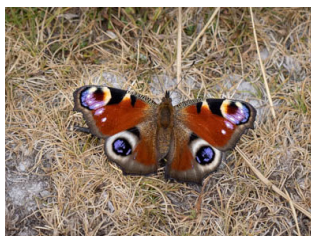


UPPER THAMES BRANCH

# Hairstreak

ISSUE 121 | SPRING 2024



**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 (from top, anticlockwise)...

- Small Tortoiseshells at Hillesden (Bucks) 3rd April 2023 (©Neil Holman)
- Volunteers working at the disused railway line near Westcott (Bucks) 20th February 2024 (©Nick Bowles/UTB)
- Peacock seen at a Holtspur Bottom (Bucks) work party 28th January 2024 (©Nick Bowles/UTB)
- Volunteers working at Buttler's Hangings (Bucks) 13th February 2024 (©Nick Bowles/UTB)

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# Editorial

It's springtime, hoorah! For many (including me), this is the favourite season: full of anticipation and hope for the year ahead.

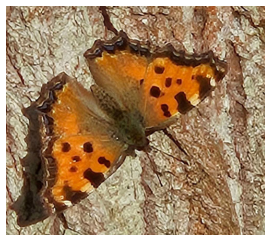


Maybe others share my enthusiasm, too, for one of the year's first native 'arrivals': the Orange-tip? Such a gentle and attractive butterfly, one which is a sign

(hopefully) of warmer weather to come. Mark Jones spotted this male on 7th April last year – just 4 days after the first reported sighting of the species in our area in 2023. Wonderful!

In the same week, Neil Holman photographed the two Small Tortoiseshells which feature on this issue's front cover. One wonders how many other members were fortunate to see two at the same time in 2023, which was a particularly poor year for the species.

Whilst on the subject of spring butterflies, the Branch perceives some 'gaps' in their records... particularly for the Orange-tip. So, do please record and submit all your sightings.



One unexpected sighting (recorded by Tony Croft on 15th Feb. this year) was this Large Tortoiseshell at Whitecross

Green Wood (Oxon). A splendid specimen, indeed!

Nick Bowles, our Chairman, has worked tirelessly to organise and participate in most (if not all) of the winter work parties, and we (and our species!) owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

Often working alongside Chiltern Rangers, UTB volunteers (and, most importantly, youngsters from local schools or youth groups, on occasion) undertook a series of tasks across the region. The Branch is most grateful, of course, to all its volunteers, and although our organised winter work parties are now all but over, you may wish to keep an eye on what's planned for the future by visiting <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/events>

Our Facebook Group page is also a place to look at regularly, as details of past work parties (invariably including photos) are posted there. Better still, why not join the Group, and get notified of new posts? Members of the Group also post other interesting information there, such as what they are trapping in their moth trap at home. As a member, you can join the Group (Butterflies and Moths of the Upper Thames region) at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/458565932924345>

We're excited to announce the first cluster of UTB's 2024 guided walks on pages 7-12 of this issue, along with articles (including requests for survey and recording assistance) which we hope will inspire you to start planning for the months ahead. Here's wishing you every success.

Any contributions for consideration for the next (summer) *Hairstreak* will be most welcome. Thanks.

**Derek Haynes**

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 31st MAY 2024.**

# View from the Chair

It is my favourite time of year again, spring!



A hibernated Peacock on spring blossom

I can dream of days of warm weather with lots of lovely insects all clearly seen and easily identified. One thing that improves my confidence that this will happen is the condition of nature reserves and private land where we worked during the winter months. UTB members planned (and carried out) 42 site visits to improve habitat condition, and we know that members also work with other organisations at other sites.

That's more than one thousand hours of voluntary work to directly aid the flora and therefore the invertebrates that we cherish. Their work means that we will see better numbers of the rarest species at those sites.

In fact, one 'winter' task remains, at a site with the Downland Plume, a moth that is only known from the Chilterns. It is obviously very important to look after the Downland Plume, and if we don't protect it here, no-one else can.

A week after that task, the official Transect Survey season starts. I'm very hopeful that if you know a member that does voluntary conservation work, you think to thank them when you start to enjoy the uplifting sights of spring and then the

summer butterflies and moths. Please don't forget to record all that you see. You'll find various articles in this edition of *Hairstreak* which detail

ways in which you can get involved in surveys that inform winter conservation work. To help you with that, if you'd like some training in survey techniques, or in species' ID, see the events we are hosting throughout the year, all free and all detailed at

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

Finally, a warning that ticks are becoming more numerous. After each Branch event, please check that you are not carrying one, and, if you are, remove it carefully and report it to our volunteer co-ordinator, as BC wants to keep records of the frequency of tick bites which occur at its events. [See also the article on page 13].



