

UPPER THAMES BRANCH

# Hairstreak

ISSUE 118 | LATE JUNE 2023



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

**Upper Thames  
Branch**



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

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Cover images: Should be seen now (or anytime very soon)... from top left; clockwise:  
Dark Green Fritillary, Ivinghoe Hills, Bucks, 01-Jun-2022 (©James Robson)  
Chalk Hill Blue, The Holies, Berks, 24-Jun-2022 (©Jean-Paul Brouard)  
Emperor Moth (larva), Bernwood Meadows, Bucks, 11-Jun-2022 (©Robert Pell)  
Scarlet Tiger, High Wycombe, Bucks, 01-Jun-2022 (©Mark Gosling)

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

Next edition: **LATE SEPTEMBER 2023 (ISSUE 119) [DEADLINE FOR COPY: 8th SEPTEMBER 2023]**  
**PLANNED PUBLICATION DATE: 18th SEPTEMBER 2023**

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Print: Supported by **Bluepepper Designs** [www.bpdesigns.co.uk](http://www.bpdesigns.co.uk)

Butterfly Conservation. Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468). Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP. Charity registered in England and Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SC039268). VAT No GB 991 2771 89

# Editorial

**Hoorah, it's summertime!** And not before time, I might add.

It was a slow start to spring 2023, with March being duller and wetter by some measure than the monthly average. Consequently, the first non-hibernating butterfly (Small White) wasn't reported in our area until 21st March. Last year, Speckled Wood was first recorded in the region on 16th January (albeit unusually early) and the first Holly Blue on 27th February (a month earlier than the average). In fact, in 2022, all but 2 (95%) of our non-hibernating resident species appeared on the wing earlier than the mean first-sighting record for each in almost two decades. It just goes to show how much influence the climate has on our species. Our webmaster David Hastings has observed that some of the butterflies he saw this spring were much smaller than usual, questioning whether last summer's dry conditions, which may well have caused a shortage of food for larvae, was responsible?

I am sure that many of you were captivated by BBC's spring series *Wild Isles*, narrated by BC's President Sir David Attenborough?

I was visiting Knepp Castle Estate in West Sussex with friends when filming of the Purple Emperor sequence (for episode 2 of *Wild Isles*) was under way (with naturalist Matthew Oates a key participant in proceedings), and although we were not lucky ourselves in seeing much butterfly activity on the day,

making a visit to one of PE's known habitats is always an occasion dripping with anticipation.



This majestic butterfly should be on the wing anytime now, so – perhaps by taking some inspiration from one of our planned Guided Walks – you may wish to make the effort to try to see this elusive species this year? It could be well worth the effort. Furthermore, Matthew is scheduled to be a guest speaker at our **Members' Day on 28th October** (full details on [page 7](#)), sharing his experiences with PE at Knepp Castle. Definitely not to be missed!

Elsewhere, our very own Andy Spragg has produced a fine, detailed report on the butterflies of the Ridgeway, so please take the time to read his complementary article on [page 26](#).

Our Guided Walks programme is now well under way, with attendee numbers very encouraging. Many of the reports are included in this issue ... and if you haven't yet joined one of our walks, why not take a look at what's on offer (on [page 14](#))?

Enjoy your newsletter, and the lepidopterous delights that summer will hopefully bring to our lives. Furthermore, do tell us about your experiences and achievements.

**Derek Haynes**  
Newsletter Editor

**PLEASE NOTE** that as this publication contains entities such as buttons, icons and 'here' text to link to external sources of information, it is recommended that – in order to open that source in a new tab or window – you use the right mouse-click option when selecting the entity.

Please send contributions for future issues of the newsletter to [newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk), with supporting images sent separately (or as attachments) in order to maintain quality. **NEXT COPY DEADLINE IS 8th SEPTEMBER 2023.**

# View from the Chair

The drought last year led many butterfly lovers to predict fewer butterflies and moths this year. The drought badly impacted plants... and caterpillars feed on plants. So, a sensible theory was that if plants suffered and died, so too would many caterpillars. Consequently, there would be fewer adult butterflies and moths.



Volunteers plant cowslips on a bank that we are readying for the Duke of Burgundy to expand onto from a nearby colony.

I'm happy to say that this spring I noticed plenty of Holly Blue, Brimstone and Orange-tip in my garden. Checking on the effect of work that our volunteers (and those of other organisations) provided in the winter at several local reserves, I saw plenty of Peacock and, in this last week, Brown Argus and Common Blue. Even Small Heath seem to be in better numbers than in some recent times.

Of course, as soon as you leave the sites where conservation volunteers work so hard, the situation can be anything from disappointing to dire.

At one site where we worked with Chiltern Rangers in the winter I have already seen 21 butterfly species... but at two other nearby nature reserves, where no volunteers did any work, I struggled to find three species at the

first (an undisturbed woodland reserve) and six at the second (an unmanaged, increasingly overgrown, bramble-covered grassland).

Possibly, to weaken my claim that considered intervention is crucial, you have seen reasonable numbers of butterflies or moths at a site that gets no conservation work; but if you have been to several sites, I bet you'll agree that reserves where our volunteers turn out in the winter are more diverse, on average, than those where they don't.



A volunteer uses a mattock to help create a patch of bare ground in scrubby grassland, which will heat up quickly in sunshine and allow basking insects to reach 'operational' temperature sooner.

Yet again I'm greatly indebted to all those UTB members who have given time and labour to keep our best nature sites in top condition. Without you the countryside could be a species-poor assemblage of crops, mown grass, solemn rows of plastic tree tubes and the odd rough corner. With you, we have acres of wildflowers and productive scrub, tapering into the edges of woodlands of dappled sunlight.

I hope that every one of you will be able to visit some of the reserves where we worked in the winter and see just how special these places are.



Please investigate the plethora of guided walks and training we offer you for free.

[Details can be found here.](#)

You are very likely doing something to help butterflies and moths in your garden or on other bits of land that you tend. Remember that there is a Butterfly Conservation scheme called **Wild Spaces**, which aims to collect details about what we are all doing. You can register your own effort [here](#) and BC will contact you about your work periodically... to see how you are getting along and to share tips for maximising your impact.

I say this in each issue: we can always use more help with every aspect of our work. Please get in touch if you can

offer us some time. I find it very odd that – despite repeated requests – no one ever volunteers to take pictures for us! In addition, you can easily see (in this piece) that we need someone who can write decent text etc., etc.

We know that some can't offer any more time, but Butterfly Conservation is always very grateful for any time that you can offer; and perhaps a donation from all the rest who have no time! (You can donate [here](#)).

Enjoy a summer filled with warm sun, spectacular moths and wondrous butterflies!

**Nick Bowles**  
**Chair, Upper Thames Branch**

## Membership News

In the last two months we have regrettably seen a slight drop in membership in the Upper Thames Branch to 1563 households with 2173 individuals.

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.

**A warm welcome to all new members** who have joined since the last newsletter was published. 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) There is also a monthly bulletin reminding members of upcoming events, which is sent to all members with registered email addresses.

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

# Seeing is Believing

One might think, at this time of the year, that our butterfly habitats would be awash with species... but that's not necessarily the case.

Some of our more common butterflies, such as Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Meadow Brown, Marbled White, Ringlet and Gatekeeper should be found throughout our region at this time of year, and the three more common Skippers (Small, Essex and Large) might also be discovered quite readily. But the following 9 more localised or specialist species are those especially worth seeking out (based on the UTB mean first sighting of each species between mid-June and mid-July over the past 18 years): **Dark Green Fritillary, White Admiral, White-letter Hairstreak, Silver-studded Blue, Purple Hairstreak, Silver-washed Fritillary, Purple Emperor, Chalk Hill Blue** and **Grayling**.

If you would like to learn a little more about each of these 9 species before 'heading out for the hunt', you might find the following direct links to Butterfly Conservation's species pages helpful. Check out our Guided Walks programme on page 14, too!

[Dark Green Fritillary](#)

[White Admiral](#)

[White-letter Hairstreak](#)

[Purple Emperor](#)

[Purple Hairstreak](#)

[Silver-washed Fritillary](#)

[Silver-studded Blue](#)

[Chalk Hill Blue](#)

[Grayling](#)

To discover more about these **species in our three counties**, select the UTB Marbled White icon (below left) to take you to our own website, where each individual species page will show the local distribution and details of the Species Champion (who can be contacted should you require any further information or wish to report perhaps-unexpected sightings of the butterfly).



