

UPPER THAMES BRANCH

# Hairstreak

ISSUE 114 | APR-JUL 2022



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

**Upper Thames  
Branch**



[www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

# Contents

Missing out... and moving on.....	3
First Impressions... view from the Chair.....	4
Making the most of the UTB Website.....	6
All Change for Reporting Butterfly Sightings .....	8
Attention all new Members!.....	9
Conservation Achievements Winter 2021/22.....	10
'Tracking the Impact' Project .....	12
Surveying Butterflies and Moths.....	13
Spotlight on UTB Squares (2): SP71 .....	16
Butterfly Monitoring – Transects .....	17
Highest-priority Butterflies & Moths in the UTB Region .....	19
Garden Butterfly Survey 2021 .....	22
Black Park - 26 Species of Butterfly.....	25
mothnight 19th-21st May 2022 .....	28
Churchyard Survey - 2021 .....	29
Urgently Wanted: (YET MORE!) Churchyard Recorders.....	32
A Hard Reign.....	33
Guided Walks – May to August.....	36
We Choose Hope...Saving Butterflies & Moths .....	42
Upper Thames Moth Atlas .....	43
On the trail of one of our more elusive species .....	45
UTB Species Surveys: Join the Teams!.....	47
UTB Butterfly Records 2021 .....	48
Accessible Butterflies & Day-flying Moths .....	50
Training – May to August.....	53
Goat Moth or Goat Myth? .....	56
SU79: 10K Champion's Report + .....	58
A Closer Look at Aston Rowant NNR.....	63
Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) .....	65
Tips & Hints (1) from the Lepidoptera Wonderer.....	67
Discovering iRecord: Butterflies & Moths (Training).....	69
Videos worth watching + Answers to Last Time's Quiz .....	70
Cryptic Crossword.....	71

Cover image: Orange-tip (male) © Derek Haynes

Opinions expressed in the articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Branch or the Society.

Next edition: **Details on the next page.**

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# Missing out... and moving on...

Welcome to this bumper-packed issue of *Hairstreak*.



If you are a UTB member and reading this now, but **not** due to an email link having been sent to you personally from Butterfly Conservation, there is every chance that you're not receiving other material electronically from either Butterfly Conservation and/or the Branch.

This might be because you've not lodged your email preferences with Butterfly Conservation (or that they're out of date, or that BC has inadvertently reverted to your previous preferences), in which case – assuming you do wish to receive such material in the future – please inform them by sending an email to:

[membership@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:membership@butterfly-conservation.org)

It is hoped to be able to consider publishing the newsletter 4 times a year (rather than 3), but the cost of sending out paper copies has (at present) thwarted this proposal. So, newsletters will continue to be published as follows:

Issue to be called	Seasons(s)	Copy deadline date	Planned publication date
JAN-MAR Year	mid winter-spring	31st December	10th January
APR-JUL Year	late spring-mid summer	31st March	10th April
AUG-DEC Year	late summer-mid winter	31st July	10th August

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue. We welcome contributions from as many of you as possible, as the newsletter will only be as worthy as the sum of its parts and, to achieve that, we need a wide range of topics from a myriad of authors.

**Please send material to the email address below**, and attach any photographs as **high resolution individual .jpg** (or similar) files or provide a link to either a cloud-based storage location or to a location provided by an email file transfer agent. **Please do not embed photographs in documents.** Microsoft Word is the preferred hosting word processor for all articles (ideally in A5-layout format).

We hope you enjoy this edition of *Hairstreak*, and welcome any comments or suggestions you have.

**Derek Haynes**, [newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

# First Impressions... view from the Chair

## Chairman's Notes

In my inaugural piece as Chair, I said that I wanted to see us achieving even more conservation effect than we previously managed. I'm delighted that despite the difficulties that Covid-19 caused, we are achieving that. Far more members came out in this last winter than ever before and the impact was tremendous. Thanks to the members of the UTB, many invertebrates that were in danger of disappearing as scrub shaded their habitats, are safe again, and dark woodlands have been opened up to the sun.



A UTB work party at a site after they cleared scrub to help the Adonis and Chalk Hill Blues, & Grizzled and Dingy Skippers

We also managed to plant more cowslips into areas close to **Duke of Burgundy** colonies in the hope of enticing them to spread, and we planted more disease-resistant Elm at many sites. We know that the disease-resistant Elms planted at the start of the Branch work to make them more widely available are now hosting colonies of **White-letter Hairstreak**.



One of over 325 disease-resistant Elms planted across the UTB

The Upper Thames Branch's membership is small in comparison with that of local National Trust, RSPB and Woodland Trust groups, but our members' impact on the conservation of butterflies and moths is greater. It is a great honour to represent such an active and effective team of truly committed people. Thank you so much for your astounding efforts.

The impact we have made can be seen decorating the pages of the UTB Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Butterflies.Berkshire.Buckinghamshire.Oxfordshire> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/UpperThamesBC> pages.

Those pages rarely reflect the massive effort you also make with records. The UTB received c90,000

records in 2021, with complete coverage of every 10km square that is 100% within our boundaries. Thank you so much for those. People recording with iRecord will know that we thank recorders individually for each record but those of you using other methods probably get less feedback. I want to thank all of you here and encourage even greater participation, please. We, in the UK, have the best understanding of the changing fortunes of our butterflies and moths of any country, but the more we learn the greater the precision of our conservation effort.

Although it is still early April, most of us have seen several species of butterfly and moth already this year. To learn what other members are seeing, visit our website <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/> where exciting records appear (already ten butterfly species in the UTB area at the time of writing, a week before April!). The website also lists all the events we are staging to help you enjoy your membership and help us to conserve butterflies and moths. This year we will have more guided walks than ever before and for the first time, some in every part of the UTB area. There are events to help you polish your ID skills and everything we do for our members is free<sup>1</sup> (largely thanks to all the time that you wonderful people devote to us). What more could you want to lure you out to start spotting and recording? Enjoy the summer.

<sup>1</sup>The only thing that possibly isn't free is the paper form of the newsletter. If you let us know that you really can't receive the "*Hairstreak*" electronically, we will send it on paper but also urge you to donate so that you cover the cost of that. UTB membership subs (£6) are less than the cost to us of printing and posting the newsletter (with costs continuing to rise).

**Nick Bowles**

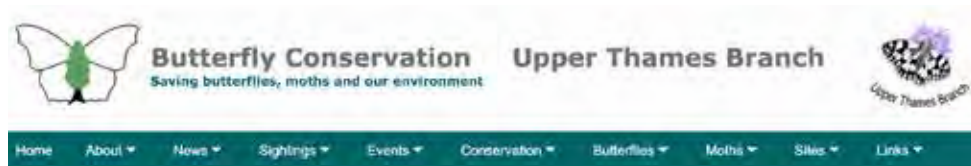


The White-letter Hairstreak is benefitting from UTB's work in planting disease-resistant Elms  
© Peter Kendall (2nd July 2021)

# Making the most of the UTB Website, and... All Change for Reporting Butterfly Sightings

## Making the most of the UTB Website

The redesigned Branch website [[www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)] is now three years old. This article gives some advice on how to make best use of the site.



The first port of call is the **Home** page. **Any current announcements appear here in red.** These are more important than news items, so **please take note of them.**

On the right hand side of the **Home** page there is a panel with three sections:

- The top section shows recent first sightings in the current year (up to five). Clicking on '**First sightings**' will display the full list. Clicking on a species name will take you to the description of that species.
- The middle section shows upcoming events. Clicking on '**Events**' will show all upcoming events. Clicking the link for a particular event ([More info](#)) will take you to more information about that event.
- At the bottom there is a news section. Clicking on '**News**' will show all news items for the current year. Clicking on a news item will show that item.

[Note that the Home page is not optimised for small-screen devices. If you visit the full-size home page on a mobile phone, you will be redirected to a mobile-optimised page. This doesn't have the functionality of the large-screen version; at the moment sightings can be submitted.]

On the main website: from the **About** tab you can see the names and **Contact Details** (email addresses) of people carrying out roles in the Branch. You can also find links to **Branch Newsletters** (including previous editions of *Hairstreak*) and other **Publications** here.




From the **News** tab you can see news items for the current and previous 2 years.

From the **Sightings** tab you can see:

- **Butterfly Sightings** since 2018 (and archived sightings from 2004 to 2017);
- **First Sighting dates for butterflies** (back to 2004);
- The Web Form that you can use to **Submit Sightings** to appear on the Sightings page. **Please use this form if you can**, as it requests all the information needed (please also see the separate item 'All change...' overleaf).

From the **Events** tab you can get a list of all upcoming events. You can filter these by event type, using the drop-down menu. There are links to videos of **Online Talks** here as well, for example:



Title	Date & Time	Detail	Link
The DECIDE Project	30th Oct 2021	The DECIDE Project: A new approach to recording nature where it matters by Michael Pocock	<a href="#">Video</a>
Regional Action Plan	30th Oct 2021	Seven half-hour talks about progress so far in the BC South-east Regional Action Plan	<a href="#">Video</a>

- Events
- Field Meetings
- Committee Meetings
- Members' Day & AGM
- New Members' Day
- Conservation Review Day
- National Moth Night
- Online Talks

Under the **Conservation** tab there are lots of menu options, including information about UTB's Holtspur Bottom Reserve, what you should do with your records, Hairstreak egg hunts, butterfly Species Champions and 10km-square Champions. Details of partnerships – for example, Chiltern Rangers – and links to other useful information (such as that sampled below) are also given here.

#### Gardening for Butterflies and Moths

Many of us try to attract butterflies by planting nectar sources, like buddleia, in our gardens. Planting flowers raises an expectation which often leads to the question, "Why don't I see many butterflies?". There are several reasons, but the most important is that nectar sources simply retain butterflies which would otherwise fly straight through your garden. Nectar sources alone do not increase the numbers of butterflies...

- Conservation & Recording
- Holtspur Bottom Reserve
- Didcot-Upton SUSTRANS
- Chiltern Rangers
- Your Records
- Species Champions
- 10km Square Champions
- White-river Hairstreak Project
- Hairstreak Egg Hunts
- Churchyard Management
- Gardening for Butterflies & Moths
- Garden & Churchyard Records
- Five Hairstreaks Project
- WCBS
- UTB Surveys (PDF)

The **Butterflies** tab has a section about the butterflies which can be found in the three counties, as well as the options already described.

Under **Moths** there are links to priority moths, as well as a series of PDFs on '**Moths for Beginners**', kindly supplied by John Thacker and Peter Cuss. There is a new '**Flying Tonight**' section, too.

Under **Sites** you can see the location of butterfly sites in the three counties. You can get more information about each site by clicking its name.

Under **Links** there are some useful links to external sites, for example, 'UK Moths':



**The UTB website is under continual development... so if there is anything you think would be a useful addition, please let me know.**

## All Change for Reporting Butterfly Sightings

In the past, contributions that were added to the **Sightings** page of the website were manually transcribed at the end of the year, and the records sent to the UTB butterfly recorder. Apart from being very time-consuming for the transcriber, this process inevitably generated duplicate records, which required effort to locate and remove.

With immediate effect, butterfly (and moth) sightings submitted for the **Sightings** page via the Web Form will also be added to iRecord by default. If you have already added the records to iRecord yourself, you will need to state this, to prevent them from being added again. When submitting your sightings via the Web Form, you will find a new section containing information about iRecord.

**If you send in sightings by email, you will also need to include this information in your message: recorder's name, sighting date, location (preferably with a six-digit grid reference), species and numbers seen.**

Thank you for your co-operation with this.



**David Hastings, Webmaster**  
[webmaster@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)



# Attention all new members!

**A warm welcome to all new members who have joined since the last newsletter was published.**

Since then, 66 new households have joined the Branch. At present there are 1712 households in the Branch.

The more members we have the more we can achieve as a Branch. Please encourage your friends to join Butterfly Conservation, either on the website or by leaflet. Please let me know if you would like any membership leaflets to pass on.

All of you are welcome to join field meetings, work parties and attend Members' Day.

Up-to-date news on activities can be found on our website:

[www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)



## **New Members' Events 2022**

Over the past two years we have been unable to welcome you to the Upper Thames Branch. At last this is possible and we would like to invite all new members to our New Members' Day. This year it will be in two parts, and we have arranged the following:

1. An evening session on Zoom including an introduction to the Branch, what we do and opportunities for getting involved, some ID hints and information on how to record the butterflies and moths you see
2. A guided walk in each of the three counties held on the same day.

All members who have joined BC and Upper Thames Branch since April 2019 will be sent an invitation that will include;

- details of the evening talk,
- the Zoom link
- the walk locations, dates and times for each county for you to choose your most convenient location

If you are eligible and do not receive an invitation please contact Brenda Mobbs, Membership Secretary.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

**Brenda Mobbs, Membership Secretary**  
[bc.upperthames@gmail.com](mailto:bc.upperthames@gmail.com)

# Conservation Achievements Winter 21/22

The UTB had what by any measure was its **most successful winter conservation season ever**, this last winter. We visited more sites than previously, and attracted more volunteers who put in more hours than ever in the Branch's history. A magnificent achievement, especially as we were still affected by various Covid-restrictions.

In summary, we put in sessions at 23 sites.



Aston Uphorpe



Arncoth



Butlers Hangings



Watermead



Sands Bank (assisted by schoolchildren)



Winchester Wood

Of these, 18 sessions were in the Chilterns and largely focused on controlling developing low-growing scrub on biodiverse grasslands, to spare flowers from being out-competed by bushes; and some created warm, sheltered glades in taller, more

extensive scrub for species like the **Duke of Burgundy** (pictured right) that rarely flies in windy spots, and other species that are reluctant to breed anywhere where the larvae will suffer from excessive wind chill.



Duke of Burgundy, Incombe Hole, Bucks  
2 May 2021 (© Rikki Harrington)

16 were in the Downs and largely focused equally on controlling scrub to spare flowers, particularly Kidney vetch from being over-shaded; and in creating warm, sheltered ride and glades in secondary woodland.

3 were in the Aylesbury Vale and also focused on controlling scrub to reduce the competition flowers experience from bushes; and in creating warm, sheltered glades in ancient woodland where the understorey had grown very dense. We hope this will favour grassland skippers in the former case and fritillary species and possibly **Black Hairstreak** that currently breed along the wood's outer edge in the latter.

Additionally in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire we continued the planting of Elm trees with a very impressive 338 disease-resistant Elms now planted. At a Bucks golf club adjacent to a Chalk Hill Blue colony, we planted 50 Horseshoe vetch plugs and at a Thames Water site, near Duke colonies, we planted 200 cowslips.

These conservation sessions involved 284 adult volunteer days (totalling 1321 hours) and 160 junior volunteer days (totalling 585 hours). This in addition to 36 Ranger days (180 hours) provided by the Chiltern Rangers professional team making a total of 1917 person hours of conservation work at a cost to the UTB of £6,300.



I hope that you agree that our cost was tiny given the outcome. No doubt you also join me in thanking the volunteers for their time, efforts and very good company.

The photo shows four of the twelve volunteers who turned out on 21st December at our Holtspur Reserve. The tall red stems of Dogwood, still visible to the left and

downhill, show what has been cleared from the foreground. We fully expect masses of flowering plants to replace them.