Happiness is a rewarding survey

**Nick Bowles**



## Members' Day 2023: More Photo Competition Entries

In the last *Hairstreak*, we showed the winning photos (and a few others) from our Members' Day competition. Here are a few more excellent images that were submitted:



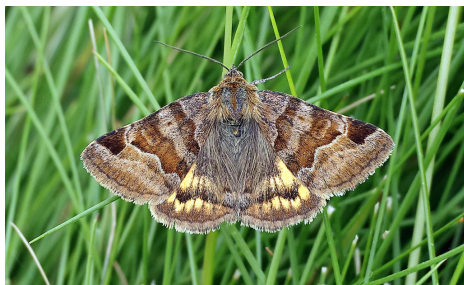
Unusual view of Jersey Tiger ©Bruce Hyde



Duke of Burgundy ©Sue Taylor



Chalkhill Blue ©Mark Batchelor



Burnet Companion ©David Hastings



Nettle Tree butterfly ©Sue Taylor



Apple Ermine larval nest ©Colin Mather

# The greater the effort, the greater the glory

Around 350 years ago, the French dramatist Pierre Corneille came up with the quote with which this article is entitled. Today, the quote is equally relevant – especially in the context of conservation.



Planting Kidney Vetch grown by a UTB volunteer. With luck, Small Blue will find it and lay eggs upon it.

Over the past winter, the Branch and its partners have invested both time and effort to help some of our most threatened species.

The photos reproduced here are testament to that time and effort,

reflecting the types of work that we need to carry out on behalf of our butterflies and moths.

Hopefully, they will encourage more of us to vacate our comfortable homes and give a helping hand. And it's not just our species that can benefit: we also stand to gain a lot on a personal level, too.

More recently than the time of Pierre Corneille, American President Theodore Roosevelt had similar thoughts: *"It is only through labor and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things"* – though I'm not sure our conservation work can be described as either painful or grim? (Just look at the photo below!)



Clearing tall vegetation and scrub from an area we wish to see as short, flower-rich turf.



A view inside a conservationist's boot: tools, waterproofs and food!

## Why not join us sometime soon?

Take a look on <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/events>



## Are you First Aid-trained?



You will be well aware that the Branch organises a large number of walks and conservation tasks throughout the year, and it has an obligation to ensure that a First Aider is present at each event.

The Branch is keen to learn if any of its members are First Aid-qualified (perhaps through their workplace) and would be prepared to be called upon if, for example, the Branch were to organise a walk or task in their area and felt that some additional First Aid support at that event would be beneficial.

If you can offer your expertise, Peter Philp (for walks) [guided-walks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:guided-walks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk) or Nick Bowles (for tasks) [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com) would love to hear from you. Thank you.

# Guided Walks 2024



**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.** Anyone can enjoy butterfly walks, regardless of their level of knowledge (even those with none!) First-time participants, children (with adult supervision), photographers... **you are ALL welcome.**

**PLEASE BOOK** if you are planning to attend one of our walks. This helps us to manage parking and our impact on the visited sites, and ensures the Leader does not turn up unnecessarily. 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 **'Booking & details'** link for each event).

**Please see the branch Guided Walks web page for guidance on how to get the most out of our guided walks, including meeting points etc.**

[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/guided\\_walks](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/guided_walks)

We have assembled an extensive programme of guided walks, to allow you to see some of our beautiful Lepidoptera 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 the regularly occurring butterfly species of our region, most of our rarer species; plus some of our day-flying moths.

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

Walks in May and June are featured on the following pages. Walks in July and August will be featured in the next newsletter, but you can always check ahead on the UTB website or Butterfly Conservation's 'Events' pages.

**Enjoy!**



If the **'Booking & 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 4th May at 10:30am**

**Incombe Hole**

[Booking & details](#)

A field meeting to help embed the spring butterfly and day-flying moth ID skills presented in the 2nd May Zoom meeting.



**Saturday 11th May at 10:30am**

**Small Dean Lane Bank**

[Booking & details](#)

A field meeting to help embed the spring butterfly and day-flying moth ID skills presented in the 2nd May Zoom meeting.