**Good luck in searching out all these species!**

Our **latest Butterfly Sightings** page might also prove useful

[UTB Butterfly Sightings](#)

And if you would like to know **which moths are likely to be seen in our region now**, click on this photo of a Scarlet Tiger to give you a helping hand.





## Upper Thames Branch Members' Day 2023

We are excited to announce that, after several years of Zoom, Members' Day will be back to meeting in person this year! Please come and join us on...

**Saturday October 28th at 9.45am  
at Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson,  
Oxfordshire, OX10 6LZ**

It is always a great day: a chance to meet and chat with other butterfly enthusiasts, purchase interesting books, buy a Richard Lewington print and listen to an amazing line-up of speakers. This year's speakers include:

**Matthew Oates** - Naturalist, author, TV and radio personality, volunteer at Knepp Rewilding and leading expert on the Purple Emperor.

**Will Langdon** - An amazing young naturalist currently working towards his PhD at Oxford University, studying 'responses of lepidoptera to environmental change'.

**Peter Eeles** - Passionate and award-winning conservationist, author and founder of the [ukbutterflies.co.uk](http://ukbutterflies.co.uk) website.

**Mike Slater** - The hard-working Chair and Conservation Officer of Warwickshire Branch of BC: a branch that, under Mike's guidance, has achieved a great deal for their butterflies.

So, make sure you **pencil the date in your diary!** Entry is free but there will be a donation box... so if you feel you would like to make a small contribution to cover costs, one is always appreciated.

**PLEASE NOTE:** that in previous years lunch was provided but this resulted in a fair bit of food left over at the end. To simplify things and avoid food waste, we would ask this year that you bring your own packed lunch. Tea, coffee, squash and biscuits will be provided.

## ITINERARY:

- 09.45 Doors open
- 10.15 Introduction and welcome: Nick Bowles
- 10.25 Review of the Upper Thames moths: Peter Cuss
- 10.50 Review of the Upper Thames butterflies: Nick Bowles
- 11.15 Holtspur (and other sites) update: Nick Bowles
- 11.30 Break. Coffee, tea or squash and biscuits.  
Browse books, prints etc. for sale
- 12.00 Talk 1. 'British and Irish butterfly rarities': Peter Eeles
- 12.35 Talk 2. 'Nothing without a moth trap: Recording micro moths in the Upper Thames region': Will Langdon
- 1.10 Lunch. Browse books, prints etc. for sale. Quiz
- 2.10 Talk 3. 'Butterfly conservation, the Warwickshire approach': Mike Slater
- 3.00 Talk 4. 'The Purple Emperor: Yet more good news!  
(*Thou meetest with things dying, I with things living...*): Matthew Oates
- 3.45 Break. Coffee, tea or squash and biscuits.  
Browse books, prints etc. for sale
- 4.15 Photo Comp/Quiz results: Pete Thompson
- 4.30 Round up of the day: Nick Bowles
- 4.35 Finish



## Why not enter the photo competition this Members' Day?

The details are listed below. There are four categories:



1. UK Butterflies
2. UK Moths
3. Early stages (ovum, larva or pupa)
4. Foreign/non-UK Lepidoptera (all life-cycle stages)



**A few simple rules to follow, please!** Photos should have been taken in either 2022 or 2023. Maximum number of three photos per category per person and a maximum number of eight photos per individual.

**Please send your photos (in jpeg format) by email by 7th October to Pete Thompson [plthompson127@gmail.com](mailto:plthompson127@gmail.com)**

The photos will be shown as a rolling presentation during the lunch break on the day, with the winners shown at the end of each category. It is also hoped that we can publish some of them in a future issue of *Hairstreak*. **Good luck!**



# Target areas for butterfly recording in 2023: we need your help!



Every five years, we try to achieve complete coverage of our branch area: the counties of Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire.

In 2024, we reach the end of the current 5-year recording window. At this stage, we look at a map showing recording gaps that we would like to fill in the last two years of the window.

A map was shown in the Spring edition of *Hairstreak* showing gaps as at the end of the 2022 season. **The map on the next page** has been updated with spring records from 2023 (from records submitted through iRecord) and highlights 2kmx2km squares with no recording or where they have not been looked at closely enough. In most squares, we expect to see at least 15-16 common species.

The numbering along the bottom and up the left side of the map is that of the OS grid squares.

There are recording gaps to the SE of Oxford (in squares SU69, especially), in the Vale of White Horse, especially in SU29/SU39, diagonally across N Bucks, in SP62, SP72 and SP81, in Oxfordshire north of Witney (SP31) and in SP20 and SP21, north and south of Burford.

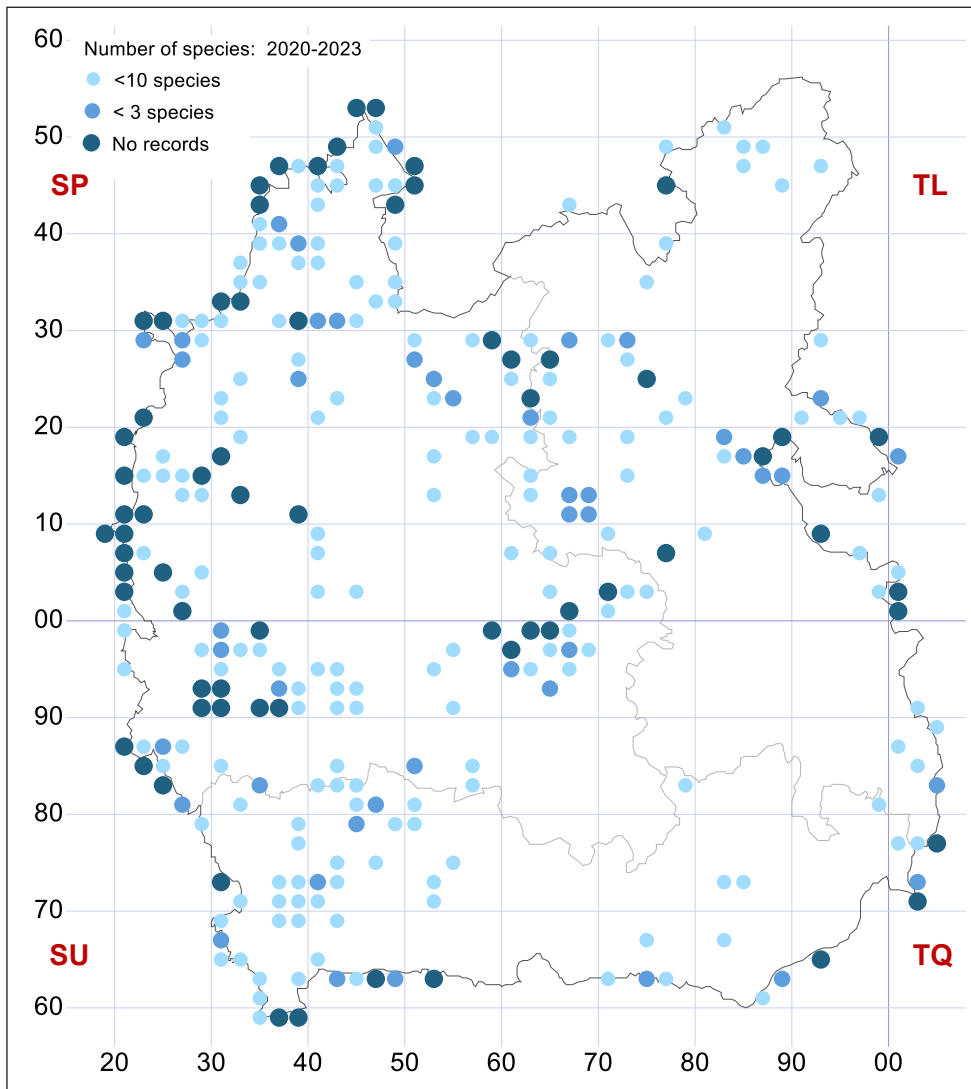
As you can see, many of the squares at the edges straddling the border with neighbouring counties are poorly recorded, too, especially in west and north Oxfordshire. We are keen to encourage recorders to visit more of these areas this summer and next spring and summer to fill as many gaps as possible before the end of next year. Further information was provided in the March edition of *Hairstreak*.