**Nick Bowles**

# ‘Tracking the Impact’ Project

## Opportunities to get involved in wildlife surveys in and around the Chilterns

Through its **Tracking the Impact** project the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) is looking for volunteers to take part in formal bird, butterfly and plant (and other wildlife) surveys in the Buckinghamshire Chilterns.

CCB is working closely with the British Trust for Ornithology, Butterfly Conservation, Plantlife, BBOWT and the Bucks & Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre to set up a long-term survey project covering 50 1km squares to track trends of Chilterns wildlife. We have a wide range of opportunities to get involved in, regardless of your levels of experience or the time you have available.

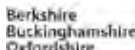
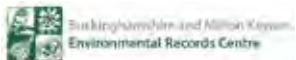
2022 will be the second full year of running the project and we got off to a great start last year. To see what volunteers got up to, watch our online end-of-year celebration event from last December that has lots of great speakers and other volunteers sharing their experiences:

### [Tracking the Impact 2021 Programme Review - December 2021 - YouTube](#)

Training is available and support is on hand to help with survey methods, setting squares up and with data entry. There are many 1km squares in the **Tracking the Impact** project area as well as opportunities to carry out surveys on Nature Reserves and farmland too. We are also working with partners to share other surveying opportunities in the wider Buckinghamshire area, so if the Chilterns isn't for you then don't worry: there are plenty of other opportunities.

The project also runs a programme of species ID training to help you brush up on your ID skills. These are ideal if you have an interest but feel you need some help in developing your skills.

To find out more about what is involved, which squares are free, what the species ID training involves and/or to sign up, please contact: Nick Marriner ([nmarriner@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:nmarriner@chilternsaonb.org)) or fill in this simple registration form ([hsforms.com](https://www.hsforms.com))



# Surveying Butterflies and Moths

All of us love to see butterflies and moths. Many of us take photos of them when we can. Their lively movement and brilliant colours cheer us up. Days of decent weather when none are seen seem empty and very sad. They are a hollow mockery of truly decent days.

It's too horrible for me to contemplate but can I ask you, to very briefly, try to imagine a day of lovely summer weather and beautiful surroundings, but just one butterfly (or if you are very brave, none at all!). If you tried that I hope it wasn't too horrible and you can recover your composure.

The point of that awful exercise was to make you aware that simply standing and revelling in the wonder of butterflies and moths is great for you; and that you would miss them if they were not present. However, simply enjoying them doesn't help the insects.

By recording what you see, you will make a difference. As our departing regional Conservation Officer Steve Wheatley proudly says, during his time as our officer working with the volunteers of the SE region (to ensure that)... **no species of butterfly has gone extinct**. He explains that our thorough monitoring and recording of the butterflies and moths that we see, builds a very accurate picture of where they are in trouble. Once that is established, we can work with landowners to address the issue and improve conditions for the endangered species.



A UTB walk finds a scarce butterfly

So please, don't simply enjoy the wondrous joy that sightings bring us, but also make a note of what you see and make sure that you inform us about it. For casual sightings, the easiest way for nearly everybody to achieve this is through the free iRecord Butterflies app (available at Google Play and Apple Store). This YouTube video runs through setting up and using the app: <https://youtube/qBPFVSfmyKI>

However, as our love and appreciation of butterflies and moths deepens, we start searching for them purposefully. It really is important to record whatever we see – and perhaps most importantly when we see very little. Moreover, to make the records most useful you should consider recording in a standardised way. You can consider helping with various surveys that we run; listed here in order of their demand upon you, with the least demanding first:

## Churchyard surveys

These have no rules, but simply involve walking around a churchyard, ideally in spring and again in summer a couple of times, and recording every butterfly and moth that you can identify. You can do this on paper downloaded from:

[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden\\_churchyard\\_records](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden_churchyard_records)

or you can request a form to be posted to you:

contact: [churchyard-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:churchyard-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

## Garden surveys

These are ideally conducted every week from March to November, but there are no guidelines apart from your recording all that you can. You can do this online at:

<https://gardenbutterflysurvey.org/>

or by downloading from

[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden\\_churchyard\\_records](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden_churchyard_records)

or by requesting a form to be posted to you

contact: [garden-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:garden-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

## Fixed-route surveys of private land

e.g. at various MOD bases, on private estates and across woodland and farmland with no footpaths. These follow approximately the same path each time, and record what is seen to a fixed distance from the observer. They are not walked with a fixed frequency and usually involve three or four visits each summer by a small team. In addition to butterflies recorded, you can record whatever other groups interest you.

## Single-species studies

These surveys only count a particular life stage and therefore operate for only a few weeks each year. The life stage counted is the one that is most obvious, e.g., the egg of **Brown Hairstreak** in winter, but the adult **Silver-studded Blue** and **Wood White** in summer. Again, the idea is to count a fixed distance from the observer and know the time devoted to the search, in some cases along a fixed route. Again, there is no fixed frequency and usually involves three or four visits during the appropriate season.



Egg, Brown Hairstreak



Larva, Duke of Burgundy



Pupa, Black Hairstreak



Adult, Wood White

## Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveys (WCBS)

Although these surveys follow a fixed route and count butterflies (and day-flying moths, dragonflies and whatever you like) at a fixed distance from the observer, they are only walked between twice and four times each year, in better weather during the summer. Each walk is 2km long so takes just over 30 minutes to walk slowly. Please refer to the separate WCBS article on page 65.

## Transects

The most demanding survey if undertaken alone. You would walk a fixed route every week for 26 weeks, but as part of a team you might only walk once a month for a couple of months. Again butterflies (and day-flying moths etc.) are only counted at a fixed distance from the observer, but the length of the survey walk may be well over 2km long. The 'rules' about when it is appropriate to walk are more complicated than for the other surveys too, because although the same 'rules' apply to the WCBS these are rarely undertaken in poor weather. You can always find two days of good weather for a short WCBS walk, even in a British summer; but finding good weather every week from April to October is much harder. There is more information in the 'Butterfly Monitoring – Transects' article on page 17 in this newsletter.

All the results from the more standardised surveys go into the annual UKBMS reports, see <https://ukbms.org/> and form the basis of our own State of Butterflies reports.

Downloadable from:

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/the-state-of-britains-butterflies>

If you would like to be part of the effort to ensure that there are still butterflies and moths (bees and dragonflies etc.) to enjoy in ten years' time, please consider raising your game from occasional casual recording and help us with standardised surveys too. We can find you experienced recorders to partner while you find your feet and for surveys that need an assistant.

Please contact me about joining a team and helping with the first three types of survey:

[nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com)

and Mark Chapman about the transect surveys:

[m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com](mailto:m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com)



## Spotlight on UTB Squares (2): SP71

### A chance for our 10K Champions to... well, champion their squares

My square is SP71, which is quite varied, containing the western edge of Aylesbury and its new developments, 6 villages plus hamlets, lots of farmland which is a mixture of arable, pasture and equestrian, the Waddesdon and Eythrope estates and two A roads. My own patch is around Cuddington and along the River Thames and I survey a 1km square at Winchendon for the Wider Butterfly Countryside Survey (WCBS).

In 2021, overall the number and variety of species I saw was down on 2020, largely due to the unfavourable spring weather. **Orange-tip**, and first brood **Brimstone** and **Peacock** sightings were well down. Things picked up as June progressed and I made efforts to visit areas that I hadn't visited previously, particularly across the extensive farmland north of Waddesdon. I'm finding that quite a lot of land is not being intensively farmed, particularly when the farm has gone equestrian, which is happening a lot. I strode through acres of high grass speckled with buttercups and a number of fields near Oakley are looking more like wildflower meadows. Here, **Gatekeepers**, **Marbled Whites**, **Small** and **Large Skippers**, **Small Heaths** and **Small Whites** were frequent along with the occasional **Common** or **Holly Blue**. There seemed to be a dearth of **Small Tortoiseshells** and **Painted Ladies**. The footpaths themselves were often the best place to see butterflies, especially where hedgerows had been allowed to become scruffy. However, many footpaths are neglected and difficult to navigate.

One highlight in early July was seeing a couple of **Clouded Yellows** in my 1km square, in the wildlife strip around a huge arable field. Another was repeated sightings of **Jersey Tiger** moths close to my home in Cuddington. Later in the summer I counted a lot of **Red Admirals** and **Gatekeepers** which seemed to have a good year.



On a positive note, Waddesdon Estates farmland has been managed under Level 1 Stewardship for several years which has many benefits for wildlife. Also, land use is becoming less intensive with extensive areas close to Eythrope turning to flower meadow, and shooting ceased on the estate a few years ago, so woodlands previously used for rearing chicks is now being left alone. In addition, the estate cooperated with the River Thames Conservation Trust in creating a new wetland on its land by the River Thames which is already attracting a lot of birds and will provide great habitat for insects. And at the end of 2021, I visited another brand new wetland that has been created by Thames Water, adjacent to their large Aylesbury sewage treatment works: this will be very interesting to watch as plants grow and wildlife takes over.

Doug Kennedy



# Butterfly Monitoring - Transects



## Why is Butterfly Monitoring so important?

It is not just about butterflies! Monitoring butterfly populations is an important method for measuring changes in the environment as well as the state of habitats for biodiversity. That said, for those of us committed to the conservation of butterflies or those who just take delight in seeing butterflies in their natural habitat, monitoring is a wonderful way to see them throughout the season. Some butterflies can be seen in any month (spotting a **Brimstone** on Christmas Day is not unheard of if conditions are right!), but many species can only be seen for short periods every year (if you want to see a **Ringlet**, keep your eyes peeled during July or you will likely miss them). Monitoring is a positive way to connect you to butterflies and nature in general.

There are many ways that butterflies are monitored, from Garden Surveys to studying Churchyards or from ad-hoc sightings to Butterfly Transects. There are many other ways too, all of which are important and all of which are personally satisfying. Different methods of monitoring are complimentary and help to build a better picture of the state of play in the wild.

Within the UTB we undertake seven different types of Surveys. These allow everyone a chance to get involved, as there are some surveys requiring very little time and are suitable for absolute beginners, and others that are perhaps a little more demanding. All are wonderful opportunities to learn and enjoy making a worthwhile contribution.

## Butterfly Transects

Just one of many monitoring methods; in brief, a Transect is a fixed route established at a site where butterflies are recorded, weekly, over a number of years following some basic rules. The majority of transects are chosen by the walker and they decide which route to choose.

Butterfly Transects form the core of the UKBMS (UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) with over 2000 different Transects set up and visited since establishing the scheme (1976 onwards). New Transect sites are added annually with well over a thousand currently recorded annually. These Transect walks provide the highest quality data within the UKBMS as they are walked weekly during a 26-week period between 1st April and 30th September each year. This allows calculation of robust measurements of changes in butterfly populations for over 50 species and production of site-level trends when sufficient years' data has been collected.

**Transect Walks, Methodology**  
Transect walks are undertaken between **1st April** and **30th September** between **10.45am** and **3.45pm** (or between 10am and 5pm in perfect conditions) and only when **weather conditions are suitable for butterfly activity**.

## Getting Involved

Lots of people quite like the idea of getting involved in a Butterfly Transect, but are put off by the thought that they require a level of expertise or a massive time commitment; but nothing could be further from the truth!

Whilst some Transects are undertaken by a single surveyor, most in UTB are undertaken by a team of surveyors who work together, support one another and share experiences. So, whether you are a complete novice or an accomplished expert, there will always be a place for you on a Transect Team. For those preferring to gain more experience or brush-up on existing skills before surveying solo, being part of a team gives the chance to join a practiced Transect Walker who can show you how to tell species apart, where to spot them and so on.

A further benefit of working as a team means that you can choose a level of commitment to suit your circumstances. Some surveyors walk a Transect for an hour every week but most do much less, maybe an hour every 2 weeks or even once a month.

## Next Steps

If you would like to become involved or just find out a bit more about Transects, please contact: Mark Chapman, Transect Co-ordinator, [m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com](mailto:m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com)

We are particularly looking for help in the following areas, but will always try to find a way to get you involved wherever you live. Also, there are new opportunities arising all the time, so please get in touch.

- Abingdon/Didcot/Wallingford
- Bradfield (West of Theale)
- Mid-way between Swindon & Wantage
- Pangbourne/Theale
- Watlington
- Brill (Mid-way between Shabbington & Bicester)
- High Wycombe (South towards Bourne End, Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow)
- Thame/Milton Common
- Whitecross Green Wood
- Wildmoor Heath (Nr Crowthorne)

## Transect Walks, Methodology

- 'Walking' means maintaining the same **steady pace** throughout each section.
- Many transects are walked by a small team, walking different weeks. A single recorder recording **one** person's sightings will provide the most reliable transect data.
- If possible, stop to **scribe the numbers seen** in any section at that **section's end** (along with the percentage of the **time** the sun was shining).

**Mark Chapman, Transect Co-ordinator**  
**Butterfly Conservation, Upper Thames Branch**

Acknowledgements: Butterfly Conservation UTB, UKBMS



# Highest-priority Butterflies and Moths in the UTB Region

## Butterfly Conservation's Regional Conservation Manager's Update

*Extract from Upper Thames Branch CART [Conservation and Recording Team] Meeting, 14th March 2022*

**THANK YOU** - I will be leaving Butterfly Conservation at the end of March. I am incredibly sad to be leaving, but please be assured I will continue to be dedicated to the conservation of butterflies and moths. We have achieved so much good work in the South East in recent years, and the data highlights these positive trends. Thank you to everyone who is active in CART and to everyone actively helping butterflies and moths in the Upper Thames area. The Branch is one of the most active and engaged in the Region and it has been a pleasure to work alongside you.

**Steve Wheatley, March 2022**

## Highest Priority Butterflies and Moths

(based upon BC's Regional Action Plan 2016-2025)



### **Wood White** (Champion: Nick Board)

All site managers should be encouraged to cut/mow verges and clearings on a 2-4-year rotation, cutting a proportion every year and removing arisings. Areas will not be suitable in the first year after mowing. In Surrey, the parishioners of St Annes Church in Chiddingfold agreed in November to continue to manage their churchyard for Wood Whites.



**Duke of Burgundy** (Champions: Ched George & Nick Bowles). Should be on-the-wing next before the end of April. Over 100 habitat volunteer days were contributed in 2021. National Trust should now be recovering from the Covid-19 situation and should be able to do more habitat work next winter.



**Silver-studded Blue** (Champion: Grahame Hawker). The population remains small but stable in Berkshire. Thank you to Grahame and the team for continuing the survey work here. Grayling recording will also be important.



**Black Hairstreak** (Champion: Stuart Hodges)  
Nick and I have been in discussion with Head Office about more project work (without much progress). Perhaps the new Regional Manager can make more progress here.



**Brown Hairstreak** (Champion: Dave Wilton)  
I wrote an article about Brown Hairstreak for the BNM recorders newsletter. A report of a sighting at NT's Buscot & Coleshill Estate suggests there could be more Brown Hairstreaks to find west of Oxfordshire.



**Marsh Fritillary** (Champion: Jim Asher)  
Expect a few more sightings across the Branch area this year, as a result of the unofficial releases in the last few years.



**White-letter Hairstreak** (Champion: Peter Cuss)  
Well done to Peter and the Branch for smashing the 300 elms planted count. Many landowners and local authorities could be interested in elm planting.



