of such a work for this newsletter? Well, the title's main subject matter is Monarch butterflies, but climate change and its effects on the natural world—in this case, *Danaus plexippus* in particular—also feature heavily. *The Guardian* describes the Orange Prize-winning publication as 'an impressive work', and I was soon drawn in by the author's descriptive writing style.

The plot revolves around Dellarobia Turnbow, an unhappy farm wife living in a fictional town in rural Tennessee. One day, in an effort to

escape her mundane life, she heads off to begin an affair with a cable guy. Her plan is curtailed, however, when she encounters thousands of Monarchs roosting in her little corner of the Appalachians, although initially, she's unaware of what she's seen: 'a silent, forested valley filled with what looks like a lake of fire.'

In time, visitors and tourists come from all over to view the spectacle, and Dellarobia meets Ovid Byron, a scientist with a specific interest in the species. The struggling Turnbows have earmarked the land on which the butterflies are roosting for logging, and as Dellarobia comes to learn more about the butterflies and why they might be roosting close by, conflict with her family ensues.

There are numerous subplots and backstories that are explored. One personal highlight was Ovid, the likeable scientist, clashing with a news reporter. There were, though, many others, the descriptions of the various work carried out by Ovid and his students being another.

Evidently, the novel was inspired by the true story of the destruction of a Monarch roosting site in Mexico. The tale of the colony locating itself in Tennessee is, however, entirely fictitious. The research that went into the publication was undoubtedly meticulous, as evidenced in the final section at the back of the book.

I'm a slow reader, and initially I questioned whether I should follow up the reference and purchase a novel, something I've not done for a few years. Did I make the right choice? I'd say most definitely. This review and synopsis barely scratch the surface, so if your appetite has been whetted and you'd like to know what became of the Turnbow Monarch colony, I'd recommend ordering yourself a copy.



Six-spot burnet by James Corton