Please get your maps out, or up on a screen, and look for footpaths that give you a way to access these poorly recorded areas. You may be pleasantly surprised to discover more there than you realised – and help us to maximise our coverage.

If you have any questions, please contact either me, Jim Asher ([jim.asher@btinternet.com](mailto:jim.asher@btinternet.com)), Peter Ogden ([peter.ogden@virgin.net](mailto:peter.ogden@virgin.net)), or Jan Haseler ([jan.haseler@btinternet.com](mailto:jan.haseler@btinternet.com)) our 10km square recording coordinator. If you wish to receive email updates of the 'gaps map' as we make progress filling the gaps, please contact me.

**Please enjoy your recording walks!**

**Jim Asher**



**For your interest,** Wood White Species Champion Nick Board photographed this mating pair in north Bucks on 3rd June (at just about the peak of their flight period).

The male (left) has a white blob on his antennae, which he uses to 'impress' the female as part of the courtship routine. Once coupled, they remain that way for a period of about 30 minutes, until fertilisation is complete.



# Signs of consolidation: the Chalkies

The Chalk Hill Blue is indeed a beautiful butterfly, and we're delighted to have it in our region. It should be on the wing soon, so why not plan a visit to one of its known haunts – perhaps one of those to which it has started to spread in the past few years?



Nick Bowles is our Chalk Hill Blue Champion, and his 2022 Report follows:

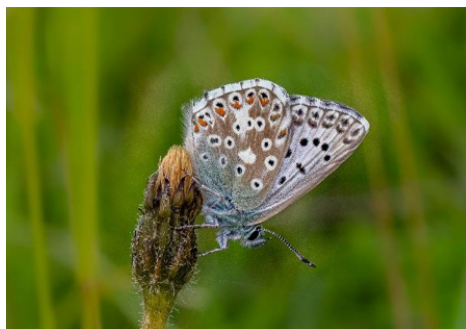
I am grateful to all of those who supplied sighting details and especially those that kept me regularly updated as the season unfolded.

Chalk Hill Blue had another near-normal year in terms of abundance and distribution, with some sites apparently doing slightly better in terms of numbers and others slightly worse. Overall, 2022 probably saw yet another slight fall in abundance. However, there were further signs of consolidation at sites into which the butterfly had been hesitantly spreading in the past three years.

The first report in the UTB area in 2022 was quite early (on 24th June, over two weeks earlier than in 2021), from near Streatley, and it was a week until there were reports of multiple sightings. The

last was on Sept 19th in the Risborough area, apart from an apparent second brood individual weeks later, on 18th October, at Ivinghoe. These are very similar dates to those in recent years, and we had at least three second-brood individuals flying in October 2018. The only other county that has recorded second-brood individuals is Cambridgeshire (also in 2018).

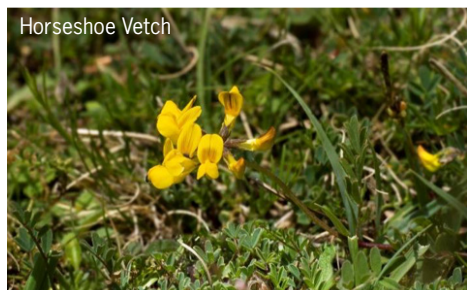
As usual, most Chalk Hill Blues (Chalkies) were seen in late July and early August. Despite the Chilterns being relatively narrow, north to south, there is a difference of about a week between the sightings in the south (e.g. at Lardon Chase) and the north (e.g. at Ivinghoe Beacon).



Only five sightings were reported in September, far fewer than normal during this month. This points to a truncated flight season compared with most recent years and helps us to understand how there were lower numbers overall.

Horseshoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*) is a low-growing plant of sparse grassland, with narrow leaves

arranged opposite each other along the stems. It flowers before the similar Birds-foot Trefoil, and it is the curled seed pods that give it its common name: horseshoe.

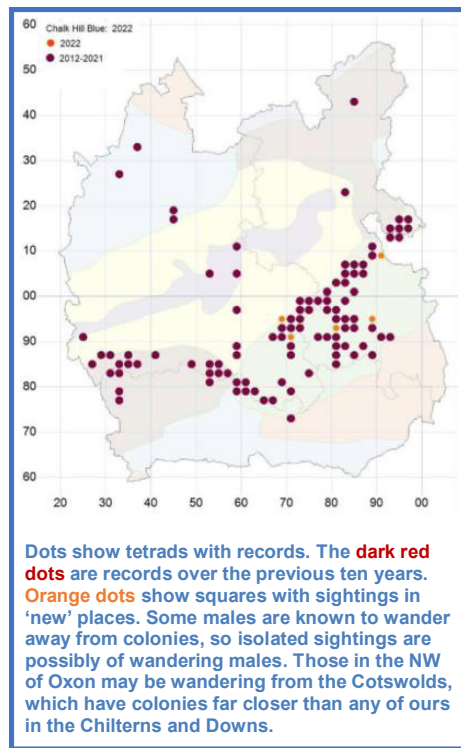


The map alongside shows both where the butterfly was seen and, in the Chilterns and on the Downs, where the butterfly's larval food plant, Horseshoe Vetch, persists on unimproved chalk grassland. We know from long-term observation of sites with Horseshoe Vetch and no Chalk Hill Blue that the butterfly can (re-) colonise areas that become suitable.

Following planting of Horseshoe Vetch, the butterfly has now colonised a site near Marlow. Planting has taken place since 2020 at various sites close to known colonies, and we await the good news that the butterfly is back.

Sadly, it was another year with no sightings within Wendover Woods, where planted trees and tall scrub have rendered Horseshoe Vetch too shaded and cold. All other (known) colonies persisted in 2022.

At our own Holtspur Bottom reserve, after worries as only males were recorded in 2021, there was a small population, including at least one female.



My very grateful thanks to all those who contacted me with news (including of unsuccessful visits); I always welcome news of Chalkies and of Horseshoe Vetch growing in sites where it was previously unsuspected.

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



# Sharing is Caring

Most of us are keen to learn more about the subjects we are particularly interested in, and this probably applies especially to those who relish the prospect of a prosperous and vibrant natural environment... one that continues to thrive, for the sake of us all.

**We can learn by sharing.** There are those who have the knowledge, and those who can benefit from the knowledge of others – and we are all surely similarly-minded?

For we conservationists and lovers of nature in general, publications like this are an ideal medium through which we can help to make this a reality.

But we need those with the knowledge to be minded to subscribe to this notion, and, in this regard, I appeal to each and every one of you to consider whether you are willing to embark upon a little sharing... by making a contribution to this 'knowledge base' by submitting an article for potential inclusion in a future edition of *Hairstreak*?

So, please don't be shy! All contributions are welcome... by sending them to: [newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.co.uk](mailto:newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.co.uk)

Thank you.

## Squaring the 'Circle'

Actually, the circle in question is our three counties! In support of Butterfly Conservation's production of the next (2020-24) edition of the national butterfly atlas, The Branch seeks to visit each tetrad of all 10km squares in the region. Currently, we need a little extra help... either to assist existing 10km Champions or because some squares aren't being surveyed at all. Select the icon below left, to be taken to the latest 10km Champions page of our website or visit [www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/10km champions](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/10km_champions)



Should you be able to offer any assistance with this vital survey work (which would be much appreciated), please contact our 10km-square co-ordinator, Jan Haseler, at: [10k-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:10k-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

# Guided Walks - until late August



**Our guided walks are aimed at everyone – not just Branch/BC members.**



You do not need to be an expert to come on one of our walks. Butterfly walks can be enjoyed by anyone, whatever their level of knowledge (even none!) First-time participants, children (with adult supervision), photographers... **you are ALL welcome.**

There is NO need to contact the leader for most walks. However, our Guided Walks are subject to amendment, particularly due to poor weather. Please consult the BC events pages for any last-minute changes (updated regularly and can be accessed from the **'Further details'** link for each event).

**A few walks do require booking; these are clearly marked.**

Please see the branch Guided Walks web page for guidance on how to get the most out of our guided walks, including meeting point, etc. <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/guided-walks>

We have put together an extensive programme to allow you to see some of our beautiful species. Walks are scattered across all three counties, so there should be something of interest close to you. The programme gives you the chance to enjoy each of our regular butterfly species, most of our rarer species and some of our day-flying moths.