**Drab Looper**  
Upper Thames achieved the best survey coverage of any Branch in 2021 and the moth was recorded in 11 Berkshire sites. Peter produced an excellent summary report. Thank you to Peter and all the volunteers who were involved. George Tordoff has produced a national summary report. **Drab Looper will be on the wing from early May.**



**Striped Lychnis**  
Excellent survey coverage again last year. Half of all the larvae found last year in the South East were in the Upper Thames area. A summary report was produced. Surveys will resume in July. The aim again will be to survey five sites across five different hectads. **Dark Mullein seed can be distributed into sparse chalky ground from April.**



### Heart Moth

Further surveys and searches in late June are encouraged for the Windsor Great Park area. I hope to get down to help with a couple of searches in 2022.



### Pale Shining Brown

No UK sightings since 2014.



### Silvery Arches

Two recorded in July at Swinley Forest by Martin Harvey, Marc Botham, Peter Cuss and myself. These were the only records from the South East in 2021. I will be looking out for Silvery Arches in the Highlands this year.



### Four-spotted (feeds on Field Bindweed)

Sharon Hearle ([shearle@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:shearle@butterfly-conservation.org)) will be happy to host an early June visit to Cambridgeshire sites in 2022.



### Sloe Carpet

Encourage people to look with a torch around extensive, old Blackthorn stands on any warm April nights. Only found in West Sussex & Surrey in 2021, but it was the coldest April for 99 years.



### Barberry Carpet

A 'Back From The Brink' project report was produced in 2021. Some Barberry was previously distributed in West Oxfordshire, so it will be interesting to continue to monitor the population here.



### Agonopterix atomella (Greenweed Flat-body)

George Tordoff produced a report on the 2021 season.

**Other priority moths in the UTB region:** Scarce Burnished Brass, Goat Moth (11 recorded at Windsor Great Park in 2021), Chalk Carpet, Forester.

# Garden Butterfly Survey 2021

**Ninety-nine gardens** across the UTB region took part in the Garden Butterfly Survey last year, which compares with 134 in 2020 and 75 in 2019. The big increase in 2020 was no doubt a result of the COVID-19 restrictions making it easier to record butterflies in one's garden than in the wider countryside. The fact that fewer gardens took part last year also fed through to fewer sightings, with just under 7,000 in 2021 compared with around 11,000 in 2020.

A total of 33 species were recorded last year, three less than in the previous year, the difference being accounted for by six species which dropped out of the list - **Brown Hairstreak, Green Hairstreak, Clouded Yellow, Grizzled Skipper, Swallowtail** and **White Admiral**, offset by three that were added - **Marsh Fritillary, Silver-spotted Skipper** and **Wall**, each with a single record. The average number of species recorded per garden was 11, the same as in 2020, whilst the maximum was 25.



In 2021 it was **Small White** which was recorded from the greatest number of gardens, followed in order by **Brimstone, Peacock, Red Admiral, Large White** and **Holly Blue** - see table overleaf. Apart from the order, the only change in the top ten compared with 2020 was that **Meadow Brown** moved back in and **Small Tortoiseshell** moved out, but, as noted last year – apart from some minor changes highlighted in yellow – the top ten species have remained essentially the same over the last ten years. In fact, only **Small White, Brimstone, Peacock**, and **Red Admiral** have ever occupied the top spot over these ten years, so one might conclude that they are perhaps the most widespread of our garden butterflies.

The first species to be recorded in the year was **Red Admiral** on January 10th, with other January species being **Peacock** on the 16th, and **Brimstone** on the 22nd. The first **Small Tortoiseshell** put in an appearance on February 17th, but **Orange-tip** didn't show until exactly a month later. The last **Red Admiral** was reported on November 17th, with a **Brimstone** the next day, and the final record of the year was a **Comma** seen on December 9th.

A rather broad-brush approach is necessary when making comparisons between the number of sightings of individual species, because of the lack of consistency in sample size, garden type and level of effort from year to year. That said, there do appear to have been some significant differences in numbers for some species compared with the previous year.

As noted, **Small White** was seen in the largest number of gardens, and it was also the most numerous species, with a count of just under 1000; nevertheless this number was much lower than in 2020, even when compared on a pro-rata basis. **Large White** numbers too were down on the previous year, and by about the same amount, but **Green-veined White** had a much worse year than the other two whites, with a total count of just 228, 40% of the 2020 level.

## Species which have been recorded every year since 2011, and rank order of the number of gardens reporting them

Species	2021	2020	2019	2017	2016	2015	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Small White	1	5	1	6	4	10	5	1	3	7	5
Brimstone	2	2	3	4	5	1	8	3	2	1	2
Peacock	3	1	5	9	9	5	1	5	1	3	7
Red Admiral	4	7	2	1	1	8	2	2	10	2	1
Large White	5	6	12	7	6	6	6	12	4	5	6
Holly Blue	6	3	6	11	2	2	14	6	9	8	3
Orange-tip	7	4	4	3	3	7	4	4	6	4	4
Gatekeeper	8	9	7	10	7	3	11	7	11	11	10
Comma	9	8	10	2	11	11	10	10	8	6	8
Meadow Brown	10	11	9	8	10	9	7	9	7	9	12
Small Tortoiseshell	11	10	8	5	8	4	3	8	5	10	11
Green-veined White	12	13	14	13	13	13	12	14	12	13	13
Painted Lady	13	18	11	15	14	15	15	11	16	19	18
Speckled Wood	14	12	13	12	12	12	9	13	13	12	9
Ringlet	15	14	15	14	15	14	13	15	14	14	14
Common Blue	16	15	16	16	16	16	16	16	15	16	15
Marbled White	17	16	17	17	17	19	18	17	18	18	17
Large Skipper	18	17	19	19	19	18	20	19	20	15	16
Small Copper	19	20	18	20	20	20	19	18	19	20	19
Small Skipper	20	19	20	18	18	17	17	20	17	17	20
Brown Argus	21	23	22	22	23	23	23	22	23	23	22
Silver-washed Fritillary	22	22	23	21	21	21	21	23	21	22	23
Small Heath	23	21	21	23	24	24	24	21	22	21	21
Essex Skipper	24	24	24	24	22	22	22	24	24	24	24

On the other hand, **Red Admiral** seems to have fared well at nearly 90% of the 2020 total, despite the lower number of gardens participating, and **Painted Lady** (image right) did a lot better too, though nothing like as well as in 2019. But **Small Tortoiseshell** numbers were disappointing and lower even than the 2019 count, which came from fewer gardens! Another species with strongly lower numbers was **Holly Blue**, down at less than half its 2020 level, with the split between first and second flight periods being roughly  $\frac{2}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$ .



Although **Small Copper** is only ever recorded in fairly small numbers, it was good to see a higher count (69) in 2021 than 2020, though it was still a long way below the 120 recorded in 2019. **Small Skipper** and **Essex Skipper** are a pair of species that also don't feature very prominently in the garden count, but for the previous couple of years, **Small Skipper** had outnumbered **Essex Skipper** by a factor of approximately two to one. In 2021, however, numbers were almost equal, brought about by a large drop in the former and a slight increase in the latter. Finally, **Small Heath**, having had a much better year in 2020, seems to have had a reversal of fortunes, with a count of just 37 in 2021, a third of the previous year's total.

As noted previously there do not appear to be any really significant long-term trends. The 'top ten' species (in terms of the largest number of gardens recording them) have remained largely constant. And whilst individual species counts have gone up and down, with some species doing better in some years and worse in others, it is not really possible to see any clear patterns.

However, gardens are certainly an important habitat for many of our commoner species of butterfly, and monitoring their fortunes through surveys like this makes an essential contribution to our overall knowledge of their populations and their distribution. Indeed Butterfly Conservation has decided to increase the emphasis on garden recording, and to this end has secured funding to revamp the Garden Butterfly Survey, and the website.

The hope is that many of those people who contributed to the Big Butterfly Count can be encouraged to record in their gardens throughout the year. From a purely parochial perspective though, it would be good to see UTB-participant numbers get back to 2020 levels and beyond...so please, if you don't already do so, get recording!

Finally, as always, **a big thank you to everyone** who counted their garden butterflies last year and who supplied data by whatever route; thanks to Chris Woodrow for coordinating both this and the Churchyard surveys and for entering all the paper records into spreadsheets; and thanks to Jim Asher for consolidating and summarising the data from a wide variety of sources so that I could write this report.

**Phil Tizzard**





# Black Park

## 26 Species of Butterfly - well worth a visit!

Black Park – occupying over 500 acres a couple of miles north-east of Slough on the Berks/Bucks border – is one of three designated Country Parks owned and managed by Buckinghamshire Council.

The other Country Parks are Langley Park (just the other side of the A412 Uxbridge Road, that separates Black and Langley Parks), and Denham Park, a few miles away (at the M25/A40/A412 junction).



Black Park really does have something for everyone, including walks and trails, open space, a large lake, kids' activities, organised runs, ongoing projects and initiatives (including ones to preserve and enhance the landscape for both people and wildlife), and commendable facilities. It's well worth a visit.

Its look and feel changes at almost every turn (and from season to season), due mainly to its flora that includes swathes of both deciduous and coniferous woodland, and heathland.

Fellow UTB member Wendy Wilson and I have been recording butterflies in the three Parks over the years, and – since 2007 – have identified 26 species in Black Park. Some notable residents are **Purple Emperor**, **White Admiral**, **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **Purple Hairstreak**. In both 2019 and 2020, I recorded the first **Purple Emperor** of the year in our region here in Black Park.

I would recommend visiting Black Park on a weekday (especially during the warmer months), as it can (invariably does) get very busy on weekends, when the sizeable car park (for which there is a charge) often fills to capacity. Also, as it has a boundary with Pinewood Studios, Black Park is often used as a location for filming, leading sometimes to the temporary closures of paths and/or parcels of woodland – and, occasionally, even parts of the lake and its shoreline!

The Park Map reproduced on the next page is published by courtesy of Buckinghamshire Council, and cannot be reproduced without permission.



Black Park is generally quite flat, thus providing an opportunity for persons with limited mobility to be able to enjoy its natural beauty. However, during times of heavy rainfall, some of the paths can become quite tricky to navigate – so appropriate footwear is highly recommended.

Butterflies can be found throughout the Park, depending on the season – but invariably not in large numbers. The northern part of the Park is likely to be the most productive overall, and although I have recorded **Purple Emperor** at 3 different locations in the Park in recent years, my first-of-the-season sightings have all been at or around the same ‘master tree’ in the very north (marked as **TQ0139584815** on the map above), just to the east of Strawberry Wood.



At the same location, I spotted and managed to photograph the attractive *valezina* variation of the (female) Silver-washed Fritillary (left). A great find! The other 2 sightings of Purple Emperor were at **TQ0150782748** and **TQ0088483406** (both also marked on the map).

As I am continuing to maintain butterfly sightings for the Parks, I'd appreciate your forwarding to me (via [newsletter-editor@upperthames.org.uk](mailto:newsletter-editor@upperthames.org.uk)) any **confirmed sightings** that you make in Black Park (indeed, in any of the three Parks) in 2022 – but please do **also** submit your records ‘officially’ in your usual manner (as your data will only be used by me to maintain my ongoing Parks records).

Species ‘of concern’ (in that neither Wendy nor I have recorded them in the past few years in Black Park) are **Small White, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper** and **Small Tortoiseshell** - so sightings of any of these would be most welcome.

I mentioned Langley Park and Denham Park earlier, and both of these are also well worth a visit. In the case of Langley Park: if you don't mind crossing the busy A412 dual-carriageway, you could pop over there whilst at Black Park. In Langley Park we've recorded 28 species since 2007, and, in Denham Park, 24 species over the same period. In the latter, I recorded **Silver-washed Fritillary** for the first time in 2021: at Denham Deep Lock (the deepest lock on the Grand Union Canal, with an 11' drop), which skirts the Park.

Further details on all the Buckinghamshire Country Parks can be found at <https://countryparks.buckscc.gov.uk/>

I am leading a walk in Black Park on Friday 8th July (see the Guided Walks article for further details).



**Derek Haynes**

# mothnight 19th-21st May 2022

**mothnight is the new version of National Moth Night.** Somewhat misnamed as 'mothnight'... because the event has both many nights and so-called 'trap reveals' during the following day, when experienced guides show the previous night's catch to Butterfly Conservation members (and perhaps the public).

There is more information about the nationwide event at <https://www.mothnight.info/> including species to look out for - revealed in all their glorious colourful detail. In our area UTB members are invited along to the night-time trapping and the following day's trap reveal. Two events are already fixed:

In **BERKSHIRE**, mothnight is **SATURDAY 21ST MAY** from 8pm at Bowdown Woods, next to Greenham Common. Meet at Bomb Site car park and enter the reserve from there to set up <http://w3w.co/ripe.glow.chip>. Contact Roger Stace for more information or if you wish to bring a trap on **07740 433002**. Morning opening of traps to enjoy the moths.

**SUNDAY 22ND MAY** 9am to 11am. Park at Bomb Site car park. The traps and moths will be gathered about 100m into the reserve <http://w3w.co/violin.intervals.claim>. This will be a joint National Moth Night event between BBOWT, Berkshire Moth Group and Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation.

In **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**, mothnight is trapping at College Lake, Bulbourne on **SATURDAY 21ST MAY**. We invite UTB members with traps to join us for setting up from 8.30pm, with the traps left overnight. Those offering help the following morning – with checking the traps and showing the moths to the public – should arrive at 9am on **SUNDAY 22ND**.

The trap reveal to UTB members and the public is at 10.30am until 12 noon on **SUNDAY 22ND MAY**. Parking for both days at OS ref SP 9352 1388, postcode HP23 5QG; please note that at College Lake you will be asked to donate to BBOWT to park a car on the Sunday morning. If you are bringing a trap and/or offering help on the Sunday morning, please contact Neil Fletcher on **07802 494828**, email: [neilmoths@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:neilmoths@hotmail.co.uk)

In **OXFORDSHIRE**, mothnight details are still to be confirmed, so please visit <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/events> shortly ahead of 19th May.

The **Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth** has recently been discovered breeding at an MOD site in Oxfordshire, and is one of the target species for survey on **mothnight**. To be part of the survey team to see this moth, please refer to the article 'Species Surveys – Join the Teams!' in this newsletter.



© Richard Fox

# Churchyard Survey 2021

Depending on how they are managed, churchyards can be an important habitat for butterflies - but one which might easily be overlooked. The churchyard survey aims to encourage surveyors to check their local churchyards and record what they find. It is hoped too that some will feed back their findings to the vicar or churchwardens in the hope of encouraging interest and perhaps leading to more butterfly-friendly management.

Twenty-three churchyards, of which six were new, were surveyed in 2021. They were covered by sixteen surveyors, five of whom were new to the survey last year. A total of 538 individual butterflies of 24 species were counted, with **Grizzled Skipper** being new to the survey. Not surprisingly though, given the poor weather this year, this total was only around half the 1028 recorded in 2020. Again, no doubt influenced by the weather, the average number of species per churchyard was only six, compared with ten the previous year. The maximum number of species recorded in any churchyard was down too, with 15 at St. John's, Stone being the top score.