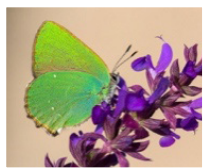


**Saturday 18th May at 10:30am**

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

[Booking & details](#)

A field meeting to help embed the spring butterfly and day-flying moth ID skills presented in the 2nd May Zoom meeting.

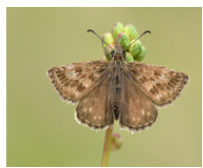


**Saturday 18th May at 10:30am**

**Wytham Woods, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

A field meeting to help embed the spring butterfly and day-flying moth ID skills presented in the 2nd May Zoom meeting.

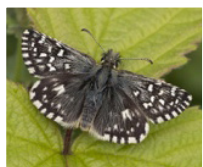


**Saturday 18th May at 10am**

**Paices Wood Country Parkland, Berks**

[Booking & details](#)

A gentle stroll to enjoy spring butterflies including **Dingy Skipper** and **Grizzled Skipper**.



**Sunday 19th May at 10:30am**

**Aston Upthorpe Downs, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

A walk to enjoy spring butterflies of downland: **Green Hairstreak** and both **Dingy** & **Grizzled Skipper**.



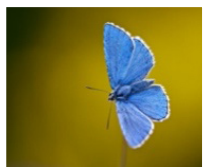
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**Sunday 19th May at 10:30am**  
**Ivinghoe Beacon NT, Bucks**

[Booking & details](#)

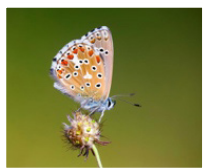
A walk to enjoy a variety of spring butterflies including a chance to see **Duke of Burgundy**.



**Thursday 23rd May at 10:30am**  
**Yoesden Bank BBOWT, Bucks**

[Booking & details](#)

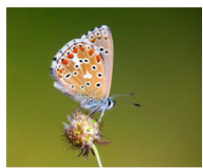
A relaxed amble to enjoy spring butterflies. Target Species: **Adonis Blue** and other downland species.



**Saturday 25th May at 10:30am**  
**Lardon Chase NT, Berks**

[Booking & details](#)

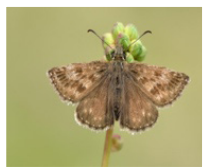
A stroll to enjoy a variety of spring downland butterflies including a chance to see **Adonis Blue**.



**Saturday 25th May at 10:30am**  
**Aston Rowant NT, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

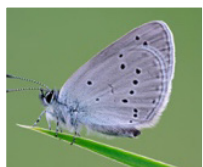
Will Langdon will help us to identify some of the moth species on this rich site, without the need for a moth trap.



**Sunday 26th May at 10:30am**  
**Pitstone Quarry, Bucks**

[Booking & details](#)

A relaxed walk to enjoy spring butterflies: **Small Blue**, **Dingy Skipper**; and day-flying moths such as **Burnet Companion**.

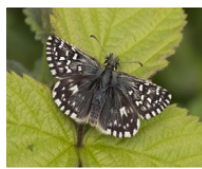


**Sunday 26th May at 10:30am**  
**Seven Barrows and Crog Hill, Oxon/Berks**

[Booking & details](#)

An amble to enjoy spring butterflies including **Small Blue**, **Dingy Skipper** and maybe **Duke of Burgundy**; and day-flying moths.

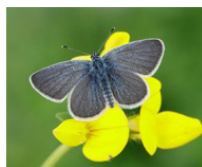
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**Tuesday 28th May at 10:30am**  
**Hartslock, Goring, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

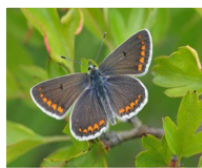
Grassland butterflies and day-flying moths. Target species:  
**Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**.



**Saturday 1st June at 11am**  
**Bradenham NT, Bucks**

[Booking & details](#)

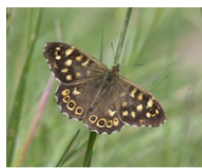
We will wander the grassland slopes in search of **Small Blue** and other early summer butterflies.



**Saturday 1st June at 11am**  
**Ashbury, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

We will explore the restoration grassland for early-summer butterflies and moths; including **Blues** and **Skippers**.



**Thursday 6th June at 10:30am**  
**Stonepit Field, Milton Keynes**

[Booking & details](#)

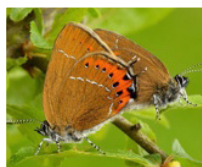
We will wander the meadow and pond area hoping to find **Small Blue** and other early-summer species.