However, we *cannot guarantee* seeing a particular butterfly species (or, indeed, any!) but our trips visit some lovely countryside and there will always be something interesting to see.

Later walks will be in the next newsletter, but you can always check ahead on our website or Butterfly Conservation's 'Events' pages. **ENJOY!**

[Calendar view](#)

Downloads a .docx file

[Map View](#)

Opens up a new tab

**Please check our website for further details**  
and for any amendments/postponements/cancellations  
<https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/events>

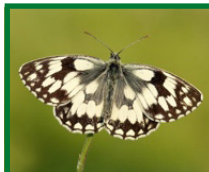
If the **'Further Details'** button does not work... please go to the **Butterfly Conservation website**, click on the **'Events'** tab (at the top or in the menu), choose **'Upper Thames'** from the **'Search by Branch'** menu, click **'Search'** and **scroll down** until you find the walk you are looking for.



**Wednesday 21st June at 10:00am**  
**Warburg BBOWT, Oxon**

Early summer butterflies, birds and other wildlife; may include **Purple Hairstreak**.

[Further details](#)



**Wednesday 21st June at 7:00pm**  
**East Hagbourne, Oxon**

An evening walk to see what butterflies do outside 'normal transect' hours, including **Marbled White**.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 24th June at 10:30am**  
**Holtspur Bottom BC, Beaconsfield, Bucks**

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

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 25th June at 10:30am**  
**Butler's Hangings SSSI, West Wycombe, Bucks**

Summer butterflies may include **Marbled White** and, hopefully, **Dark Green Fritillary**.

[Further details](#)



**Tuesday 27th June at 11:00am**  
**Blenheim Farm BBOWT, Charlbury, Oxon**

Summer butterflies may include **Marbled White**; and other grassland and hedgerow species.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 1st July at 10:30am**  
**Pamber Forest & Silchester Common, Hants**

Exploring for heathland and woodland butterflies including **Silver-studded Blue** and **White Admiral**.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 2nd July at 11:00am**  
**Hackpen Hill, Sparsholt Firs, Oxon**

A walk in search of butterflies of unimproved chalk downland, including **Dark Green Fritillary**.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 2nd July at 11:00am**  
**Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, Bucks**

A training event to look at butterfly and day-flying moth identification.

[Further details](#)



**Tuesday 4th July at 2:00pm**  
**Maidenhead Thicket NT, Berks**

We will search for **White-letter Hairstreak** amongst the rides through this wooded common.

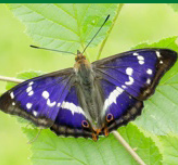
[Further details](#)



**Wednesday 5th July at 7:00pm**  
**East Hagbourne, Oxon**

An evening walk to see what butterflies do outside 'normal transect' hours, including **Marbled White**.

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 6th July at 10:00am**  
**Bernwood Forest, Oxon/Bucks**

An amble around this hotspot for woodland butterflies including, hopefully, **Purple Emperor**.

[Further details](#)

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**



**Friday 7th July at 10:30am**  
**Black Park Country Park, Bucks**

A joint walk, with the Country Park, to see woodland butterflies including, hopefully, **White Admiral**.

[Further details](#)

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**



**Thursday 13th July at 11:00am**  
**Ivinghoe Beacon NT, Bucks**

We will search the steep downland slopes for butterflies including **Dark Green Fritillary**.

[Further details](#)



If the **'Further Details'** button does not work... please go to the **Butterfly Conservation website**, click on the **'Events'** tab (at the top or in the menu), choose **'Upper Thames'** from the **'Search by Branch'** menu, click **'Search'** and **scroll down** until you find the walk you are looking for.



**Saturday 15th July at 10:00am**  
**Homefield Wood BBOWT, Bucks**

We will explore this small reserve for butterflies of woodland including **Silver-washed Fritillary**.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 15th July at 11:00am**  
**Stoke Pages Memorial Gardens, Milton Keynes, Bucks**

We will explore the gardens to see what butterflies and other wildlife we can find.

[Further details](#)

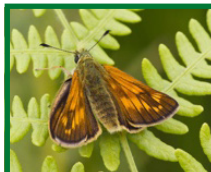


**Sunday 16th July 11:30am**  
**Bernwood Meadows, Oxon/Bucks**

An amble around this hotspot for woodland butterflies including, hopefully, **Purple Emperor**.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)

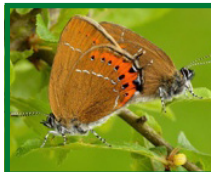


**Sunday 23rd July at 10:30am**  
**Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, Bucks**

A walk to see summer butterflies of woodland and countryside, may include **White Admiral**.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 27th July at 10:30am**  
**Whitecross Green Wood, Oxon**

We will focus on getting views of **White-letter Hairstreak** and other woodland butterflies.

[Further details](#)

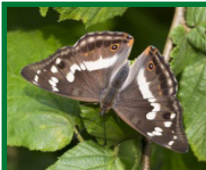


**Sunday 30th July at 10:30am**  
**BBOWT Foxholes, Oxon**

We will be looking for woodland butterflies including, hopefully, **White Admiral**.

**BOOKING  
REQUIRED**

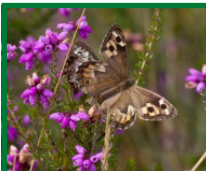
[Further details](#)



**Thursday 3rd August at 10:00am**  
**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

We will explore this magnificent woodland for **Purple Emperor** and other woodland butterflies.

[Further details](#)



**Thursday 3rd August at 11:00am**  
**Greenham Common BBOWT, Berks**

An exploration of this extensive heathland for **Grayling** and other heathland butterflies.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 5th August at 10:30am**  
**Wytham Woods, Oxon**

A walk to see and identify high-summer butterflies, maybe even **White-letter Hairstreak**.

[Further details](#)

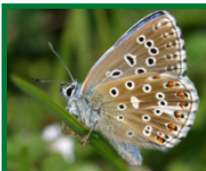


**Saturday 12th August at 10:00am**  
**Colstrop Farm, Hambledon, Henley-on-Thames, Bucks**

**BOOKING  
 REQUIRED**

A walk describing how management has improved biodiversity. With Charles Flower (renowned wildflower expert).

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 12th August at 10:30am**  
**Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks**

We will explore the steep downland for **Adonis Blue** and other summer grassland butterflies.

[Further details](#)



**Sunday 13th August at 10:30am**  
**Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon**

A careful amble along the steep slopes of this iconic butterfly reserve for **Silver-spotted Skipper**.

[Further details](#)



**Saturday 19th August at 10:30am**  
**Rushbeds Wood, Bucks**

We will wander along to the meadows in search of **Brown Hairstreak** and other woodland species.

[Further details](#)

If the **'Further Details'** button does not work... please go to the **Butterfly Conservation website**, click on the **'Events'** tab (at the top or in the menu), choose **'Upper Thames'** from the **'Search by Branch'** menu, click **'Search'** and **scroll down** until you find the walk you are looking for.



**Sunday 19th August at 11:00am**  
**Grangelands, Bucks**  
A walk in search of butterflies of unimproved chalkdownland, including **Chalk Hill Blue** and **Silver-Spotted Skipper**. [Further details](#)



**Tuesday 22nd August at 10:30am**  
**Watlington Hill, Oxon**  
A stroll across this steep downland in search of **Chalk Hill Blue** and **Silver-spotted Skipper**. [Further details](#)



**Tuesday 29th August at 11:00am**  
**RSPB Otmoor, Oxon**  
We will focus on the 'Roman Road' seeking decent views of **Brown Hairstreak**, as well as other species. [Further details](#)

I have taken on quite a few guided walks myself this year. This is because several previous leaders have dropped out - mainly due to the 'added bureaucracy' of our increasingly 'blame culture' society. **If you would like to help out, either by taking on leading one of 'my' walks or by helping me or one of the other leaders, that would be fantastic...** particularly if you have a current First Aid certificate and would be willing to take on BC online training (fairly straightforward and all done in about two hours).



Many thanks  
**Peter Philp**  
Field Trip Organiser  
[guided-walks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:guided-walks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

# Aston Rowant NNR 27th May 2023: Identification of Species

10 people joined this walk at Bald Hill. At first, things were very quiet with hardly any butterflies or day-flying moths seen. This seemed odd under perfect blue skies with only a light wind. After an hour or so, perhaps the temperature rose... as the number of butterflies (especially Common Blue) and moths appeared quite suddenly. Even so, the site did not seem as beneficent as usual, and we struggled - failing to see several species normally found on these lovely chalk grasslands with extensive views across the Vale of Oxford.