The five most widely recorded species last year were **Small White** ('obliging' mating pair pictured), **Meadow Brown**, **Large White**, **Holly Blue** and **Gatekeeper** - the same on average as for the previous 12 years.



© David Hastings 4th April '21

The top six species in terms of numbers were the same as for 2019 & 2020, namely **Meadow Brown**, **Gatekeeper**, **Small White**, **Marbled White**, **Ringlet** and **Large White**. Together they accounted for three-quarters of the total, virtually the same as for the preceding two years. However, despite the much lower overall total count, more **Meadow Browns** and **Gatekeepers** were seen than in 2020. In fact the **Meadow Brown** count was almost double that year's total!

Conversely, only four **Brimstones** were recorded in the whole season, compared with 33 the year before. Presumably the cold weather in April was an influencing factor here. **Red Admiral** and **Peacock** too had proportionately much lower counts than the previous year, and only a single **Comma** was recorded, compared with 13 the year before. Although **Small Copper** appears to have done rather badly, it has never had a strong showing in recent times, so not much significance can be attached to that result.

The table below lists the percentage of churchyards recording each species, ranked in order of the average percentage over the twelve years 2009-2020.

YEAR	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
<b>No. of sites</b>	23	21	24	28	33	67	59	69	68	50	54	45	36
<b>Small White</b>	83	95	100	78	75	57	68	65	87	60	74	76	75
Meadow Brown	74	90	92	71	72	57	63	78	81	66	56	56	78
Large White	61	90	67	64	54	39	58	45	81	32	67	60	89
Holly Blue	43	62	79	61	45	49	51	17	34	32	67	33	33
Speckled Wood	39	24	50	43	57	33	44	62	54	26	46	47	72
Gatekeeper	43	62	54	43	51	22	47	58	54	42	39	36	36
Green-veined White	39	76	54	64	24	27	41	46	35	28	46	42	58
Ringlet	39	67	54	50	39	27	42	42	44	50	28	40	53
Orange-tip	30	29	42	68	57	42	37	39	37	32	52	33	42
Red Admiral	22	52	46	29	36	28	27	43	22	36	52	36	28
Brimstone	17	38	29	43	33	31	39	42	34	22	30	29	33
Small Tortoiseshell	22	33	25	25	30	27	41	61	47	14	22	29	44
Peacock	17	48	29	25	15	24	41	42	43	12	19	24	44
Comma	4	33	17	29	24	10	24	42	40	22	20	27	44
Common Blue	35	24	25	21	24	7	20	20	22	4	22	36	31
Marbled White	22	33	42	21	18	13	19	16	16	10	13	13	8
Small Skipper	17	29	21	17	9	10	17	23	18	10	6	9	22
Small Copper	4	14	8	11	9	1	12	12	13	12	19	18	17
Large Skipper	9	19	8	11	6	9	14	12	15	6	9	16	14
Painted Lady	4	0	25	7	9	6	2	4	4	2	0	9	56
Brown Argus	4	10	13	18	9	1	10	6	4	2	17	2	8
Essex Skipper	4	19	13	11	6	4	14	12	4	2	4	2	0
Small Heath	4	29	4	0	6	1	5	3	4	4	0	2	0

100 – 70%	69 – 50%	49 – 30%
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To end on a more positive note, **Common Blue** seems to have had a good year, with a total of 35 counted in eight churchyards, compared with 21 in just five churchyards in 2020. A species also faring better than the year before was **Speckled Wood**, with double the number recorded this year than last; but this must be set against the fact that in 2020 the species reportedly had "...its worst year in the Big Butterfly Count since the start of the project".

Once again it was very encouraging to see new observers and new churchyards added last year, though unfortunately a few were not covered, so the overall total remained roughly flat.

The photo (above) is of St John's, Stone, Bucks - a 'top performer', where the grass is left uncut for the benefit of butterflies. [© Michael Pitt-Payne]

My thanks to all those who contributed their time, effort and data to the survey in 2021, and also to Chris Woodrow who transcribed all of the paper inputs into Excel spreadsheets. As usual, all inputs will be consolidated and sent on for inclusion in the UTB region dataset, so helping to increase our knowledge of the number and distribution of species in the region.



**Phil Tizzard**

## URGENTLY WANTED: (yet more!) Churchyard Butterfly Recorders



I am very grateful to those members who have responded to my appeal in the last issue of *Hairstreak* to volunteer to survey their local churchyard for butterflies this summer.

However, we need more please! With a branch membership in excess of 1500 we should be able to cover at least half the churchyards in our region. At present 55 churchyards are surveyed in our region including those to be covered by the new volunteers.

So if you can spare just 30 minutes in each of the 4 months of May to August, perhaps in the course of a regular walk, in order to record the butterflies you see in a nearby churchyard, do please contact me at [lepidoptera45@btinternet.com](mailto:lepidoptera45@btinternet.com) in the first instance, indicating which churchyard you could survey, so I can check whether or not it is already covered by one of our volunteers.

Many thanks,  
**Chris Woodrow, Surveys Co-ordinator**



## ALSO WANTED!

We're always on the lookout for photos suitable for the front cover of *Hairstreak*. But because of the top banner and lower logos on the page, the photo needs to be in portrait format (**unlike** that below), with space both top and bottom of the main subject.

Please send any prospective image(s) to the editor at:

[newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)



Photo is of Small Coppers (at a party, perhaps!)



## A Hard Reign

The Purple Emperor's survival, as for many other British butterflies, depends on a complex and delicate balancing act that includes the welfare of its habitat and the vagaries of the British weather. Climate change, which has become an increasingly prominent subject in the last two decades, has an impact on both habitat and the British weather. Loss of habitat by direct human intervention is also a threat to the Purple Emperor.



Butterflies have been around for a very long time – far longer than humans. Rocks dating from 200 million years ago, found in Germany, contain the earliest fossil records of butterflies. Since then the earth's climate has fluctuated widely. About 90 million years ago the climate was much warmer than it is today. There was no ice on the planet and there were even tropical rain forests in the polar regions, near what is modern-day Australia. There have also been devastating ice ages, the last one ending about 12,000 years ago when the polar ice caps had covered much of Britain and Northern Europe. Butterflies survive to this day despite these extremes in climate. No doubt some species will have become extinct, and new ones will have evolved over time.

Fast-forward to the present day. The current rate of climate change is unprecedented and the world is heating up by about 0.2 degrees C per decade. By the end of this century the global temperature, predicted by various computer models, is estimated to be about 1.5 to 2 degrees higher than it is today. The problem is not variation in climate per se, but that the current rate of change is so high that the process of species evolution cannot keep pace and that many varieties of plants, animals and insects are threatened with extinction as a consequence. The local impact of climate change in Britain is that our winters are becoming milder and the summers hotter and wetter. Another effect of Earth's rising temperature is that extreme weather events, such as prolonged heavy rainfall, extended periods of drought and unseasonal storms, seem to be occurring with more frequency and intensity.

The Purple Emperor, like most British butterflies, has very particular habitat requirements to enable it to successfully breed and thrive. The main larval food plant is Sallow, famous for its display of 'pussy willow' in the spring. The female Purple Emperor is particular about where she lays her eggs. Too much sun on the Sallow leaves and

the emerging young caterpillars are in danger of overheating and dehydrating; too little and the foliage is not rich enough to provide an adequate food supply. Sallows prefer growing in moist soil, so prolonged periods of drought can impact the quality and quantity of the leaves on which the caterpillars feed.

Like many other British butterflies, the Purple Emperor overwinters as a larva, hibernating for about five months in sheltered spots, often in the forks between branches of the Sallow.



Purple Emperor larva (© Gillian Thompson/Butterfly Conservation)

Milder and wetter winters are causing hibernating caterpillars to stir, particularly on warm nights, and, in some cases, they wander about in a fruitless search for food. This activity uses up vital supplies of stored energy on which the caterpillar is relying to survive the winter. This adds to the mortality rate of overwintering caterpillars which is high anyway (due to predation by birds).

An extreme weather event in the form of an uncharacteristically violent summer storm at the end of June 2020 is thought to have been the reason why that year was particularly poor for Purple Emperor sightings in the Upper Thames region.

The flight season seemed to be progressing normally up to the last weekend in June, when the storm hit. Thereafter, sightings of adult insects were in decline and the numbers were down 42% on the previous year.

This was one of the worst years on record in the Upper Thames Region since Purple Emperor sightings were recorded in reports dating from 2004. These two days of unseasonal stormy weather battered the roosting butterflies resting overnight in the trees: particularly the males, which tend to spend the night higher in the woodland canopy than the females do.

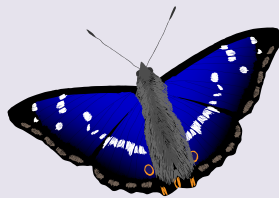
Pictured right is a Purple Emperor which did seem (just!) to survive the effects of the strong winds at the beginning of July 2020.



(Black Park, Bucks, 5th July 2020, Photo © Chris Lamsdell)

Direct man-made destruction of habitat is also threatening the Purple Emperor. The controversial route of HS2 has taken the rail line through some of the butterfly's strongholds, including Finemere Wood, a Berks Bucks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust reserve a few miles north-west of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. Destruction of woodland that has taken centuries to evolve cannot simply be reversed by planting some new trees in the hope that this will somehow compensate for the loss of a unique ecosystem. Plants, fungi, insects and animals develop complex and interdependent relationships which are built over time periods spanning multiple generations. To all intents and purposes, sections of this woodland will be lost forever.

However, not all is doom and gloom. The Covid-19 lockdown heightened the value of preserving natural landscapes for people to escape to in order to find solace and calm from the stresses and strains of everyday living, and our green spaces are treasured as never before. Much scientific research is being carried out by academic institutions and conservation groups on how to preserve habitats for butterflies, including the Purple Emperor. The key is for conservationists and would-be developers to work together so that environmentally-friendly solutions can be found to satisfy everyone – so that we can keep looking forward to those heady days in high summer when the Purple Emperor soars again in the treetops.



**Martin Robinson**

# Guided Walks - May to August



## Thinking of attending a guided walk?



**Our guided walks are aimed at everyone**, from complete beginners to experts. They can be enjoyed by anyone: young or old, children (with adult supervision), photographers, first-time participants, etc. **You are all welcome.** **If the weather looks doubtful for any walk, please check with the leader before attending.**

We have put together an extensive programme of guided walks, to allow you to see some of our beautiful butterflies. We have arranged walks across our three counties and covering all of our regular butterflies and some of our day-flying moths. However, there is **no guarantee** of seeing a particular species. A butterfly field guide and a pair of binoculars may well help. **Enjoy.**

[Map View](#)

[Calendar View](#)

Please check our website for further details and for any amendments/postponements/cancellations  
[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/field\\_meetings](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/field_meetings)



### Saturday 21st May at 10.30am Pitstone Quarry, Bucks

Spring butterflies: **Small Blue** and **Dingy Skipper**;  
and day-flying moths such as **Burnet Companion**.

[Further details](#)



### Sunday 22nd May at 10.30am Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks

A walk to see a variety of spring butterflies including  
an opportunity to see **Duke of Burgundy**.

[Further details](#)



### Sunday 22nd May at 11.00am Aston Upthorpe Downs, Oxon

Target species: spring butterflies including **Dingy**  
and **Grizzled Skippers** and **Green Hairstreak**.

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 26th May at 10.30am**  
**Yoesden Bank, Bucks**

Target Species: **Adonis Blue** and other spring chalk downland species.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 28th May at 10.30am**  
**Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks**

Target Species: **Adonis Blue** and other spring species.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 28th May at 2.00pm**  
**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

A field trip to try to find **Black Hairstreak Pupae**.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 29th May at 10.00am**  
**Hazelborough Forest, Northants**

Target species: **Wood White** and variety of other woodland butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 9th June at 10.30am**  
**Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, Bucks**

**Common Blue** and **Speckled Wood** and other summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 11th June at 11.00am**  
**Bradenham, Bucks**

Target species: **Small Blue** along with other early summer butterflies.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 12th June at 10.00am**  
**Herwin's Wood, Quainton, Bucks**

Target species: **Black Hairstreak** along with other woodland butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Wednesday Evenings 15th, 22nd & 29th June at 7.00pm and 6th & 13th July at 6.30pm**

**East Hagbourne, Oxon**

Target Species: **Marbled White**, **Small Blue** and other summer butterflies.

**EVENING WALKS**

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 18th June at 10.30am**

**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

Our **Black Hairstreak** Champion leads a walk to see this butterfly.

**BOOKING REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 18th June at 11.00am**

**Silchester Common, Hants**

A walk to see heathland species - this is a good site for the **Silver-studded Blue**.

[Further details](#)



*Please express an interest early, so we can see if we get enough people to make it viable. There would be a cost involved.*

**Sunday 19th June at 8.30am**

**Strawberry Banks & Daneway Banks, Glos**

An 'out of county' minibus trip, to see **Marsh Fritillary** and **Large Blue**. Could this be the start of an annual 'foray' to neighbouring counties?



[Further details](#)



**Wednesday 22nd June at 10.00am**

**Warburg Nature Reserve, Oxon**

*A joint walk with the local RSPB members group. A variety of early summer butterflies might include the **Purple Hairstreak**.*

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 25th June at 10.30am**

**Holtspur Bottom BC Reserve, Bucks**

We hope to see the **Small Blue** as well as most of the common summer species.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 26th June at 10.30am**

**Hackpen Hill, Oxon**

A walk in search of various butterflies (including **Dark Green Fritillary**) and day-flying moths.

[Further details](#)



**Friday 1st July at 10.30am**  
**Butler's Hangings SSSI, Bucks**

Summer butterflies including possibly **Marbled White** and hopefully **Dark Green Fritillary**.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 3rd July at 10.00am**  
**Windsor Heath, Berks**

Our target species will be **Silver-studded Blue** and other summer butterfly species.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Tuesday 5th July at 2.00pm**  
**Maidenhead Thicket, Berks**

Target species: **White-letter Hairstreak** and a good selection of woodland butterflies.

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 7th July at 9.30am**  
**Bernwood Forest, Bucks/Oxon**

Summer butterflies, the main attraction being the **Purple Emperor**.

[Further details](#)



**Friday 8th July at 10.30am**  
**Black Park Country Park, Slough, Bucks**

Summer butterflies including **Purple Hairstreak**, **Silver-washed Fritillary**, **White Admiral** and even **Purple Emperor**.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 9th July at 10.30am**  
**Stonesfield Common, Oxon**

A wide variety of summer butterflies and other wildlife.

[Further details](#)



**Tuesday 12th July at 11.00am**  
**Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks**

A variety of common summer butterflies, including **Dark Green Fritillary**.

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 14th July at 10.30am**

**Honeydale Farm, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxon**

A **Wychwood Forest Trust Walk** (*UTB invited*).  
iRecord Butterflies will also be demonstrated.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 14th July at 11.00am**

**Homefield Wood, Bucks**

A joint walk with **Wycombe Wildlife Group**: butterflies may include **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **White Admiral**.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 17th July at 11.30am**

**Bernwood Forest, Bucks/Oxon**

Summer butterflies, the main attraction being the **Purple Emperor**.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 23rd July at 10.00am**

**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

Target species: **White-letter Hairstreak** and a range of other summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 31st July at 10.30am**

**Linford Lakes NR, Milton Keynes, Bucks**

**Common Blue, Skippers** and other summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 4th August at 11.00am**

**Greenham Common, Berks**

Lots of butterfly species to see but our main target is the **Grayling**.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 6th August at 10.30am**

**Grangelands & Kimble Rifle Range, Bucks**

Summer butterflies including **Chalk Hill Blue** and **Silver-spotted Skipper** and day-flying moths.