**Saturday 8th June leaving *circa* 8am**  
**Fineshade Wood FE, near Corby, Northants**

[Booking & details](#)

An 'out of county' field trip to try to see the re-introduced **Chequered Skipper**. We may have time to stop, on our return, to try to see **Wood White** in Hazelborough Forest.

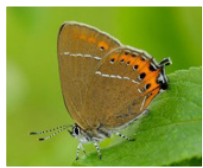


**Tuesday 11th June at 10:30am**  
**Whitecross Green Wood, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

A walk to search for **Black Hairstreak** and other early-summer woodland butterflies.

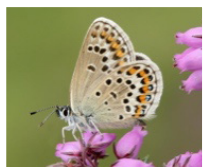
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**Saturday 15th June at 10:30am**  
**Bernwood Meadows, Bucks**

[Booking & details](#)

A walk to search for **Black Hairstreak** and other early-summer butterflies of woodland and meadows.



**Tuesday 18th June at 10:30am**  
**Wildmoor Heath, Berks**

[Booking & details](#)

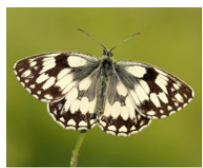
A walk to search for **Silver-studded Blue** and other heathland butterflies and day-flying moths.



**Wednesday 19th June at 10am**  
**Warburg BBOWT, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

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



**Wednesday 19th June at 6:30pm**  
**East Hagbourne, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

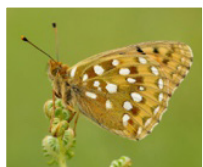
An evening walk to see what butterflies do outside 'normal transect' hours, including **Marbled White**.



**Saturday 22nd June at 10:30am**  
**Holtspur Bottom BC, Beaconsfield, Bucks**

[Booking & details](#)

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

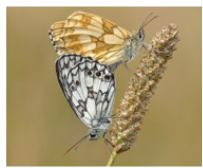


**Sunday 23rd June at 10:30am**  
**Butler's Hangings SSSI, West Wycombe, Bucks**

[Booking & details](#)

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

If the **'Booking & 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.



**Tuesday 25th June at 11am**

**Blenheim Farm BBOWT, Charlbury, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

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

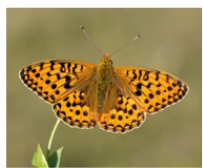


**Saturday 29th June at 10:30am**

**Pamber Forest & Silchester Common, Hants**

[Booking & details](#)

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



**Sunday 30th June at 11am**

**Hackpen Hill, Sparsholt Firs, Oxon**

[Booking & details](#)

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

Our July-August walks will be featured in the next issue of *Hairstreak*, but you can always check ahead on the UTB website or Butterfly Conservation's 'Events' pages.

**We are always looking for new Leaders to join our team.** If you have the enthusiasm, knowledge and skills to lead one of our guided walks – and would be happy to help out – please get in touch.

Perhaps you may prefer to join one of our existing walks to 'learn the ropes' for next year? It is a great way of getting out in the fresh air and getting some exercise, whilst helping like-minded individuals learn more and enjoy our butterfly and moth species.

If you have a current First Aid certificate and would be willing to undertake a small amount of online training, that would be a bonus.

Many thanks.

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



# Tick\_ing all the right boxes...

Those of us who just love to spend time out-of-doors may be oblivious to the fact that we may be sharing our environment with ticks.



These tiny arachnids – particularly fond of grassy and wooded habitats – can carry infections

which may lead to Lyme disease or tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) in humans.

## Tick bites should be taken seriously!

Before going through some precautions that you can take to minimise the chances of being bitten by a tick (and offering guidance following a tick bite), we need to advise those of you who attend any of the Branch's outdoor events that...

**... if you notice that you have been bitten by a tick whilst participating in a Branch event, please immediately inform the task leader. If you later discover a tick bite that you conclude occurred whilst on a Branch event, please notify the task leader (or another Branch representative) at the earliest opportunity – whether or not you've sought medical attention.**

Those of us who have had the misfortune to have been bitten by a tick might report having not been aware of the bite until itching occurs sometime later. This is why **it is important to check your**

**body carefully** following an outdoor event.

The following will help you to become **Tick Aware**:

