

# BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

## Duke of Burgundy Report 2009

Robin Carr

The butterfly has not yet shown any sign of recovery since dwindling to approximately 5 colonies in the UTB area. This is a reduction from an estimated 20 colonies 25 years ago.

Numbers of butterflies at these remaining colonies were approximately the same as in 2008, despite a considerable amount of work at two of these sites specifically aimed at improving conditions for the species. Surveys of some sites that previously held the species showed no signs of re-colonisation, even though their condition looks superficially suitable.



Male Duke of Burgundy at Dancersend reserve, May 2009  
*Photo © Nick Bowles*

Intriguingly, at Dancersend there was a discovery of larval damage on Primrose plants growing in the meadow plots - which according to current thinking is far too exposed a site for Duke of Burgundy females to consider as a potential egg laying site. In theory, at least, 'Duke' females prefer large plants of either cowslip or primrose, growing in semi shaded and sheltered positions on the edge of scrub.



**Red arrow shows position of eggs (on cowslip) in what would be considered a more usual egg laying site - scrub edge at Ivinghoe Beacon, May 2008**

Extensive survey work and site condition assessment continues as a joint exercise with BBOWT and other land-owners at all currently known and occupied sites. Hopefully, management work to improve these sites will eventually coincide with climatic and other critical factors in a way that suits these threatened butterflies and assists their recovery.