[Further details](#)





**Sunday 7th August at 10.00am**

**Rushbed Woods and Lapland Farm Meadows, Bucks**

Target species: **Brown Hairstreak** and other summer butterfly species.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 13th August at 10.30am**

**Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks**

Target species: **Adonis Blue** and other other grassland butterflies.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 14th August at 10.00am**

**Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon**

Target species: **Silver-spotted Skipper** and other chalk downland species.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 21st August at 10.30am**

**Buckler's Forest, Crowthorne, Berks**

Target species: **Grayling** and other neutral and acid grassland species.

[Further details](#)

**Peter Philip  
Field Organiser**

*A butterfly lights beside us, like a sunbeam...  
and for a brief moment its glory  
and beauty belong to our world...  
but then it flies on again, and although  
we wish it could have stayed,  
we are so thankful to have seen it at all.*

*Author unknown*

# We Choose Hope

## Butterfly Conservation's Saving Butterflies & Moths Strategy 2021-2026

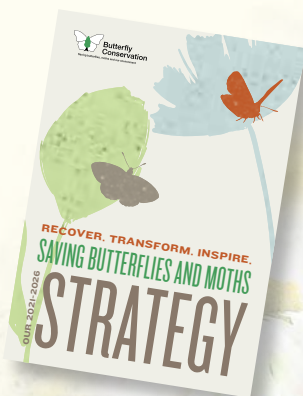
Nature is in crisis in the UK. We are facing unprecedented loss thanks to both the climate crisis and a frightening crash in biodiversity. As many of you will know, since 1976, 76% of butterflies have declined in abundance or distribution while our larger moths have declined by 33% since 1968. We live in a world where many people are amazed to see butterflies and moths as they become increasingly uncommon. This is an untenable situation. Particularly as we know it doesn't have to be this way.

So, we are choosing another way. We choose hope and positive action to create a world where butterflies, moths and our environment thrive. We choose to fight for what we believe in. To do this Butterfly Conservation has just created the most ambitious plan of action (**Saving Butterflies and Moths**) we have ever produced in our 53-year history.

Our plan enables key activities which will allow us to recover populations of butterflies and moths across the UK. It will also allow us to expand our outreach further and connect more people to nature in new ways. We will work even more closely with other conservation organisations, government and landowners together to fight for our wildlife. We will also act strategically to tackle threats to species and manage land sustainably all across the UK.

We will recover, transform and inspire to save our butterflies and moths.

So, we actively choose a positive future, where land use is more sustainable, where threatened species are recovering and where butterflies and moths thrive alongside people. **Saving Butterflies and Moths** provides a pathway to that future. With our bold new approach and ambitious plans, we know that we can make a radical difference for butterflies, moths and the natural world we all love.



***“Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. The twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss are pushing much of the natural world to the brink – including many of our most treasured species. In the UK, the majority of our butterfly and moth species are in worrying decline.”***

**Chris Packham, Vice-President of Butterfly Conservation**



# Upper Thames Moth Atlas

Following a considerable amount of work behind the scenes over the past six months, we are now very pleased to announce that the on-line Moth Atlas covering Bucks, Berks and Oxon is available to view at <https://www.upperthamesmoths.co.uk>

**Please take a look!** Below is a snapshot of the Home Page:

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Upper Thames Moths website. The header features the site name 'UpperThamesMoths.co.uk' and a search bar. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, Routes, Photos, Gallery, Submit, News, Journals, Info, Updates, and Login. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Left Column:** A large image of a moth on a leaf, captioned 'Cabbage Moth - Photo © Dave Wilson'. Below it are 'Latest sections' and 'Show all latest photos' with a grid of smaller moth photos. A section titled 'We need your photos' encourages users to upload photos of moths found in the region. Another section titled 'We need your records' asks for records of moths seen in the region.
- Center Column:** A message stating 'This site is under development and macro-moths only are included at the moment, with micro-moths to follow at a later date.' Below this is the 'Butterfly Conservation' logo and a 'Moths Board' section for 'Bucks Records' (Summer: 2nd April 2022). An 'Annual Statistics' table is shown below.
- Right Column:** An 'Events Calendar' for the month of July. Below it is a 'Records' section showing '1,883,187 records', '957 photos', and '254,267 VOT2 records'. It also mentions 'Powered by NOLA™' and '12 month membership'.

At the bottom, there is a 'Facebook Group' link and a disclaimer: 'Disclaimer: We try to keep this web site accurate. However some information may be incorrect. Data & Privacy Policy / Contact Policy / Terms & Conditions / Privacy Policy / Photo Copyright / Photography'.

Our grateful thanks go to Jim Wheeler for creating the site and to our own Branch for funding those initial set-up costs. We also thank Les Evans-Hill of the National Moth Recording Scheme at BC for cleaning up the data and, of course, all our local recorders past and present who have provided the underlying records which generate the species maps.

Please be aware that the Atlas is still very much a work in progress and for now it covers only the macro-moths (our larger species), but all the basics of the site are now in place so we thought it was time to “go public”. The micro-moths will eventually be added, and work on tidying up their data should start this coming winter.

We would like as many people as possible to sign up to the annual “Golden Cinnabar” membership with a donation (£10-£20 suggested, more if you can afford it!) which will go towards the annual running costs of the website. Membership allows you to view the individual county maps and see data down to the 1km-square level.

We also need more photos. There are about 40 moths, some of them long-since extinct in our area, which don't as yet have an image to accompany the species account - and these are a particular priority. We would also like to add to (and in some cases replace) the images already present. Whilst we don't want to be inundated with pictures of really common species which vary very little, if you do have good, clear, well-exposed images of any of the described species which you think add to what is already available, perhaps by showing different views or variation in markings, please consider uploading them to the site for consideration.

When going through the photo upload process you'll see that there is a box for “Brief Comments” where we'd like you to add where/when the image was taken. The pictures go into a waiting room to be checked by one of the Administrators and those selected will appear on the site with due credit. Whilst we'd particularly like images taken in our three counties, we recognize that this isn't always possible and we will in fact welcome pictures from absolutely anywhere - providing they're good enough.

Contributions are very welcome from anyone who uses the site, whether you are an Upper Thames recorder or not. Please keep to the macro species for now and we'll let you know when we want to start thinking about illustrating the micro species.

**Martin Harvey** (County Moth Recorder for VC22 Berkshire)

Email: [cmr-berks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:cmr-berks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

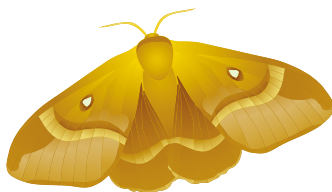
**Martin Townsend** (County Moth Recorder for VC23 Oxfordshire)

Email: [cmr-oxon@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:cmr-oxon@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

**Martin Albertini** (County Moth Recorder for VC24 Buckinghamshire)

Email: [cmr-bucks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:cmr-bucks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

**Dave Wilton**



# On the trail of one of our more exclusive butterflies

There are, I'm sure, many butterfly enthusiasts who are still waiting to see their first **White-letter Hairstreak**. In part this is because its arboreal nature means it tends to be very overlooked. It isn't a common species, but that said, there are a number of sites in the Upper Thames region, and with a little patience it can be found.



The White-letter Hairstreak lives in colonies on mature elms, and the first thing to do is locate one of these trees. If you email me ([pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)) I can send you a list of recent sightings with grid references that should help with finding a colony, hopefully reasonably close to where you live.

Once the tree has been found it is a matter of standing patiently and looking up into the canopy during the flight season - but do remember your binoculars! The adults usually emerge from about mid-June. What you will see is the males sparring with each other, usually two or three butterflies looking fairly small and dark when silhouetted against the sky, twisting and turning in aerial dog fights often rising some distance above the tree. They will occasionally come down to feed, so remember to carefully scan any nectar sources at ground level too. You will have to pick a warm sunny day; they tend not to move if it is cloudy.

This species can also be searched for as a larvae. When the seeds are on the elm tree, in April, the larvae will be feeding on these. Sometimes they will give themselves away by leaving a tell-tale hole in the seed and, if the seeds are gently parted, the caterpillar can be seen.

Later, in early May, the larvae will have moved onto feeding on the leaves and this is the best time to look for them. Look first for feeding damage. Most often the leaf will have semi-circular damage on each side, leaving a 'diamond' shape on the end.

If you spot this, look closer and the larva may well be there: but it is well camouflaged. Please don't be tempted to take them home. I know many people enjoy rearing from larvae they find, but do bear in mind this is a scarce and priority species.

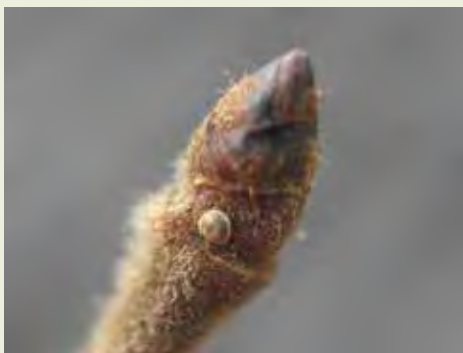
White-letter Hairstreak overwinters as an egg. It is possible to find these once the leaves have fallen. The exact place the egg is laid varies, but it is most often at the base of a leaf or flower bud. A magnifying glass will help, and the egg appears as a small grey 'flying saucer' shape.

The pupa is the hardest stage to find. If you find a final instar larva you can track its progress. It changes to a dark brown colour as it gets close to pupation.

Usually they then disappear and pupate elsewhere, but occasionally they pupate where they are.

**Peter Cuss**  
**(White-letter Hairstreak Champion)**

All images © Peter Cuss



# UTB Species Surveys: Join the Teams!

The UTB runs a number of surveys across land that has limited access. If you wish to know more about the teams surveying these areas, because you think you might like to join them, please get in touch with [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com)

## **Arcott MOD, near Bicester, Oxfordshire**

Survey teams admitted after security clearance

## **Ashbury and Ashdown, near Faringdon, Oxfordshire**

Private farmland and National Trust land

## **Bradenham, near Saunderton, Buckinghamshire**

National Trust land

## **Ditchley Estate, near Charlbury, Oxfordshire**

Private estate with limited access

## **Farmoor reservoir, near Botley, Oxfordshire**

Thames Water owned site with a request for regular surveys of the adjacent meadows and an opportunity to set up moth trapping sessions

## **Green Farm and Hughenden, near High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire**

National Trust land with limited public access

## **Hall Farm, near Dagnall, Buckinghamshire**

Private farmland with no footpath

## **Otmoor MOD, near Beckley, Oxfordshire**

Survey teams admitted after security clearance

## **Piddington MOD, near Bicester, Oxfordshire**

Survey teams admitted after security clearance

## **Road Farm, near Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire**

Private farmland with no footpath

## **Strawberry Bank, near Lane End, Buckinghamshire**

Private estate with limited public access

## **Tilehouse Estate, near Lillingstone Dayrell, Buckinghamshire**

Private farmland with no footpath

## **Wapseys Wood, near Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire**

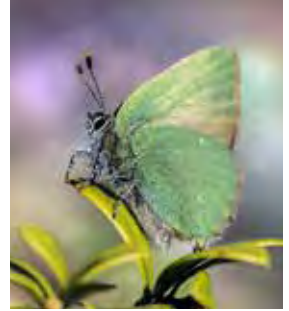
Veolia owned site with footpaths but currently no organised surveying takes place

## **Wendover Woods, near Wendover, Buckinghamshire**

Forestry England – open access but currently no organised surveying takes place

## **West Woodhay Estate, near Inkpen, Berkshire**

Private estate with limited public access

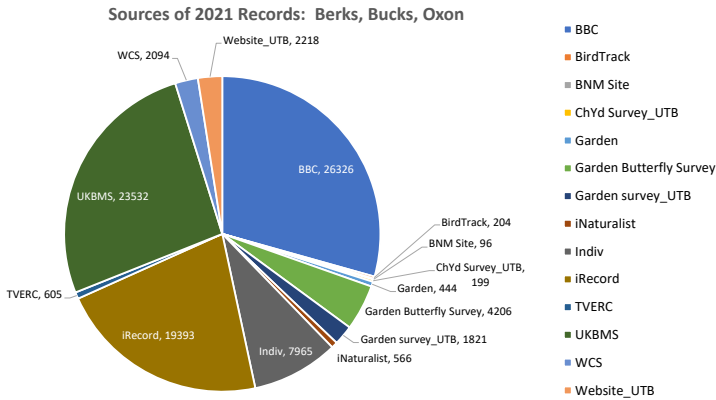


# UTB Butterfly Records 2021

As of 12th March 2022, a total of 89,669 butterfly sighting records from the UTB region had been submitted for 2021.

Records were received from all 10km squares (with the exception of tiny 'corner marginals'), comprising 1305 2km squares. In almost 14% of 2km squares 20 or more species were recorded.

The highest number of records (just over 29%) were submitted as part of the Big Butterfly Count, with just over 26% coming via UKBMS. A further 21.6% were submitted via iRecord. The following chart analyses the source of all records submitted for Berks, Bucks & Oxon:



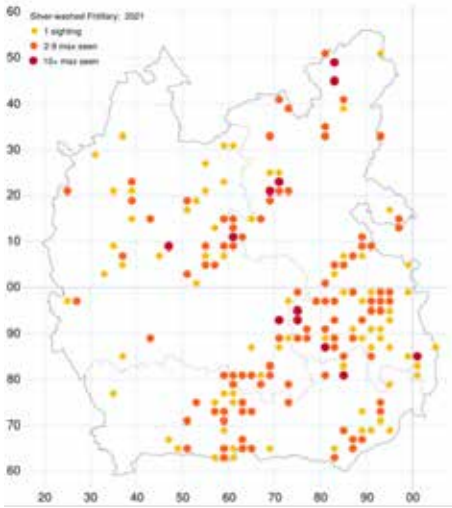
Every recorder will have his or her own preferred way of submitting records, as indeed the above chart shows. There is no right or wrong way: the important thing is that sightings are indeed sent in – **every record counts**, one way or another. However, sightings submitted electronically drastically reduce the time-consuming task of transcription, so this is to be preferred (if practicable).

Also, kindly take note of the **latest instruction** given regarding sightings submitted via the Sightings page of the UTB website, which is to be found towards the foot of page 8 of this issue of the newsletter.