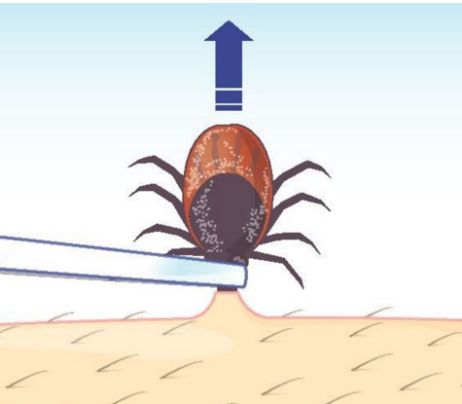
## PRECAUTIONS

- Consider wearing light-coloured clothing that – as far as is practicable – covers your entire body (the light-coloured clothing making it easier to spot any ticks which may be present upon it).
- Avoid brushing against vegetation in areas where ticks are likely to be present (which is where they 'lie in wait').
- Use an insect repellent (on exposed areas of the skin and on clothing), such as those containing DEET (ideally with a 7-10% concentration), applied every few hours as per each product's guidelines.

## ACTIONS

- Check your clothing and body often during and after any outdoor activity.
- Remove any attached tick as soon as possible, using a tick-removal kit (such as the one I use, shown over the page) or fine-tipped tweezers. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull upwards slowly and firmly (as shown over).
- Clean the bite area with an antibacterial solution and monitor it for several weeks for any changes.

- Seek medical advice, if necessary.
- Notify the Branch (if the tick bite occurred on one of its events)



### SYMPTOMS

- Itchiness around the bite area
- Flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue, muscle pain, headaches, a high temperature and chills
- Nerve pains
- A small red circular ('bullseye') patch around the bite

If any of the above symptoms persist, it could be indicative of Lyme disease (which is treatable with a course of antibiotics). Left untreated, other more-serious symptoms may be experienced. **If in doubt, always seek medical advice.**

There are about 20 species of tick in the UK, of which *Ixodes ricinus* is the most common and thus the most likely to bite humans. Without larger hosts such as deer or livestock, whose blood the adult ticks feed on, tick populations are less likely to become established. The period April to June is when the risk from tick bites is at its highest.

Data shows us that adults are commonly bitten on the legs (so wearing shorts where there is a tick risk is not advised!), whereas children tend to be bitten on the head/neck area. However, anyone can be bitten almost anywhere on their body.

Don't let these tiny creatures spoil your enjoyment of the outdoors, but **BE PREPARED** and **TAKE CARE!**

NOTE FOR DOG OWNERS

The active ingredients in most tick and flea treatments for dogs are toxic to aquatic life. Please don't allow your dog to enter water if this is the case.



Derek Haynes

# Butterflies and Moths Need YOU!

**Our Branch is looking for volunteers to join organised survey teams.** Within the UTB we undertake several types of survey. These allow everyone a chance to get involved: some require very little time and are suitable for absolute beginners; others are more demanding. All are opportunities to learn.

Though all recording is very useful to the Branch, survey work is the most helpful to conservation. Surveys take place on land where we are invited by landowners wanting to improve conditions for butterflies and moths, especially scarcer species. Our surveys inform the changes that may be made to land management.



We are seeking volunteers to join the survey teams and to enjoy themselves whilst making a worthwhile contribution. The survey types are:

- **Single Sites** - the owner is seeking feedback on what is present and how the numbers fluctuate according to management.
- **Transects** - a national scheme, along fixed routes, following standardised techniques, counting butterflies and day-flying moths weekly from 1st April to 30th September (often on nature reserves but always where the owner welcomes feedback).
- **Churchyards** – recording butterflies across UTB 4 x per year or according to recorder opportunity, some with reports sent back to the churchyard managers.
- **Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS)** - a national scheme at randomly selected sites and locally in the Chilterns, along fixed routes and following transect techniques, counting butterflies and day-flying moths at least twice per year, several weeks apart.
- **Key Species** - for locally scarce butterflies and moths where the principal aim is to seek only that species (possibly in various life stages) allowing comparisons in management outcomes between sites, and recording population change over time.
- **10 km Square Champions** - for butterflies across a 10x10 km grid as marked on OS maps, allowing an overview of the changing nature of occupancy by various species.

All these surveys run in addition to casual recording at any time (eg. garden recording).