However, using glass tubes to allow close scrutiny of key features, we got very close views of most of those species seen - of butterflies (Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, Common Blue [m.& f.], Brown Argus, Small Heath, Small Copper) and day-flying moths (Burnet Companion, Yellow Shell, Silver Y, Common Carpet, Common Purple and Gold, Wavy-barred Sable, Hook-tip Veneer); and we saw free-flying Orange-tip, Large White, Brimstone, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood and Mother Shipton moth.



Burnet Companion ©David Hastings

We also observed the snail-shell-nesting *Osmia bicolor* mason bee carrying grass stalks, and a slow worm. Some saw a common lizard and a herd of fallow deer; a dark-edged bee fly was noted; and we were able to compare garden chafer with soldier beetle and red-headed cardinal beetle.

**Nick Bowles**

## ...and for something a little different



Photo ©Geoff Sutton

Geoff Sutton was very fortunate to see this variation (*ab. schmidtii*) of Small Copper (at Shotover, Oxfordshire, on 17th May) one which the editor has been hoping (but failing!) to see for decades...

Send in your unusual sightings to [newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)



## Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) – still a few vacant squares

These surveys are really important in order for Butterfly Conservation to understand how our butterflies are faring in the wider countryside across the UK. **There are still 6 squares in our region without surveyors.** If you could spare a few hours to do one, that would be great. I really would like to get all squares covered for 2023.

- SP2405: Filkins, Carterton, Oxon
- SP3523: Enstone, Oxon
- SP6124: Stratton Audley, Bicester, Oxon
- SP7130: Padbury, Bucks
- SU7669: Carters Hill, Sindlesham, Berks
- TQ0186: Aldbourne Manor, Gerrards Cross, Bucks



If you can help, or would like further information, please get in touch.

**Peter Philp, WCBS Champion**  
[wcb-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:wcb-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

### Butterflies find safe haven in UK gardens

New research by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has found that half of the 22 butterfly species under consideration saw a significant increase in their abundance within 'study gardens' between 2007 and 2020.

The study found strong similarities between these new, garden-focused butterfly population trends and those previously reported more broadly by the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS), of which the WCBS is part.

If you'd like to read the research, please refer to:  
<https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/butterflies-find-safe-haven-in-uk-gardens-new-research-reveals>

... or you can find it [here](#)



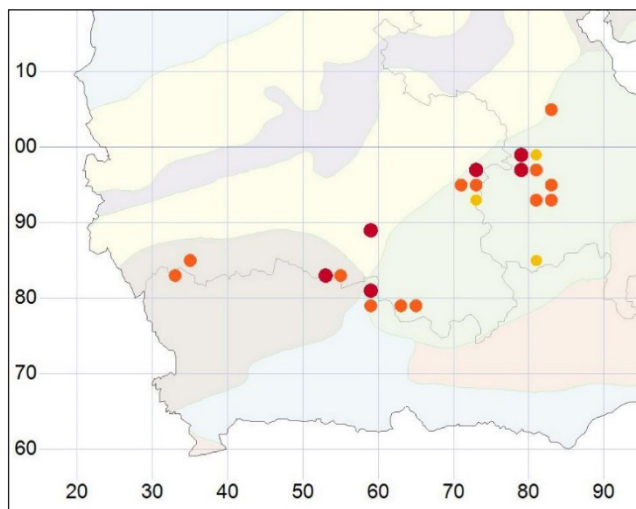
# Adonis Blue in '22



Male Adonis Blue ©Gail Hampshire

Our colonies of the stunning Adonis Blue had a reasonably successful year in 2022, especially at their strongholds of Lardon Chase, The Holies, Aston Rowant and Yoesden Bank. The earliest sighting was recorded at The Holies on 14th May, and the latest at Aston Rowant on 22nd September. This differs slightly from the comparable dates of 25th April at Aston Rowant and 22nd September at Aston Rowant and Yoesden in 2021, probably because of a later, chilly spring in 2022. The earliest date of

emergence often also reflects a more southerly location and the latest sighting that of a more northerly one.



## Adonis Blue: 2022

- 1 sighting
- 2-9 max seen
- 10+ max seen

Looking at data from 1997 onwards, it is possible to see a trend towards the establishment of strong colonies further north in our region, perhaps indicating the effects of climate change. But there has also been a decline in the number of

strong colonies in the Goring Gap, some notable colonies having disappeared from around 2012 onwards due to changes in site ownership and management. Others, like Watlington Hill and Hartslock, continue to produce patchy records of very few individuals. But there are a few possible new sites to keep an eye on in the coming years, mainly to the east of existing colonies in the South Bucks Chilterns, and a possible 'revival' in the Goring Gap.

The right habitat conditions are vital to the success and viability of a colony. Take for instance the example of Lardon Chase and Lough Down. Lardon Chase is south facing, well-managed, richly floriferous chalk grassland with a well-established

stronghold colony of Adonis Blue. Lough Down, the adjacent field, which shares its management regime and has a comparably rich sward, is north-east facing and clearly not favoured by the butterfly. Only recently have there been sightings in this area.



Mating Adonis Blues ©Chaz Jackson

Adonis Blue can be a difficult butterfly to identify, especially if it has been a while since you last saw one. A freshly emerged Common Blue can fool the unwary into thinking they are witnessing the full glory of the Adonis. However, once seen, the almost iridescent blue of the male Adonis is unmistakable and seldom forgotten. Not so the female, unfortunately! Records of female Adonis lag far behind the males and, in several instances, persistent colonies have no records of females in any given year.

This is patently unrealistic but shows how difficult it is to reliably tell the male Adonis from the female Chalk Hill Blue – so much so that some sites' data may only show females when mating is recorded. This makes it difficult to predict whether a colony remains viable.

We would like to thank all those volunteer recorders who enable us to keep tabs on the health of the Adonis Blue populations in our region. Your continued interest and contributions are invaluable.

**Maureen Cross and Margery Slatter  
Adonis Blue Champions**

**The full, comprehensive 2022 Adonis Blue Champions' Report may be viewed on the website by clicking [here](#).**

New 2022 Champions' Reports for both [Purple Emperor](#) and [Silver-spotted Skipper](#) are also now available on the website. Just click on the species above to view.



# Summer Ragwort and Dogwood Control Tasks



**We would appreciate some help** with pulling ragwort, and raking up on the dogwood control days. Both tasks seek to control these plants - not remove them completely. Please bring gloves and bags in which to place pulled ragwort. All other tools are provided.

If you are interested in more details, please contact [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com)

Leader & contact number for all the tasks:  
**Nick Bowles 07727 441376**

## 1. Saunderton, Bucks (Joint task with Chiltern Rangers)

**O.S. ref of meeting point** nearby Postcode what3words  
SP80270160 HP27 9NL ///plotter.betrayed.strictest

Date	start time	tasks	end time
Thurs 13.07.23	10.00	Dogwood control	13.00

## 2. Holtspur Bottom, Bucks

**O.S. ref of meeting point** nearby Postcode what3words  
SU918906 HP9 1BT ///manage.banana.chimp

Date	start time	tasks	end time
Thurs 06.07.23	10.00	Ragwort and Dogwood control	13.00
Tues 08.08.23	10.00	Ragwort control	13.00
Weds 16.08.23	10.00	Ragwort control	13.00
Thurs 31.08.23	10.00	Ragwort control	13.00

# Moths on a mission... everyone's a winner!

How many of us knew that night-flying moths were more efficient pollinators than day-flying insects such as bees?

Research undertaken by the University of Sussex during July 2021 [and reported by BC] concluded – in a study of the effectiveness of insects' pollination of bramble flowers – that **night-flying moths were** the 'kings and queens' of efficiency, **able to pollinate the flowers more quickly** during the short summer hours of darkness than their day-flying pollinator counterparts.

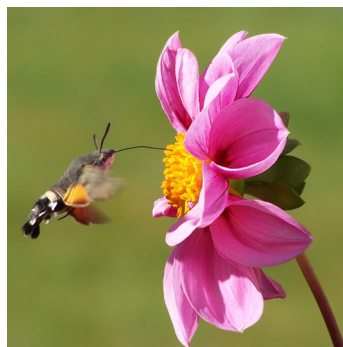
Bramble is often unfavourably viewed due to its invasiveness, but, if you have some in your garden and can tolerate it, allowing it to contribute to the pollination process will benefit wildlife whilst providing you with a supply of blackberries - so, everyone's a winner!