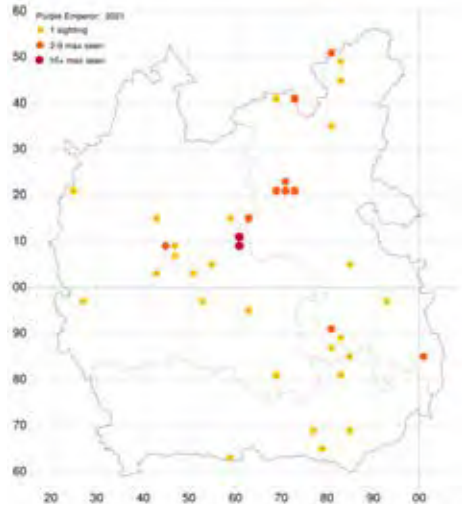
On the following page, the distribution of 4 species (by way of example) from records submitted for 2021 is shown (sightings per 2km-square), viz. **Silver-washed Fritillary, Purple Emperor, Black Hairstreak** and **Wall**. Unfortunately, no further interpretation of the data for any of our species was made available at the time of publication. **Please keep those records coming in! Thank you.**

All data provided by **Jim Asher, (UTB Butterfly Records Officer)**

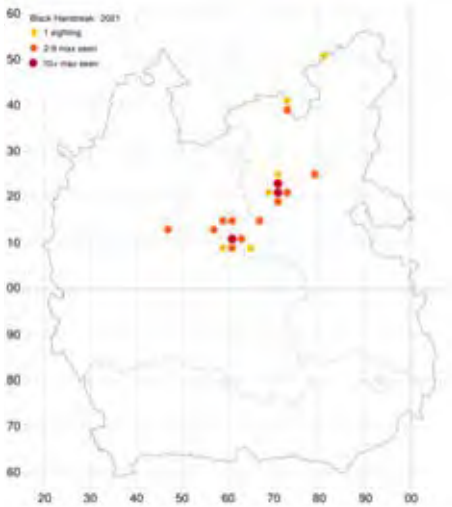




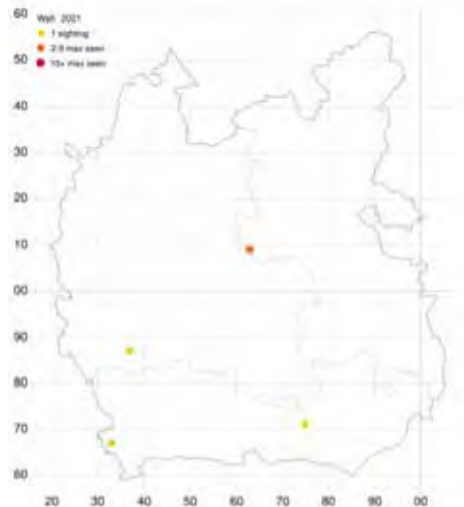
The Silver-washed Fritillary is now frequently recorded in our larger woodlands, and more often recorded in gardens. It is spreading north across the UK and is probably benefiting from climate warming.



The number of sightings of Purple Emperor has been growing in the past decade, partly through more people looking for it, but also because it seems to be genuinely spreading in our woodlands.



Black Hairstreak continues to show up in NE Oxfordshire and North Bucks. Changes are slow with this sedentary species, but we are pleased to see it continuing to appear, provided that its mature blackthorn habitat remains available in our area. We have a special responsibility for this species in UTB, as we have over half of the UK's populations recorded in our Branch area.



The Wall became rare in our area many years ago, but we still receive occasional records of sightings, so there may be a few still breeding in our area, or perhaps longer-distance vagrants from coastal populations.

# Accessible Butterflies & Day-flying Moths

I am lucky enough to be fit and active - but I have friends and family who are not, so I am acutely aware that one day I may also have difficulty accessing my favourite sites. But I will still want the thrill of finding and watching these engaging insects, and I can imagine how frustrating it is for people to find they can no longer go and see many of our beautiful butterfly and moth species.

Unfortunately, many nature reserves are on land that was previously unwanted for agriculture and which have challenging terrain, meaning that it is often almost impossible to give adequate access. Some species are frustratingly awkward in that they require this same challenging terrain to thrive: for example, both the **Adonis** and **Chalk Hill Blue** favour steep south-facing slopes.



Chalk Hill Blue, Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon  
16 Aug 21, © Peter Law

Despite this it should still be possible to see most of the Upper Thames area's 40+ butterfly species, on sites that are accessible at least in part using a rugged wheelchair, sticks or a stout walker. I have decided to try to draw together a list of sites that are both accessible and good for butterflies. It is a work in progress, but once complete will be uploaded to the UTB website.

The sites on my list have been drawn from web searches or personal recommendation, are accessible at least in part, have parking and are good for butterflies and often day-flying moths also. Not all have facilities, and I would always recommend checking out the respective websites before visiting, to check if those sites are suitable for your own level of mobility.

**My top 6 sites are listed on the following pages**, to give you a taste of what is available. The map reference quoted is of the main car park(s).

I hope that just by talking about access issues, more landowners will be able to make small improvements to make a big difference to those with limited mobility.

## College Lake, Buckinghamshire, BBOWT SP935138

Has toilets, some accessible hides for birdwatching and a café. You can hire a trumper buggy (pre-booking required). The main routes are wheelchair-friendly and mainly on level ground. A wide range of butterfly species can regularly be seen here, including **Small Blue**, **Chalk Hill Blue**, **Green Hairstreak**, **Dingy Skipper**, **Grizzled Skipper**, and – if you are lucky – **White-letter Hairstreak** and **Clouded Yellow** are occasionally seen.



College Lake © Sue Taylor

## Bernwood Forest, Oxfordshire, Forestry England SP610116

Forestry Commission access roads. The wide rides give access to a wide range of meadow and woodland butterflies, with the site known for **Brown Hairstreak** and **Black Hairstreak** (but these are elusive, and the best locations are away from the most accessible tracks). Instead, look out for **Purple Hairstreak**, **Purple Emperor**, **White Admiral** and at least 15 other woodland and meadow species of butterfly and many moth species too. Unfortunately there are no facilities on site – not even an ice-cream van! The car park is unmade and bumpy, but once on the main forest tracks the surfaces are very good.



Red & White Admirals, Bernwood Forest,  
07-Jul-2020 (© Simon Fenner)

## Greenham Common, Berkshire, BBOWT, SU499692

An access road encircles the inner area, and in dry weather many parts of the grassland may also be accessible. A good range of meadow species can be seen, including the rare **Grayling**, **Common Blue**, **Small Copper**, **Meadow Brown**, **Small Heath** and **Marbled White**; also day-flying moths. There is a café with an accessible toilet by the Control Tower Car Park. There is a parking charge.

## Ashridge Estate, Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire, National Trust SP971130 for Ashridge Visitor Centre, SP955149 for Pitstone Hill and SP963159 for Ivinghoe Beacon

The Visitor Centre has toilets (including an accessible toilet) and an outdoor café. You can hire a tramper buggy which can be used on dedicated routes. Woodland butterflies to be seen include **Speckled Wood**, **Silver-washed Fritillary**, **Purple Hairstreak** and – if you are lucky – **Purple Emperor**. In the more open glades you may see **Comma**, **Red Admiral**, **Peacock** and **Large Skipper**. Unfortunately, the terrain means that the downland around Pitstone and Ivinghoe is not easily accessible to those with restricted mobility. However, parking at the Pitstone Hill car park allows access to relatively level chalk grassland with wide grassy paths through it, with the possibility in a good year of seeing **Duke of Burgundy** near the edge of Incombe Hole, and some great views of the surrounding countryside.

## Watlington Hill, Oxfordshire, National Trust, SU702936

A National Trust site, it has no facilities but the car park at the top of the hill gives access to the short-turf chalk grassland which is known for **Silver-spotted Skipper**, **Dark Green Fritillary**, **Chalk Hill Blue** and a good range of other butterflies and day-flying moths.



The access track is surfaced, but the paths over the downland are unsurfaced though relatively level and firm at the top. Just avoid going down the hill: it is very steep! Nearest facilities are in Watlington village. **Silver-spotted Skippers** (an obliging example, previous page) can be seen from the path at Watlington Hill NT Site.

## Warburg, Oxfordshire, BBOWT, SU721879

A mix of ancient woodland, scrub and chalk grassland means there is a wide range of species on site, including **Purple Hairstreak, Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Grizzled Skipper, Silver-washed Fritillary, Common Blue, Marbled White** and day-flying moths.

However, the terrain is challenging, so you may want to book ahead to use one of the trampers which will help you access more of the site. There is a Visitor Centre with toilets - but no café.



Silver-washed Fritillaries, Warburg Reserve, Bix Bottom, Oxon 7 Jul 2020 © John Kearns

## Other sources of information

The **National Trust** has an online list of accessible walks:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/our-top-accessible-walks>

**BBOWT** has an excellent site listing all their accessible sites and their facilities:

<https://www.bbowl.org.uk/nature-reserves/accessible-reserves-and-tramper-hire>

**The Wildlife Trust's** site gives details of other accessible sites outside our area, most of which should have a range of butterflies:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/accessible-nature-reserves>

**Chilterns AONB** has drawn together information on walks on the Chilterns:

<https://www.chilternsaonb.org/explore-enjoy/access-to-the-countryside/access-for-all.html>

and <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/ccbmaps/viewcategory/23/137/pushchair-wheelchair-walks.html>

It is also worth checking out your local **country parks, urban parks** and **canals**, as many will have natural habitat that will support a range of butterflies, and most have some good firm paths.

**Sue Taylor**

# Training - May to August

## Thinking of attending our training?

Over the coming months we will be offering a series of **butterfly identification talks**, followed by **training walks** in each of our three counties. These focus on spring butterflies, early-summer butterflies and late-summer butterflies. **Participants are advised to watch the Zoom talks before each walk** (see further details below).



These events are a part of a programme aimed at anyone who would like to learn a bit more about **identifying our local butterfly species**; either for your own pleasure or to help monitoring butterflies across our region. Earlier in the spring, we carried out a series of training events to help volunteers who wanted to learn how to complete **Butterfly Transects** and **WCBS**; as well as on **habitat management for biodiversity**. Each involved a **Zoom meeting** followed by a series of **field events**, spread across our three counties.

We hope to repeat all these training events each year. **If the weather looks doubtful for any walk, please check with the leader before attending.**

Please check our website for further details and for any amendments/postponements/cancellations  
[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/field\\_meetings](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/field_meetings)



### Thursday 5th May at 7.30pm-9.00pm ZOOM TALK

A thorough guide to the ways to reliably separate the **spring butterflies** we see in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire; with advice on appearance and behaviours as a means to identify and (then record) sightings accurately.

[Further details](#)

### Saturday 7th May at 10.30am Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, Bucks

A **training walk** to help you identify spring butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Sunday 8th May at 11.00am**

**Wytham Woods, Oxon**

A **training walk** to help you identify spring butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Saturday 14th May at 11.00am**

**Ardley Wood Quarry, Oxon**

A **training walk** to help you identify spring butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Sunday 15th May at 11.00am**

**Paices Wood, Berks**

A **training walk** to help you identify spring butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 23rd June at 7.30pm-9.00pm**  
**ZOOM TALK**

A thorough guide to the ways to reliably separate the **early-summer butterflies** we see in the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire; with advice on appearance and behaviours as a means to identify and (then record) sightings accurately.

[Further details](#)

**Saturday 25th June at 10.30am**

**Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, Bucks**

A **training walk** to help you identify early-summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Saturday 2nd July at 10.30am**

**Colstrop Farm, Hambleden, Bucks**

A **training walk** to help you identify early-summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Saturday 2nd July at 10.30am**

**Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon**

A **training walk** to help you identify early-summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Sunday 10th July at 10.30am**

**Wytham Woods, Oxon**

A **training walk** to help you identify early-summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Saturday 16th July at 10.30am**

**Pamber Forest, Tadley, Hants**

A **training walk** to help you identify early-summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 28th July at 7.30pm-9.00pm**

**ZOOM TALK**

A thorough guide to the ways to reliably separate the **late-summer butterflies** we see in the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire; with advice on appearance and behaviours as a means to identify and (then record) sightings accurately.

[Further details](#)

**Saturday 30th July at 10.30am**

**Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, Bucks**

A **training walk** to help you identify late-summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

**Saturday 7th August at 11.00am**

**Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks**

A **training walk** to help you identify late-summer butterflies.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

## **FURTHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITY**

**Thursday 21st April, 7.30pm-9.00pm - DNA and its use in identification and recording of moth distribution (hosted by John Thacker)**

This talk will look at the DNA revolution, as applied to the identification and recording of species. In particular it will describe how it has been possible to identify a unique DNA 'barcode' for each species that can be used in comparative studies of organisms. The use of barcodes and of more detailed DNA analysis from groups of organisms has also given a better understanding of the evolutionary relationships of moths and butterflies. Further, advances in DNA technology have allowed minute quantities of DNA to be analysed from the environment (eDNA), leading to new and very sensitive ways to record species in the wild.

For further info and to book a place, please see: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/295808570397>

# Goat Moth or Goat Myth?

The popular explanation for the common name 'Goat Moth' is that the larvae smell like billy goats. However, I admit, a little hesitantly, that I have sniffed a Goat Moth larva, just as a neighbour walked round the corner and gave me a bemused look, and it didn't smell of anything.



Goat Moth caterpillar rescued from the road. © Kat Dahl

A Chemistry teacher told me that there are several references to goat (or more specifically the Latin *capra*) in the names of chemicals – caproic acid, capric acid, caprylic acid – and that none of these actually smell of goat either, although they are certainly pungent. In fact, the Latin word *capra* was also used to mean the smell of armpits, so perhaps 'goat' just means stinky in general. But all that doesn't explain why the word has been used to name an apparently odourless moth.

I think I might have learned the answer to this conundrum last June, when I responded to a report of an adult Goat Moth on a pavement.

I carefully picked it up to place it in a safer location and, as I did so, I was struck by a rancid smell. Thinking that

perhaps it could be the moth, I glanced furtively around me to establish that there were no onlookers, and then took a deep sniff of the beast and... nothing.



Goat Moth rescued from the pavement © Kat Dahl

Convinced that the powerful stench and the presence of the moth must be connected, I traced the scent and discovered an oak tree nearby containing the distinctive holes and fermenting sap-runs of Goat Moth, at which several other species of insect were drinking themselves into a stupor.

The smell of the sap was quite overwhelming, like rotting fruit.

The Goat Moth's scientific name, *Cossus cossus*, is the Latin word for woodworm, and the larvae of the family Cossidae also include witchetty grubs, an important staple of the Australian Aboriginal diet. Indeed, the larvae are strikingly grub-like, more reminiscent of plump beetle larvae such as Cockchafer. The Goat Moth larva is Britain's largest caterpillar, taking up to four years to munch through enough wood to reach full size before pupating, and then emerging as Britain's heaviest moth. Willows appear to be the most common foodplants, but they also feed in several other species of





Red Admiral drinking from Goat Moth oak sap-run © Kat Dahl

broad-leaved tree, and all the foodplant trees that I have found locally have been Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*.

Having the longest life cycle of any British moth makes it harder for this species to recover from the decline in numbers and distribution that it has experienced since the mid-twentieth century, primarily due to loss of habitat and misperception as a pest. Consequently, it is one of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan's priority species. They now appear to be resident only in a few coastal sites and a handful of inland areas, but there would appear



Rescued Goat Moth returned to its oak © Kat Dahl

to be quite a hotspot in the far south-east of the Upper Thames region, in and around Windsor, Swinley Forest, Crowthorne and Sandhurst.