## How do we record?

UTB video guidance about survey techniques and recording options (among other training videos) can be found at:

[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/online\\_events](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/online_events)



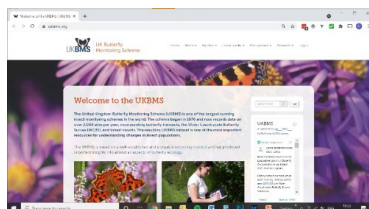
All those recording using the UKBMS survey methods will need to also register with that website. All other volunteers will also need to register with Butterfly Conservation's Assemble app to be fully supported. Visit:

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/volunteering/assemble-volunteer-portal>

## Butterflies

- **Single-site surveys.** 10km squares and casual observations are best recorded using the iRecord Butterflies app, or the Butterflies for the New Millennium software. See text guides to those recording methods here: [www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording)
- **Transect and Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveys (WCBS)** have a dedicated recording website at the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme <https://ukbms.org> which requires user registration. For more information about UTB transects contact [transect-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:transect-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk) and, for WCBS, [wcbcs-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:wcbcs-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

Guidance and information on standardised surveys plus feedback and interpretation of previous nationwide results: <https://ukbms.org>



## Moths

- **Site surveys and casual observations** are best recorded with the free-to-use National Moth Recording Scheme or the iRecord Moths section of iRecord (select 'Moths' under 'Species Group Forms' in the Record dropdown menu) or go direct with <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/enter-moth-sightings>
- County moth recorders also accept records in other forms. For info, contact:  
Berks - Martin Harvey, [kitenetter@googlemail.com](mailto:kitenetter@googlemail.com)  
Bucks - Martin Albertini, [malbertini@onetel.com](mailto:malbertini@onetel.com)  
Oxon - Martin Townsend, [martin.townsend4@ntlworld.com](mailto:martin.townsend4@ntlworld.com)

All surveys should be conducted in accordance with Butterfly Conservation's Health and Safety advice. Please never place yourself in any danger to walk a survey. **All surveys require the landowner's permission.**



## Where can surveyors help?

### Single-site survey locations

The list below indicates the approximate location of sites where single-site and single-species surveys take place. This was correct when posted, but new sites are constantly added. If you are unable to see any near you, or if you would like to know more about volunteering for UTB surveys, please contact: [peterphilp@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:peterphilp@hotmail.co.uk)

Many landowners want their site's position hidden. Site names and locations will only be made available to registered surveyors.

Site close to	County	Survey type	As part of a team	
			together	separately
Crowthorne & Camberley	Berks	Site survey (i.e. all species)	yes	no
Pangbourne	Berks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Ashridge Estate	Bucks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Dagnall	Bucks	Site survey	yes	no
Lane End	Bucks	Site survey	yes	yes
Leighton Buzzard	Bucks	Site survey	yes	yes
Lillingstone villages	Bucks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Princes Risborough	Bucks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Arncott	Bucks & Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Between Oxford, Bicester and Waddesdon (BOR)	Bucks & Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Beckley	Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Brill	Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Charlbury	Oxon	Site Survey	yes	no
Newnham Courtney	Oxon	Site Survey	yes	yes
Sparsholt Firs	Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Faringdon	Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Lambourne - Ashbury	Oxon & Berks	Site survey	yes	yes

### Single-species surveys - Butterflies

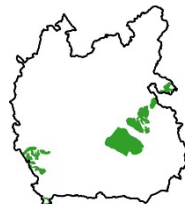
**Black Hairstreak.** We have the greatest concentration of Black Hairstreak colonies of any BC branch and probably the largest numbers of the butterfly, too. The Species champion for the Black Hairstreak, Stuart Hodges [swhodes2@gmail.com](mailto:swhodes2@gmail.com), would be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the flight period (June and July) searching for adults, and from those willing to undertake night-time UV torch larval searches in May and early June.



**Brown Hairstreak.** There is a rapidly expanding colony of Brown Hairstreak in the north of Bucks and Oxon and the beginnings of a tiny colony in Berks. The Species Champion for the Brown Hairstreak, Dave Wilton [wilton@burnhamlodge.plus.com](mailto:wilton@burnhamlodge.plus.com), will be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the flight period (July - October) searching for adults, and from those willing to undertake the rewarding task of winter egg searching from October to March.



**Duke of Burgundy.** We have a very few colonies of Duke of Burgundy in the UTB area. There are 3 species champions: Peter Ogden in the Bradenham area [peter.ogden@virgin.net](mailto:peter.ogden@virgin.net), Nick Bowles in the Ivinghoe area [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com) and Aga Bogucka [agnieszkabogucka.ps@gmail.com](mailto:agnieszkabogucka.ps@gmail.com) in the Sparsholt Firs area of the Berks/Oxon border. They will be very pleased to hear from anyone who can spend some time during the flight period (May and June) searching for adults and from those willing to undertake egg and larvae searching from June until August.