Dark Arches, recorded in 92% of UTB's 10k squares (data to end 2020) ©John Thacker

The University of Sussex also undertook a 2-year project a while ago, researching and recording visits by insects to 32 popular summer-flowering plant varieties, and the results of this research ('Functional Ecology': *Garden plants for flower-visiting insects*) are well worth consulting if you are planning to introduce new plants to your garden...

<https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1365-2435.12178>



Humming-bird Hawk-moth  
©Butterfly Conservation

BC also reported that 2022 was a 'bumper year' for the Humming-bird Hawk-moth, with an estimated ten-fold increase in sightings reported across the UK.

An immigrant from Europe and North Africa, this species – which is most likely seen between May and September (a similar flight period to Dark Arches, above) – particularly likes tubular flowers with a good supply of nectar, so honeysuckle, buddleia and red valerian are a good choice if you want to attract it to your garden.

**Derek Haynes**





The trial plots had been set up to investigate different vegetation management strategies.



Small Blue ©Andy Spragg

It turned out that at first Kidney Vetch, and then Small Blue, had appeared on some of the plots, causing some excitement. I subsequently identified three previous records within 2-3 km of the trial plots; not implausibly far, but considerably further than received wisdom suggests. The Butterfly Conservation Small Blue Action Plan, published in 2000, indicates that individuals travel typically less than 40 m but occasionally up to 1 km (with occasional vagrants travelling up to 17 km!).

Perhaps I came over a little over-interested in all matters Small Blue (although to be fair, that was why I was there) because Sarah joked at one point that “it’s not all about the Small Blue, you know!”. She went on to tell me about the 50th anniversary, and the plans for a Ridgeway Top 50 social media calendar, with one interesting Ridgeway fact per week throughout 2023. Putting these two things together, I enquired whether a report on all the butterflies of the Ridgeway might be of interest, if I could obtain the necessary data set, and this suggestion was enthusiastically received.

Back at base, I identified all the 1 km squares covering the Ridgeway, and then made enquiries about the possibility of creating a Ridgeway data set. Without one, the enterprise was doomed, and I didn’t know how easy or even practical

it would be to extract records for nearly 500 1 km squares across Branch boundaries (most of the Ridgeway is Upper Thames territory, but the western end is in Wiltshire). With the keen assistance of Jim Asher, who leveraged my request to extract up-to-date information from Wiltshire Branch, I acquired a Ridgeway data set of nearly 200,000 records, covering all butterfly species for a period of more than 25 years and a total area of 491 km<sup>2</sup>. No more pitfalls or hurdles! From that point on, I had only to fashion a report that Sarah would hopefully find informative for Ridgeway 50th anniversary purposes, presenting the results of a lot of data analysis, without presupposing any prior knowledge of butterflies.

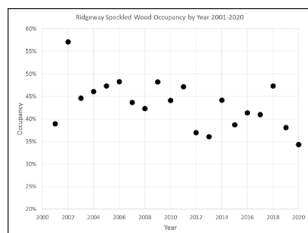
The report can now be found [here](#).

My analysis threw up some unexpected findings. I created a standard set of graphs for each species, including a plot of “occupancy” from 2001 to 2020: for each species and year, the number of squares with species records, divided by the number of squares with butterfly records. It indicates how likely each species is to be seen on the Ridgeway. For most species, that plot was statistically a flat line, indicating no change in Ridgeway occupancy over the last twenty years. However, the data indicated an increasing trend for two species, and a decreasing trend for two others.

The Silver-washed Fritillary and the Dark Green Fritillary are apparently expanding their Ridgeway occupancy. The Silver-washed Fritillary was identified, in the

2015 Atlas of Butterflies in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, as spectacularly expanding its occupancy of Upper Thames territory. This existing knowledge gave me confidence in my own data analysis. However, I am unaware of any such previous finding for the Dark Green Fritillary, so this was a pleasant surprise.

The two species whose Ridgeway occupancy appears to be decreasing are the Chalk Hill Blue and the Speckled Wood. The Chalk Hill Blue is a habitat specialist, albeit relatively widespread on the Ridgeway, and so an apparent decrease in occupancy, whilst of concern, is perhaps not so surprising.



The data for the Speckled Wood, however, came as a shock to me, and

has worried me ever since. Assuming the result is not an artefact, it is not easy to see what might be responsible; in particular, the Speckled Wood is unique in the UK in being able to over-winter as either larva or pupa, which ought to make it uniquely resilient in the face of meteorological ups and downs. The official Butterfly Conservation line on this species is that, nationally, it is of least concern and has actually expanded its range spectacularly since the 1970s.

I am currently in correspondence with Butterfly Conservation about this apparent contradiction.

**Andy Spragg**

## Once upon a time...

... the High Brown Fritillary – now very localised in the west of Britain – was flying in our region.

According to Natural History Museum (NHM) records, this species could be found in all 3 counties around 100 years



High Brown Fritillary  
©Derek Haynes

ago - albeit seemingly in relatively small numbers. The main sightings were on the northern fringes of the Chilterns, with other more isolated records from across our region. Even Windsor Forest had a population.



One wonders what effect (if any) the 'enthusiastic' collectors of the time had on the demise of this (and other) species? One such collector, for example, took 11 High Brown Fritillaries on 26th June 1917 on Chorleywood Common, on the Bucks/Herts border.

Perhaps the word **conservation** hadn't made it into the dictionaries of the period!

Citation: Natural History Museum (2014). Specimens (from Collection specimens) [Data set resource]. Natural History Museum. <https://data.nhm.ac.uk/dataset/collection-specimens/resource/05ff2255-c38a-40c9-b657-4ccb55ab2feb>

# Wytham Woods (Oxford) 13th May 2023: Guided Walk Report

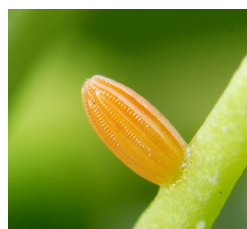
Our first Guided Walk of the 2023 season was planned for Wytham Woods, the same as for 2022. Last year we had 2 people take part; this year, having decided to put all the Branch walks onto Eventbrite, we had rather more. I had set the booking limit at 20, but this walk became fully booked over a month beforehand, and I had a further 3 people who asked if they could participate. I decided to put on an extra session in the afternoon, and this too was fully booked several days before the walk.

So far, so good: 42 people booked (yes, I let in a couple of extras!).

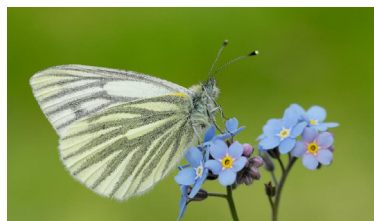
However, despite the weather forecast suggesting the temperature would rise to about 15°C by mid-morning and it would then be mostly sunny, it never got above 12°C and the sun never shone. It looked like it was going to on several occasions, but never did. Exactly the same happened in the afternoon!

If this wasn't bad enough, the A34 southbound was closed (added to the Botley Road closure and rail strikes)... and the traffic was horrendous. I took nearly 2 hours to get to the site, a journey which is normally less than 15 minutes. Fortunately, Hilary had arrived on site and 'held the fort', but I decided to delay the start until 10am to allow others to arrive.

15 people finally made it for the morning session, and after a brief introduction to the site and an idea of what we might see, we set out (several people had texted to say they had given up due to the traffic). Insects of any kind were few and far between, but we satisfied ourselves with a nice variety of spring flowers, pointing out several butterfly foodplants. There was a great show of Bluebells and – whilst photographing Garlic Mustard flowers – one of our group noticed a single Orange-tip egg (our only lepidopteran of the morning).



Orange-tip ovum  
©Gilles San Martin/BC



Green-veined White ©Iain Leach/BC

16 people turned up for the afternoon session (again delayed by traffic). It basically followed the same patterns as the morning, though we did get to see 1 butterfly species and a couple of moths. A nice fresh male Green-veined White perched low down and gave everyone time to study its key features, and several the chance to photograph it.