Older records of this moth do exist elsewhere in our region, and it is very possible that it is under-recorded, as only some of the caterpillars emerge from their foodplant trees briefly to pupate in the ground and the adult moth rarely comes to light. They are more likely to be attracted to sugar, despite being unable to feed, perhaps because they mistake it for a sap-run and therefore a potential egg-laying site.

Upper Thames BC would really appreciate your assistance in recording this moth if you spot it, either through iRecord or by sending reports of the moth or potential foodplant trees, preferably with photos if possible, to [goat-moth@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:goat-moth@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk).

The adults are on the wing in June and July, and the larvae can be found on the move to a pupation site anytime from spring to autumn.

**Kat Dahl**



Goat Moth oak marked for protection with forestry paint. The dark staining is evidence of the previous summer's sap-run. © Kat Dahl

# 10K Champion Report for SU79: turning data into information

I took on the role of 10K Champion for SU79 in 2019 (and Species Champion for the Small Blue in 2020) and since then I have been gradually developing tools to help me fulfil those roles as well as possible. Figure 1 shows all the 10km squares that comprise Upper Thames Branch (UTB) territory, with SU79 both located and zoomed, to give a clear picture of where this report relates to. (Figure 1 also shows that we have far from complete coverage of all 10km squares; I hope that this article will inspire one or two readers to think about taking on a vacant 10km square, or helping out with one?)



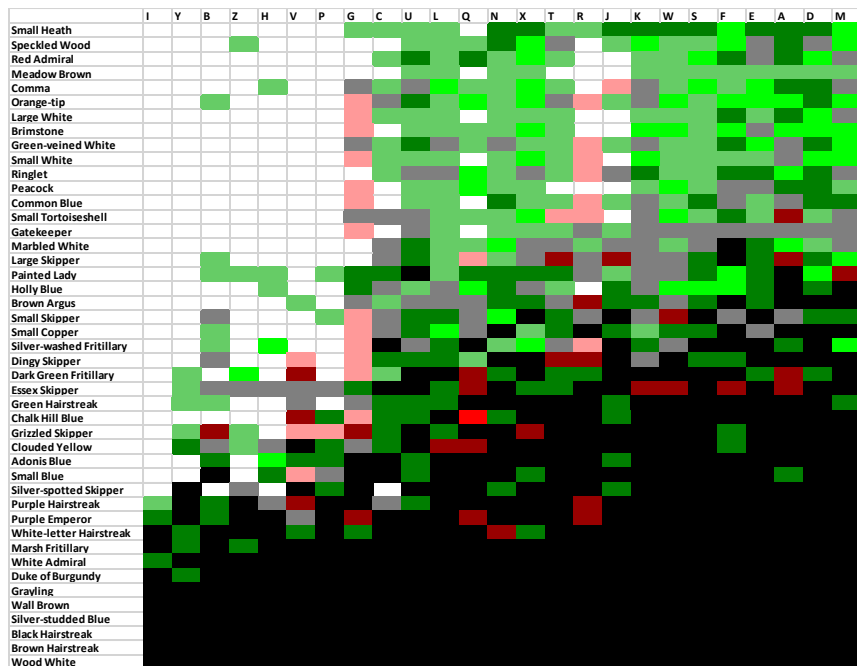
**Figure 1 – UTB 10km squares, with SU79 highlighted**

The main thing asked of a Champion of either variety is to “fill the gaps”: to add records where they are thin on the ground. This does not mean that a Champion of either variety is a one-man (or -woman) band; a really effective Champion will be able to enthuse others to add records, as well as doing so personally.

So regardless of who is going to be involved, the first question for a Champion to try to answer is where the gaps are! This question is closely followed by whether those gaps are due to the absence of butterflies, or merely to the absence of recording effort. The only way to tackle those two big questions is time spent in the field. Good decisions are required about where to go, and when, and why. The basis for good decisions is good information, derived from good analysis of good data.

Butterfly Conservation is blessed with an abundance of good data, thanks to the collective efforts of everyone who adds records. Good analysis is harder to come

by. After three years as 10K Champion for SU79, I am starting to feel that I am really contributing good analysis of the data available. This year, for the first time, I have a solid basis for identifying where the gaps are, and what sort of gaps they are. Figure 2 presents that basis. It summarizes, in a single graphic, nearly 37,000 records for SU79, for all 45 UTB species in the 10-year period from 2011 to 2020. (Unfortunately, records for 2021 were not available at the time of writing this article). The rest of the article explains what it all means, and how I could have used it at the start of the 2021 season (and will be using it in 2022, once 2021 data are available).



**Figure 2: Species-by-tetrad<sup>1</sup> trend analysis for 2011-2020 for SU79**

<sup>1</sup> A tetrad is defined as a 2km x 2km square of the Ordnance Survey National Grid, of which there are thus 25 in a 10km square, allowing the alphabet to be used for labelling (omitting O to save confusion with 0)

Trend	Colour	Label
00	Black	Unrecorded
11	Grey	Limited
22	Light Grey	Abundant
01	Dark Green	Appearing
12	Medium Green	Consolidating
02	Bright Green	Booming
10	Red-White	Disappearing
21	Red	Dwindling
20	Dark Red	Busting

## Interpreting Figure 2

Figure 2 is just a big table, containing colours rather than numbers. Species are organized by row from top to bottom, and tetrads by column from left to right, so that each cell in the table corresponds to one species and one tetrad, the colour representing two record counts for that species in that tetrad, firstly in the five-year period 2011 to 2015, and then in the five-year period 2016 to 2020. To keep things simple, those counts have been categorized three ways: zero (“None”), one to five (“Some”), or more than five (“Many”). With three possible categories for each of two

recording periods, there are thus nine possible categories for the combined ten-year period, giving an indication of the trend in the data for each species and tetrad.

The dividing lines between the categories are not entirely arbitrary. The distinction between no records and at least one record is pretty fundamental. The breakpoint at five records is used for old data in the summary reports issued annually to 10K Champions; Butterfly Conservation uses a five-year recording cycle, so five records represents the threshold value above which a species is, on average, being recorded every year.

Three groups of colours are used to convey trend information. Greyscale is used where the record count is stable (there is no trend): black for None-None, grey for Some-Some, and White for Many-Many. Greens are used where the record count is increasing: dark green for None-Some, mid-green for Some-Many, and bright green for None-Many. Reds are used where the record count is decreasing: dark red for Some-None, mid-red for Many-Some, and bright red for Many-None. In the key to Figure 2, each of these colours is associated with a single-word label. Remember that these words refer to the trend in the record count, not the trend in the underlying species abundance, although we would expect correlation between the two.



The feature of Figure 2 that makes it more than just a big table of data is the way that the rows and columns have been ordered. Species are ordered according to how many tetrads they have been recorded in during the period 2011-2020, from most tetrads at the top to least at the bottom. This simple basis of ordering will include a lot of ties; for example, the 15 species at the top of the list have all been recorded in all 25 tetrads. But a species which is increasing in more tetrads than it is decreasing in, is doing

better than a species where the converse is true, so ties are broken according to that difference. So for example, and surprisingly, Small Heath is top of the list because it is increasing in 17 tetrads and decreasing in 0, whereas the Gatekeeper is in 15th position because it is increasing in only 5 tetrads, and decreasing in 1.

Similarly, tetrads are ordered according to how many species have been recorded in them during the period 2011-2020, from most species on the left to least on the right. Ties between tetrads are broken using the same idea as for species. A tetrad for which more species are increasing than decreasing, is doing better than a tetrad for which the converse is true, so again ties are broken according to that difference. So for example, there is a tie for 3rd place in the tetrad list, between 4 tetrads with records for 34 species, but tetrad B gets it, with 9 species increasing and only 1

decreasing. Tetrad V, with only 3 species increasing and 6 decreasing, is demoted to 6th place.



Hence we can start to make visual sense of Figure 2. As we scan through the tetrad list from left to right, we move from several tetrads that are well populated with lots of species, through to the most difficult tetrads with fewer records for fewer species. Not surprisingly, tetrad I (Aston Rowant NNR & Beacon Hill) is top of the list; in the period 2016 to 2020, it had 7335 records, more than the next three most record-rich tetrads combined (one of which

includes Yoesden Bank!). Similarly as we scan through the species list from top to bottom, we move from the 15 “ubiquitous” species that have been recorded in every tetrad, through to the six that are not recorded anywhere in SU79.

### **Tetrad priorities**

How does Figure 2 help to identify what tetrads should be singled out for priority attention? A logical criterion is tetrads that have a lot of species with a decreasing record count.

At the start of the 2021 season, one tetrad – G (Northend) – stood out clearly. Despite being well to the left of the table, with records for 32 species, there was a decreasing trend for 15 of those species, including 7 of the 15 ubiquitous species. To a lesser extent, R (Cadmore End to West) was similarly afflicted. It was further to the right of the table, indicating a lower species count, and yet it is (or at least has been) far from a lepidopteral wasteland: it is one of only four tetrads in SU79 with records for both Purple Hairstreak and Purple Emperor! V (Frieth and Mousells Wood) and Q (Turville) both display a decreasing trend for 6 of the less common species. My provisional interpretation of the data is that each of these tetrads has suffered from a cessation in activity of a keen recorder. I can't check this interpretation because recorder name is anonymized in the data at my disposal.

Clearly, these four tetrads were the ones worthy of overall special attention in 2021; each one had several species with a decreasing record trend. However, aiming to add records for several species in even one tetrad requires repeated and targeted visits throughout the season, and this is too much for me to manage – I do not even live in SU79! What these tetrads were crying out for was local members who would have been able, with my assistance, to devote some time to recording on their local patch. That will remain the case in 2022, unless the 2021 data set provides unexpected surprises. If you are a reader living in one of these tetrads, and think you could help with targeted visits through the 2022 season, please get in touch!

## Species priorities

If we exclude these four tetrads from further consideration, what additional species gaps are indicated by the data? Unlike tetrad gaps, it is reasonable for a 10K Champion to aim to investigate species gaps. With luck, a single visit to a specific tetrad can suffice to add a record or two, and change a red square to grey or white at the start of the following season.

A good place to start is the tetrads with only one species showing a decreasing trend; Figure 2 shows eight tetrads that answer to this description. We can eliminate two of them as the species in question are Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady - not species to make a special visit to try and record!

In this respect, at the start of 2021, the data indicated the following species priorities:

**Grizzled Skipper.** B (Watlington Hill and Christmas Common) and P (Crowell and Crowellhill Wood) are both blessed with plenty of records; X (Studley Green) has fewer species recorded. What those three tetrads have in common is that the Grizzled Skipper was their only species with a decreasing trend in record count, indicating that a chat with the Species Champion might be in order.

**White-letter Hairstreak.** Only recorded in 5 SU79 tetrads, and the only species with a decreasing record count in N (Stokenchurch to North-West).

**Essex Skipper.** Showed a decreasing trend in 5 SU79 tetrads, but it is the only species with a decreasing trend in F (Turville Park Farm) and K (Turville Heath). I would need some help with this one; I find it impossible to distinguish between Essex Skipper and Small Skipper.



White-letter Hairstreak, Swain's Wood  
BBOWT (SU739920) 18th July 2020  
© Andy Spragg



Grizzled Skipper, Oakley Hill BBOWT  
(SU749923) 18th May 2020  
© Andy Spragg



Chalk Hill Blue, Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon,  
31-Jul-2021 © Graham Parry

To the list should also be added **Chalk Hill Blue.** Q (Turville) has already been identified as a priority tetrad, but more specifically it includes the only full red square in Figure 2, with 8 records from 2011 to 2015 (all from Turville Hill), and none from 2016 to 2020. Had the species disappeared from the site, or just not been recorded for five years? Sadly, the latter seems more likely, as 7 of the 8 records indicate that more than 10 Chalk Hill Blues were seen.

**Andy Spragg**

# Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve (NNR) - taking a closer look

Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve (NNR) is situated on the edge of The Chilterns in Oxfordshire, 2 miles west of Stokenchuch. There are 2 areas of chalk downland with some woodland, either side of the M40.

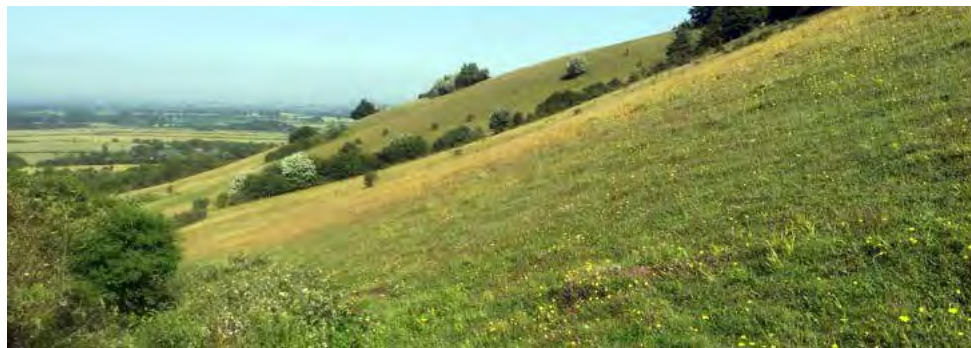
The map below shows both its general location and the site of both car parks: one to the north of the M40 (SU732966, with an optional donation) and one to the south, at Cowleaze Wood (SU727958).



© OpenStreetMap contributors

**Site Overview:** Aston Rowant NNR is predominantly a calcareous grassland of which much is south facing, and one of the best 'blue butterfly' sites in the UK. There are also large areas of woodland adjacent to the site. The M40 (constructed in 1974) intersects the site, and can be noisy... but you soon get used to the sound of speeding traffic! Some walking routes can a bit demanding, but the Beacon Hill path is quite level and you will see all species on this route.

This reserve has over 32 species of butterfly, including uncommon species such as the **Adonis Blue**, **Grizzled Skipper**, **Silver-spotted Skipper**, **Dark Green Fritillary**, **Chalk Hill Blue** and **Green Hairstreak** - all in good numbers.



© Butterfly Conservation Upper Thames Branch 2022

The Reserve also supports many day-flying moths such as **Mother Shipton**, **Burnet Companion**, **Six-spot Burnet** and the 'Nationally Scarce B' species, the **Cistus Forester**.

## MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

**MAY** - This is when to spot the **Grizzled & Dingy Skippers**, **Holly Blue** and **Green Hairstreak** (often seen along the Beacon Hill path, amongst the Blackthorn).



**JUNE** - This is the time to spot the rare **Cistus Forester** (photo left, © Iain Leach). There is also an abundance of **Common Blue** this month, with some **Small Blue** also.

**JULY** - In late July prepare for a sea of powder blue as the **Chalk Hill Blue** emerges. You can easily count 200+ on the right day. Also look for the **Dark Green Fritillary** (photo right, © Ben Paternoster 2021) and **Six-spot Burnet moth**.



**AUGUST** - The sea of powder blue is replaced with one of electric blue as the second brood **Adonis Blue** (photo left, © Mel Smith 2021) emerge along with the other reserve highlight, the **Silver-spotted Skipper** - often seen on the south-facing bank at Beacon Hill. Also, there is a small chance of a **Clouded Yellow**.

**Why not go and take a look for yourself?**

**Ben Paternoster**



# The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS): help sought

The WCBS initiative is organised and funded jointly by Butterfly Conservation, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) – and whose aim is to get a representative picture of the status of butterflies in widespread habitats such as lowland intensive farmland and not just from the richest nature reserves.