**Silver-studded Blue.** There are a very tiny number of very small colonies of Silver-studded Blue in Berks, but the species is lost from Bucks and Oxon. The Species champion for the Silver-studded Blue, Grahame Hawker [grahamehawker@hotmail.com](mailto:grahamehawker@hotmail.com), would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can spend some time during the flight period (June to August) searching for adults. Grahame can help with access to some MOD sites with no public access.



**White-letter Hairstreak.** This species suffered badly when Dutch Elm disease killed most of the trees in which it was breeding. Recently it has re-appeared, breeding on sucker regrowth and on a few Wych Elm trees that seem to be better able to resist the disease. Unfortunately, the wide distribution hides a very low abundance, and we are very keen to know exactly where the butterfly is breeding and how the population size is changing. The Species champion for the White-letter Hairstreak is Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com). He would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can spend some time spotting living Elms above 2m high, looking particularly for those in flower. Once their locations are noted we hope that surveyors would return during the flight period (late June to early August) searching for adults. It is also possible to undertake the rewarding task of winter egg searching from late October to February. The larger Elms usually flower from mid-February, which makes the eggs easier to spot. When the eggs hatch the larvae then crawl inside the flower buds, vanishing from sight.



**Wood White.** We have a tiny number of very small colonies of Wood White along the border of Bucks with Northamptonshire, but the species appears lost from Oxon where it previously had several colonies. The Species Champion for the Wood White, Nick Board [woodw@talktalk.net](mailto:woodw@talktalk.net), would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can spend some time during the flight period (May to Sept) searching for adults. Nick can help with access to some private woodlands, but please do not trespass to survey as it causes trouble with owners who are considering work to help the species.



### Additional Opportunities

From time to time, other groups contact the Branch seeking surveyors, and these are advertised in *Hairstreak* and on the website. One example is **Chalk, Cherries and Chairs** in the Chilterns. [Tracking the Impact | Chalk Cherries and Chairs \(chilternsaonb.org\)](https://chilternsaonb.org)

### Single-species surveys – Moths

**Dusky Clearwing.** Clearwings are not a single species of moth but a family of related species. All are small, day-flying bee or wasp mimics and are both easily overlooked and very under-recorded. They are best surveyed using pheromone lures – purchased chemical scent bags that smell like female moths to males of the species. These can be used in real time, often attracting males within a few minutes, or placed into small traps and left in situ for longer. Lures are available at £8.50 each, at: <https://www.angleps.com/pheromones.php>



**Dusky Clearwing**, which was 'regionally extinct', was found in our area in 2023. For more information about using lures locally contact Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

**Drab Looper.** Now restricted to just a small area of central southern Berks, surveyors help to assess the condition of its habitat and the amount of the larval foodplant, Wood Spurge, within the woods in which it occurs. In the future we hope landowners will be able to help the moth by improving/creating habitat, once we have a better idea where the moth is found. To join the survey team, contact Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)



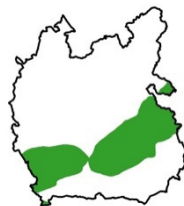
**Forester Moth.** This metallic green, day-flying moth had been reduced to just a few favoured haunts, but in the last three years has seen a resurgence and is now encountered in areas of Bucks and in central Oxon. In southern Bucks there are strong but tiny colonies, widely separated, that do not show up on the map. It can be found where the larval foodplant, sorrel, is growing in semi-natural grassland. To join the survey team and stay abreast of where the moth is being seen, contact Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)



**Four-spotted.** Another day-flying moth that has dramatically retracted its range and is now found in very few places just north of the west Berks/Oxon border and only in small numbers. The moth larvae eat field bindweed but only survive where the plant grows on patches of bare soil – and the edges of arable fields are ideal. These are places that are rarely visited by most surveyors, so the moth could be more widespread than is realised. There are indications that the moth is recolonising parts of NE Hertfordshire and spreading west. If you live within its current range or in the very NE of the Chilterns and walk the footpaths through arable fields you might be able to find the Four-spotted. To stay abreast of where the moth is being seen, contact Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)



**Striped Lychnis.** This is a night-flying moth but rarely encountered at light traps. It is best sought by searching for the distinctive larvae during the day, whilst they feed on the flower spikes of Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigra*. We have established that a very large proportion of the moth's UK population lives in the Chilterns, and we think that it could be more widespread in the Berkshire Downs than previously known. We want more surveyors to help continue the larval searches in the Chilterns and new surveyors to begin looking for Dark Mullein and Striped Lychnis in Berkshire.