A Common Heath moth gave us the run-around (whilst trying to find Green Hairstreaks), but eventually gave reasonably good views - and a few of us saw a Burnet Companion in the grassland area. We also picked out a number of different Bees and Hoverflies. Alas, no Green Hairstreaks!



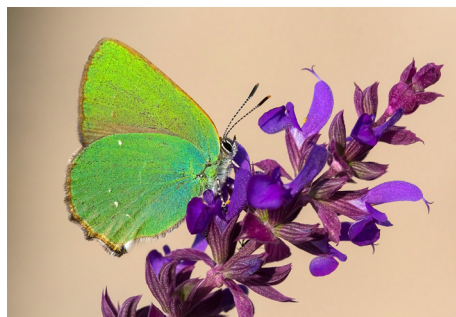
Common Heath moth  
©Ryszard Szczygiel/BC

Though the weather and traffic conspired against us, the group was full of enthusiasm and thoroughly enjoyed a splendid site. The final irony: when I got home at 5:30pm, as soon as I got out of the car the sun shone through and the evening really brightened up.

**Peter Philp (Walk leader)**

*[Sod's Law comes to mind, Peter! The usual case for me is that it's nice and sunny when I leave home, yet overcast when I get to site - Ed.]*

## Paices Wood (Reading) 20th May 2023: Guided Walk Report



Green Hairstreak ©Tamas Nestor/BC



Speckled Yellow moth ©Tamas Nestor/BC

A group of 11 of us set out to look at this extensive country park which has lakes and ponds, woodland, grassland and areas of heathy scrub. We saw 10 species of butterfly and a couple of moths. Butterflies included Dingy Skipper, Brown Argus and the delightfully bright Green Hairstreak.

For the moths, there were lots of Speckled Yellow and a Silver-ground Carpet.

**Hilary Glew (Walk leader)**

# Box Clever

The Box (or Box-tree) Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*), originating from south-east Asia and whose larvae eat and potentially severely damage box (*Buxus*) plants, was accidentally introduced to the UK as recently as 2007. In recent years this species has become firmly established here, spreading across the country, including into Scotland.



Over the recent Bank Holiday in Oxfordshire, resident and member of Natural England, Vicky Gilson, checked for Box Moth larvae eating her small 1m high x 2m long section of box hedge by her porch. What follows is her account.



“Box Moth had been present in low numbers for at least 2 years previously, but defoliation was far worse than normal this year and had affected box plants in neighbours’ gardens also - theirs to total defoliation. You could hear the box moth larvae eating the box!”

RHS advice (available [here](#)) to preserve the box plants yet protect other wildlife is to hand-pick caterpillars, so it was an opportunity to count abundance.

Box Moth ‘yield’ in warm sunny weather on 27th May at 8.30pm from a 15-minute hand-pick of the 2m hedge by 2 people was estimated c.350-400 larvae - 110 grams. (Extrapolated from weighing 100 larvae).

A second pick of the Box Moth larvae on 28th May at 8.30pm - a longer pick of half an hour by 2 people in a 2m hedge = 460 caterpillars = 130g.

I counted each one this time. There were still Box Moth larvae remaining when we stopped collecting. We had observed them on the walls and windows of the house: occasional large larvae moving away from the hedge upwards, scaling our house and our neighbour’s house.



Pupae were found and old empty pupal cases. We were able to collect twenty more caterpillars easily the following day (30th May), but more remained.



Given that some have already left the hedge and others remain, one can accurately estimate there were at least 1000 larvae on one small hedge! We removed them to a wild area by the back garden – well away from any foodplants – for other garden wildlife to ‘enjoy’. We observed, the next day, a sparrow taking one Box Moth larva from the hedge, but they don’t appear to be favoured by birds despite a flock of sparrows nearby.

We will be keeping an eye on the progress of the moths, perhaps until we replace the hedge with a less tasty yet wildlife-friendly option!”

**Vicky Gilson**

[All but the first image ©Vicky Gilson]

[Ed.: Butterfly Conservation has issued its own advice note on this moth, which can be read [here](#).]

## Field Meeting at Yoesden 25th May 2023

There were 19 of us for this walk at the BBOWT Reserve of Yoesden, near Radnage. It was a sunny day with a gentle breeze. We saw 14 species throughout the morning.



Adonis Blue ©Mark Hagger

They were Adonis Blue, Small Blue, Common Blue, Marsh Fritillary, Small Heath, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Peacock, Green-veined White, Red Admiral, Holly Blue, Orange-tip, Green Hairstreak and Brimstone.

A very pleasant morning at a lovely reserve.

**Brenda Mobbs**



## We all make mistakes!

Recently I was leading a walk at Yoesden and was delighted to be able to show the whole group a pair of mating butterflies, confident they must be a pair of Adonis Blues. It was only when looking more closely at my photo that evening I started to question what I had seen. I talked to one well-known butterfly guru who thought it was a male Common Blue.

If it was a Common Blue male mating with a female Adonis Blue, then that would be a big mistake for the butterflies to make. Cross-species' matings are known, and in the case of the closely-related Chalk Hill and Adonis Blue can produce live though sterile young - but all species have measures in place to make this less likely.



The female was definitely an Adonis Blue and, while incredibly beautiful, was an aberrant form [which Derek Haynes says is called *ab. krodell*]. It lacks most of the coloured spots that help identify this species, but the dark checking through the wing edges and the lack of adult Chalk Hill Blues at this time of year means it must have been an Adonis female.

Derek wasn't so sure that the male could be a Common Blue, and consulted Peter Eeles (of UK Butterflies) who is of the opinion that it is an Adonis Blue male, because:

1. The lack of chequered fringe is simply because the fringe is missing, and the dark markings are at the extremity of the fringe (the dark markings fan out).
2. The colour of the scales showing through the tear look more like a male Adonis.
3. The pattern of spots (less inline) suggests Adonis.
4. The relative size of male and female.
5. The flattened tips and brown colouring of the tips of the antennae look more like Adonis.

The following images of Common Blue (left) and Adonis Blue pairings may help to explain Peter's comments above:



So, I looked through other photos of mine and compared them, and my conclusion is that without seeing the upperside or wing edges it can be very hard to tell, but that as the butterflies can sense pheromones and quite likely other signals we cannot, I will defer to the butterflies being right.

You just never know what you will see when you are in the field: we do our best to put names to things but at the end of the day the insects are the only ones who know what they are!

I would encourage everyone to take a good look at even common things you come across, as you never know what you might see.

My thanks to Derek and Peter for putting me right!

**Sue Taylor**

All images © Sue Taylor

Check out on [page 22](#) how Adonis Blue fared in our region in '22

## Lardon Chase: 27th May 2023



14 butterfly enthusiasts met their guides, Margery Slatter and Maureen Cross, at Lardon Chase in Berkshire. A National Trust property, Lardon Chase features rich chalk-grassland flora to entice scrub and grassland butterflies. The very steep terrain allows for spectacular views of the woodlands and valley near the village of Streatley.

Our target species was Adonis Blue, and we were not disappointed. Nine males and one female were spotted, and they posed nicely for photographs. In addition, there were many Small Blues, Common Blues and Brimstones. Dingy and Grizzled Skippers made an appearance as did Small Heaths and a Brown Argus.



Small Blue



Yellow Shell, Silver Y, Mint, Mother Shipton and Treble Lines also displayed well. It was a spectacular sunny day and the participants were well satisfied.

Mother Shipton

**Photos and text by Linda Seward**

## Pitstone Church End: 28th May 2023

Six people joined Brenda Mobbs and myself at Pitstone Church End; this is a site I know well and often visit. The day was warm and sunny with only a light breeze: perfect. The target species (Small Blue) was soon seen, and everyone got good views. However, that was the only insect species we saw in numbers, reflecting a pattern seen on many other usually-buzzing sites this year.

I suspect that last year's long hot dry summer followed by the cold damp spring has seen a general fall in numbers, so it is especially important that we keep up our efforts to maintain and improve habitats so that numbers can bounce back.

The following were seen: Small Blue approx. 110, Brimstone 13, Common Blue 15, Grizzled Skipper 5, Dingy Skipper 6, Holly Blue 3, Small Heath 11, Peacock 1, Green Hairstreak 2, Burnet Companion 8, Treble-bar 3... and some that were unidentified.