Many species of butterfly have undergone serious declines and are in need of greater attention. But without the WCBS, the monitoring and recording programmes do not provide sufficient information on detailed trends in the vast extent of the countryside, so the WCBS initiative is necessary to sample the UK countryside in a representative way in order to 'fill the gaps' and address these issues.

Nationally, Butterfly Conservation recorders are taking part by surveying random 1km squares in their Branches, and in the Upper Thames Branch there are 30 such nominated squares. Currently, only a half of these squares have been '**Adopted**', and **we seek to increase this number**.

The outline map of the UTB region below shows the approximate locations of the 1km squares in question, and the table on the next page shows the 'adoption status' of each square (and, importantly, which squares are currently '**Vacant**'). **Vacant** square **SP2818 is of particular significance**, as we already have 10 years' worth of data for it.



**Adopters are required to make a minimum of 2 visits in July and August, with at least 10 days between each visit. In addition, 1 or 2 further visits may be made between May and August, again with at least 10 days between visits.**



Gridref	Location	Status
<a href="#">SP2405</a>	Filkins, Carterton, Oxon	Vacant
<a href="#">SP2502</a>	Langford, Oxon	Vacant
<a href="#">SP2818</a>	Shipton station, Shipton under Wychwood, Oxon	Vacant
<a href="#">SP3523</a>	Wychwood Way, near Enstone, Oxon	Adopted
<a href="#">SP4119</a>	Glympton, Wootton, Oxon	Adopted
<a href="#">SP4545</a>	Great Bourton, Oxon	Vacant
<a href="#">SP6124</a>	NE Bicester, Oxon	Vacant
<a href="#">SP6738</a>	Stowe NT, Bucks	Adopted
<a href="#">SP7130</a>	Padbury, Bucks	Vacant
<a href="#">SP7212</a>	Nether Winchendon, Bucks	Adopted
<a href="#">SP7222</a>	Between Runt's Wood and Finemere Wood, Bucks	Vacant
<a href="#">SP8230</a>	Salden Wood, Newton Longville, Bucks	Adopted
<a href="#">SP8314</a>	Broughton Crossing, Aylesbury, Bucks	Vacant
<a href="#">SP8434</a>	Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes, Bucks	Vacant
<a href="#">SP8437</a>	South Laughton Valley Park, Milton Keynes, Bucks	Vacant
<a href="#">SP8502</a>	Hampden House, Gt Hampden, Bucks	Adopted
<a href="#">SP9319</a>	Horton Wharf, Cheddington, Bucks	Vacant
<a href="#">SU2882</a>	Ashdown Park NT, Ashbury, Bucks	Adopted
<a href="#">SU3476</a>	Haycroft Hill, Lambourne, Berks	Adopted
<a href="#">SU4771</a>	Snelsmore, Berks	Adopted
<a href="#">SU4795</a>	Sutton Wick, Oxon	Adopted
<a href="#">SU6289</a>	East of Wallingford, Oxon	Adopted
<a href="#">SU7170</a>	Whitley, Reading, Berks	Adopted
<a href="#">SU7669</a>	Carters Hill, Sindlesham, Berks	Vacant
<a href="#">SU7689</a>	South End, nr Turville, Bucks	Adopted
<a href="#">SU7964</a>	Finchampstead, Berks	Vacant
<a href="#">SU9277</a>	Windsor Marina, Oakley Green, Berks	Vacant
<a href="#">SU9377</a>	Dorney Lake, Eton Wick, Berks	Adopted
<a href="#">SU9596</a>	Coleshill, Amersham, Bucks	Adopted
<a href="#">TQ0186</a>	Tatling End, Gerrards Cross, Bucks	Vacant

By entering any of the **Gridrefs** in the table (left) on: <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/wcbs> you will be presented with a Streetmap view (where the arrow indicates the square in question).

If you think you can help with this important work, or to get more information, please contact [wcbs-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:wcbs-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk) in the first instance, who can also confirm the current status of squares and advise on the presence of any Zoom training follow-up in-field training sessions.

You would also be well advised to first read the [WCBS guidance document](#), produced by the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS).



Furthermore, a comprehensive (2 hours+) online **WCBS Methodology Workshop** was presented by Megan Lowe of Butterfly Conservation last September, and this may be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqkTY1R48CE&t=6878s>

# Tips and Hints (1)... from the Lepidoptera Wonderer

Some of us spend many hours finding butterflies and moths, but we remember how useful it was when we first started out to have help from people who knew more than us.

So for those of you perhaps new to butterflies and day-flying moths, we will try to make this **Tips and Hints** feature a regular one. And, yes, the title above is supposed to say '...Lepidoptera Wonderer'!



We'll start with this contribution from **Sue Taylor**, entitled:

## **GETTING PHOTOS WITHOUT A TELEPHOTO LENS**

... which we hope may be useful especially if you are not confident over the identification of the species you are planning to photograph.

Watch your intended target and wait until it settles before trying to approach. Territorial species tend to follow a 'route', so you can wait until it comes around again rather than running around in circles yourself! Once it settles you can move in - but within about 4m, moving slowly and quietly to make sure your shadow will not touch it. A shadow to a butterfly is usually the first warning of a potential attack by a bird.

It is worth taking photos as you get closer ('grab shots'), so you at least have something to ID if the butterfly (or moth) flies off. If you manage to get really close, try not to breathe on it as they can sense that too. So if you can hold the camera at arm's length...

If the subject 'behaves', try to get a view of both the upper and lower wings. Many look-alike species are best separated by looking at the underside of the wings.

Butterflies and day-flying moths are most active in still, sunny weather, so if you want to get good photos, slightly cooler conditions are sometimes more helpful as the insects will sit around trying to warm up, and are therefore less flighty.

If you want to see a particular species: do some research, find out its preferred habitat, the flight season and where it has been seen before. Our website Sightings page can be useful to point you in the right direction.

### **Finally, keep practising!!**

Please, when you do see butterflies and moths, make a note of the species, the number seen, the location (grid reference) and the date, and (ideally) submit your sightings via the BC Butterfly app iRecord Butterflies. All sightings add to what is known about these wonderful insects and ultimately will help in their conservation.

Check out our [Events](#) page for details of walks where you will be helped to see and identify butterflies and moths in the field.

Photo: a Brown Argus, often mistaken for a female Common Blue. However, the two little dots next to the pawprint on the top underwing give it away. Photo taken with an Olympus TG5, about 30cm from the subject.



**If you think you could contribute to this regular feature, please do send your submission to the editor.**

# Discovering iRecord: Butterflies & Moths

**Butterfly Conservation's Senior Surveys Officer, Dr Zoe Randle, invites Branch members to consider the following training opportunity:**

The next programme of Supporting Science iRecord training opens on Friday 29th April 2022. BC's exciting partnership with the Field Studies Council aims to attract new people into the butterfly and moth recording network and develop the data processing skills required to turn records into research. The Supporting Science project has funded 120 free places, with our first round of recruitment being targeted at our partners and projects who work with diverse people and communities.

**'Discovering iRecord: Butterflies and Moths'** will introduce the basics of biological recording, such as grid references, data flow and verification. Content will be suitable for general taxa, with some activities focusing on moth or butterfly sightings. The course is **perfect for people new to iRecord, or those in need of a refresher** to hone existing iRecord skills:

- 4-week, self-led, online course for adults, with a weekly time commitment of 3-5 hours.
- Access to study content, activities and tutor-graded assignments through the FSC virtual learning platform.
- Access to weekly live virtual classroom sessions at the end of each week with the course tutor through Zoom (recorded for those that are unable to attend the live sessions)

We would like to invite **BC Branch members** who would wish to benefit from this entry level course; it is an ideal opportunity to train potential verification assistants to help County Recorders.

For further course information and booking please visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/256693094957>

For queries please message or email [rconway@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:rconway@butterfly-conservation.org)

The Supporting Science project has been made possible with funding from DCMS and the National Lottery, distributed by The Heritage Fund as part of their Digital Skills for Heritage initiative.

**Dr Zoe Randle Senior Surveys Officer**

Email: [zrandle@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:zrandle@butterfly-conservation.org) Direct line: **01929 406006**

Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP Tel: 01929 400209. Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468). Charity registered in England and Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SC039268).

[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)   Follow me on Twitter [@moth\\_lady](https://twitter.com/moth_lady)

# Videos worth watching

BC national Moth recorders meeting (1hr 59min 15sec):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tiQNgPs9w0>

Chequered Skipper Butterfly – Taking Flight in Rockingham Forest (1min 30):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa3PNI2AdgQ>

The Life Cycle of the Camberwell Beauty (20mins 20sec):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OwejNkr76w>

Watch this caterpillar turn into a Puss Moth (4mins 20sec):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xix6MPHQRa4>

Tiny Caterpillar Makes Stunning Metamorphosis into a Garden Tiger Moth (3mins 8sec):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTRuVIJxSOK>

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey: Survey Methodology Training (2hr 24mins 23sec)  
– refer also to the WCBS article in this newsletter:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqkTY1R48CE&t=6878s>

Look-a-like UK butterflies (1hr 18mins 37sec):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEXP6R082Tg>

How to Photograph Butterflies - Tutorial (10mins 22sec):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKdkLol-Mv8>

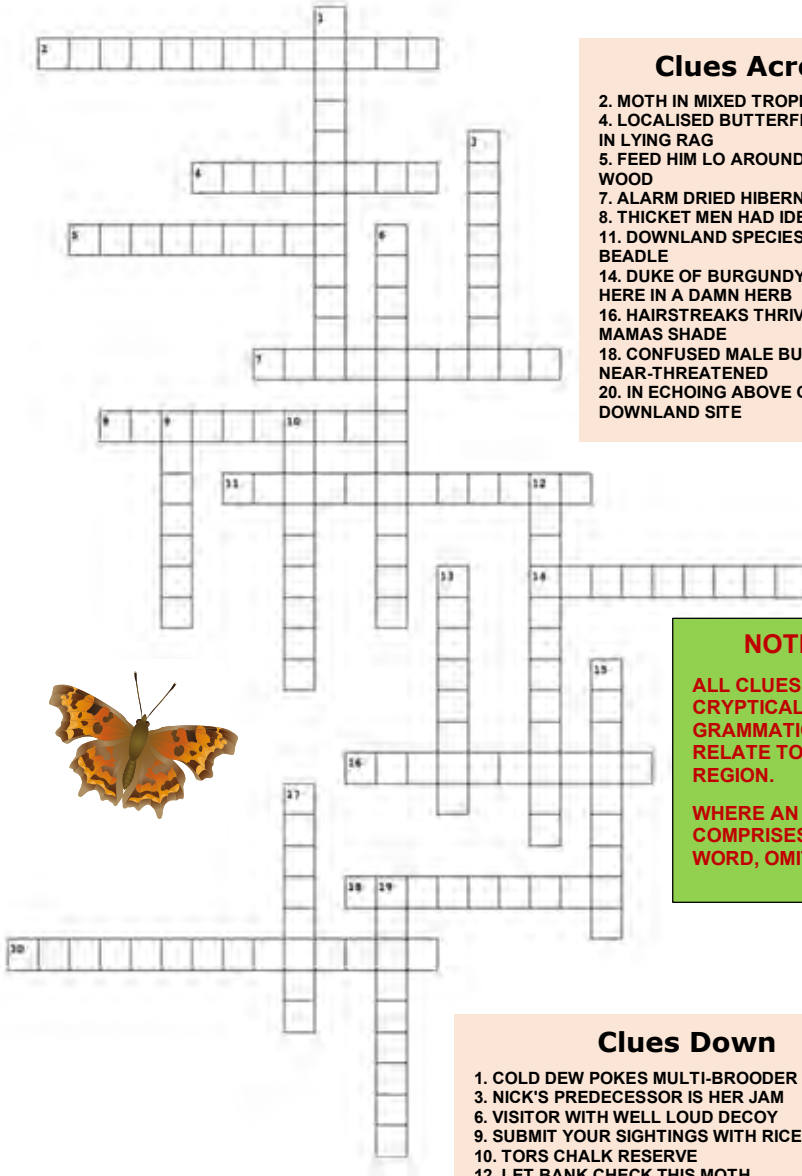
## Answers to Issue 113's 'Let's Get Quizzical'

1. Dingy Skipper & Orange-tip (though there might be others?)
2. Camberwell Beauty
3. Heart Moth
4. Silver-washed Fritillary
5. Common Blue (males)
6. Chimney Sweeper
7. Grayling
8. Pearl-bordered & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries
9. Wood Tiger
10. Brown Hairstreak

An image of a Wood White appeared beneath the questions.



# UTB Cryptic Crossword



## Clues Across

2. MOTH IN MIXED TROPHIES MONTH
4. LOCALISED BUTTERFLY FOUND IN LYING RAG
5. FEED HIM LO AROUND BUCKS WOOD
7. ALARM DRIED HIBERNATOR
8. THICKET MEN HAD IDEA THEREIN
11. DOWNLAND SPECIES WITH MR BEADLE
14. DUKE OF BURGUNDY SEEN HERE IN A DAMN HERB
16. HAIRSTREAKS THRIVE HERE IN MAMAS SHADE
18. CONFUSED MALE BULLS ARE NEAR-THREATENED
20. IN ECHOING ABOVE CHALK DOWNLAND SITE

## NOTES

ALL CLUES ARE CRYPTICAL/ANAGRAMMATICAL AND RELATE TO OUR REGION.

WHERE AN ANSWER COMPRISES >1 WORD, OMIT SPACES

## Clues Down

1. COLD DEW POKES MULTI-BROODER
3. NICK'S PREDECESSOR IS HER JAM
6. VISITOR WITH WELL LOUD DECOY
9. SUBMIT YOUR SIGHTINGS WITH RICE ROD
10. TORS CHALK RESERVE
12. LET BANK CHECK THIS MOTH
13. CAB RAN IN TO THIS COMMONER
15. THIS MOTH IS WIRED TO GO
17. TEN GIRLS TAKE US TO MIDSUMMER FLYERS
19. SHUFFLE OR COMPOSE ALONGSIDE THE PANG

**GOOD LUCK!**

**SOLUTION NEXT TIME**

In Buckinghamshire, the Bucks Invertebrate Group organises a lot of field trips which include studying butterflies and especially moths. Their list of field trips is available on their website <https://sites.google.com/site/bucksinvertebrategroup/>

In Berkshire, the Berkshire Moth Group holds regular meetings on the second Thursday of every month. They organise other events as well. Refer to their website for details <https://sites.google.com/site/berksmoths/Home>

## Upper Thames Branch Website

[www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/in-your-area/upper-thames-branch>

Have your butterfly sightings and photos posted on the website by sending them to: [sightings@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:sightings@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

Upper Thames Branch Moth Sightings Blog  
<http://upperthamesmoths.blogspot.co.uk>

Follow us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Butterflies.Berkshire.Buckinghamshire.Oxfordshire>

Twitter [@UpperThamesBC](https://twitter.com/UpperThamesBC)

Instagram [utb\\_butterfly\\_conservation](https://www.instagram.com/utb_butterfly_conservation)

Holtspur Bottom Reserve

<http://www.holtspurbottom.info>

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