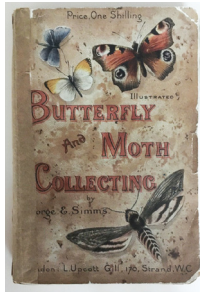


That might sound a lot, but on 21/5/2018 I stopped counting at 300 Small Blue, 27 Dingy Skipper, 30 Small Heath and a range of other species... This underlines the importance of repeated surveys of sites over many years.

**Sue Taylor**

# The Passage of Time

I own a 19th century book, *Butterfly and Moth Collecting*, by George E. Simms - one certainly from a different era to our own.



I wanted to share with you an extract from a letter (found inside the book) that was sent to a couple's grandson in 1924...

*"My dear boy... I am sending you this little book and hope you will be able to make a collection for your museum; and hope you will read carefully on page 7 how to kill them, so as not to inflict unnecessary suffering... I must be on the lookout for some specimens for you this summer, but granny is the lead to find them."*

Raised eyebrows, anyone? Some 'fascinating snippets' from this intriguing book include:

*"The Twenty-plume moth has a strange liking for civilised society... flies to the window, and scuds unceasingly up and down the panes of glass just as if it wished to make its tiny self as conspicuous as possible!"*

*"If the district we are engaged in hunting happens by good fortune to be situated in a limestone district, we shall in all probability meet with the Grayling (*Satyrus semele*)... a handsome and striking addition to the collection."*

*"The Wood Ringlet (*Satyrus hyperanthus*) is so common that I have frequently caught from 60 to 80 specimens in an afternoon, and had I cared to commit wholesale slaughter I could easily have netted double or treble that number."*

*"The wily entomologist, knowing that it is impossible to capture His Imperial Highness with anything less than a net mounted on a pole 40ft in length, deposits a piece of decaying animal matter at the foot of one of its favourite trees, lights his pipe, and watches for results. In life or death, the Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) is a resplendent creature, clothed in fine regal purple."*

*"To collect larvae, the net is pushed through the undergrowth, and its contents, which consists of a miscellaneous collection of rubbish, must be examined at short intervals for the larvae which have been forced from their foodplants into the bag."*

The author has a somewhat 'romanticised' way of describing the deliberate culling of our species, don't you think? **Fortunately, much good sometimes comes from the passage of time...**

**Derek Haynes**

# Aston Upthorpe Downs 13th May 2023: Guided Walk Report

Saturday morning dawned sunny and warm, though the NNE breeze gave an occasional chilly blast... and the cloud bubbled up in the late morning before clearing again in the early afternoon. 9 people turned up, and, after the normal introductions and briefings, we set off up the track.

We soon picked out Brimstones, Orange-tips and a Small White, before we spotted several dainty Holly Blues. Our walk turned out longer than intended (apologies to participants) because someone had stolen our track (or the leader missed it!). This did give us fantastic panoramic views of the downs and allowed us to add Peacock, Red Admiral and several lovely bright fresh Small Coppers.

As we eventually dropped down into Juniper Valley, we started to see some of the grassland and scrub specialists. First up was a nice 'chequered' Grizzled Skipper, followed shortly by a number of (somewhat unkindly named) Dingy

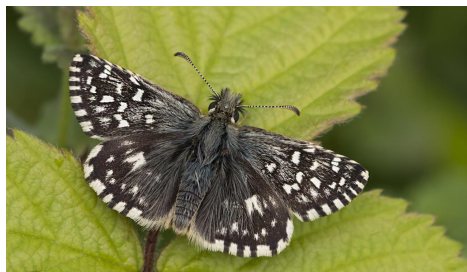
Skippers. The smaller size and silverish flight colour allowed us to separate quite a few Brown Argus from the female (and male) Common Blues.

There were several Cinnabar and Mother Shipton moths on the wing, but our search of the normal areas failed to turn up any Green Hairstreaks. A couple of Painted Lady butterflies were a nice surprise.

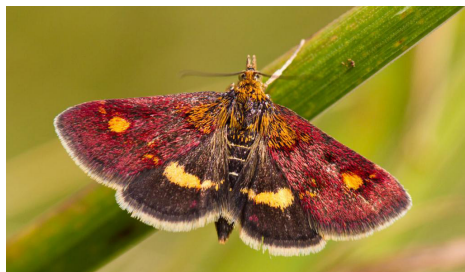
As we were nearing the end of our walk we saw that the Pasqueflowers were more or less over but Common Rockrose, Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil and lots of Salad Burnet were of some compensation.

A few of the group stayed onsite to enjoy our picnic lunch and chat about 'all things butterflies and moths'. We saw many more Dingy Skippers and had good views of several small purple and gold Mint Moths.

**Peter Philp (Walk leader)**



Grizzled Skipper ©Bob Eade/BC



Mint Moth ©Alan Drewitt/BC

# For the Butterfly Wonderer: Do the Tick Dance!



Unfortunately, ticks are becoming increasingly common... and, with it, the risk of contracting Lyme disease or another tick-borne infection.

So, to keep safe in the field: stick to paths and avoid going through long grass; avoid areas frequented by deer - such as their tracks and places they lie down.

Wear long trousers tucked into socks and a long-sleeved shirt (preferably light in colour, so you can see the ticks on your clothes and they can be brushed off). [Now you know why field naturalists look so trendy when out and about!!]

## **When you get home, do the Tick Dance:**

Find a full-length mirror (or a very good friend), remove all your clothes and your watch (erm, yes, best done in private!).

Put your left arm out, check visually and feel with your right hand. Raise your arm to the sky and check under arm and shoulder.

Put your right arm out and check, then check each leg.

Do a twirl... checking your whole body and lifting floppy and flabby bits as required.

Don't forget your face and hairline too.

All done, all clear, sigh with relief... and carry on with your life.

If you do find one (they can be VERY small) use tweezers to remove it, pulling vertically up from the skin and wipe the spot with an antiseptic. This reduces the chances of becoming infected.

*[Ed. I have invested in a Tome Tick Removal Kit, which contains all the tools, instructions and advice needed.]*

Don't panic: ticks found within 12 hours won't have started feeding, so infection is unlikely and only a small proportion of ticks carry disease.

**Do read up on symptoms and seek immediate medical advice if you have symptoms.**

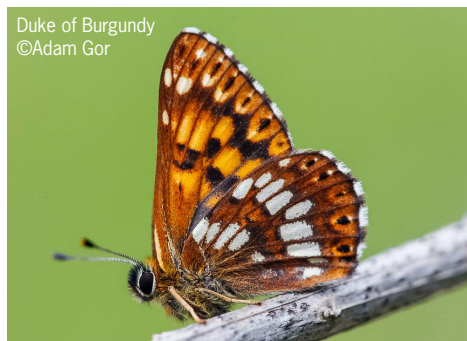
When you next see your GP, tell them you have been exposed to tick bites, making a timely diagnosis more likely.

Be safe and enjoy our fantastic countryside.

**Sue Taylor**

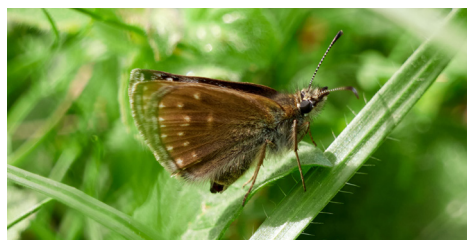


# Ivinghoe Beacon 21st May 2023: Guided Walk Report



20 of us gathered in the car park overlooking this spectacular location right at the start (or end!) of The Ridgeway. The start of our walk saw plenty of sunshine and it was not long before we were treated to the delight of finding our target species. There is something very special about being with people seeing something they've never had the joy of seeing before, and this time for a few it was the charming Duke of Burgundy.

After an hour or so of full sunshine, the morning clouded over a bit and the breeze gave a significant drop in temperature affecting what we saw for a while... but in the warmth and shelter of the gully we soon started picking up more frequent sightings, including Dingy and Grizzled Skipper.



A lesson from the day: if you are new and not sure of your identification, don't be shy! One newcomer did not know what they were looking at but took a photo to show me... and they had found the elusive Green Hairstreak! We did laugh, and they will perhaps be more forthcoming in the future.



By the end of a delightful morning, we had seen 11 species of butterfly plus Mother Shipton moth, Mint moth and a variety of other wildlife.



**Steph Rodgers (Walk leader)**

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/berkmoths/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

[www.holtspurbottom.info](http://www.holtspurbottom.info)

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