To help survey for this moth by searching for the Dark Mullein foodplant and its larvae, contact Ben who will explain the techniques involved [bennyp1009@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bennyp1009@hotmail.co.uk)

**Updates on the results of surveys will be provided to all recorders.**

**OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE ABLE TO OFFER HELP**



# Home and Away

This is the time when many of us plan our holidays... deciding if we will spend those precious days walking in the glorious British countryside or perhaps nipping off to Europe and hoping to see species we don't see in the UK.

I'm hoping you are one of the many lovely people who take time to record the butterflies and moths near you. Have you thought about continuing to make records while you are away? Wherever you go, if you can confidently identify the species you see, your records will be welcomed.

In the UK you may well be visiting areas which are less densely populated than our three counties. Butterfly Conservation is active nationally, but in less populated areas there are often fewer BC members



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (East Sussex, 2022) ©Sue Taylor

Wherever you are in the UK you can use the **iRecord Butterflies** or **iRecord** apps to submit your records.

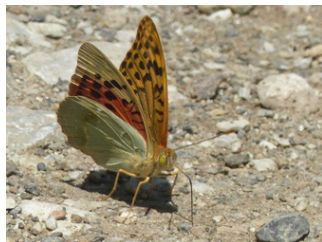
If you are going to Europe, then Butterfly Conservation's European Butterflies Group (EBG) [european-butterflies.org.uk] (formerly EIG) has a range of online resources to help with ID or contacting local wildlife bodies.

Your overseas records are best submitted through either **iNaturalist** or **observation.org**, which have global coverage but

to cover the areas, making your records very welcome and helping to achieve the national coverage we need.

don't necessarily have the small army of excellent verifiers which we have in the UK - which is why **iRecord Butterflies** or **iRecord** are preferred for your UK records. [The EBG website has details of how to best submit butterfly sightings in different European countries, using the 'Species' tab on its home page.]

Of course, you will need to get a location for your records, and there are several apps for this (I



Cardinal (male)  
(Hungary, 2023) ©Sue Taylor

use the **OS locate** app, which gives the latitude and longitude you will need to make your record); and, of course, photos are helpful to confirm your ID.

**Is recording worth it? YES.** In the UK we have a long tradition of amateur naturalists, and we have many enthusiastic amateurs collecting a wealth of records so that our UK records are the best in the world. But most countries, even in Europe, do not have a tradition of volunteer recorders, so your records are especially useful, helping to 'fill in the gaps'. If travelling to Europe, you may wish to join EBG or, at least, consult the EBG website for a wealth of information which may help to make your trip more fruitful.

Of course, by keeping your eyes peeled for butterflies wherever you go, you may be treated to some fantastic sights and be drawn to some amazing places.

**Sue Taylor**



## You CAN help...

You do not need to commit hours each week.  
Many of our roles require only a few hours a month or even a year.  
Don't worry if you haven't got the skills or experience required:  
free training and support are available for many of our roles.



There are many reasons why people volunteer:

- to meet people with similar interests
- to learn more about Lepidoptera and their habitats
- to gain skills and experience
- to get out and socialise
- to make a difference for the butterflies, moths, habitats and people in our area.



But, perhaps, most of all:

- the pleasure, enjoyment and positive feeling from contributing to real success.

*You too could help to restore and maintain healthy populations of butterflies and moths, and sustainable habitats, across our three counties; and contribute to the enjoyment and well-being of local people.*

**There are many ways you could help out - see some suggestions overleaf.**



## Recording, surveying and monitoring

Dozens of volunteers already help us keep track of the state of butterfly and moth populations across our Branch area.

Opportunities are available for beginners and experts alike, in a variety of roles.

**Your records are important to us.**



## Work parties

If being outside in the fresh air, getting stuck into physical work and a deep sense of satisfaction are what you are after...

Then join a work party and make a tangible difference to the fortunes of our butterflies and moths.

**Roll your sleeves up and find out more...**



## Publicity, media & fundraising

Perhaps you are a wizard on social media or enjoy writing or giving talks. Or maybe you are great with people face-to-face and could help us recruit new members or raise funds for our vital work.

**If so, ask about our current roles.**



## Events

Do you enjoy meeting people and sharing your enthusiasm for butterflies, moths and our natural environment?

Then perhaps you could lead a guided walk, help to run a stall or represent us at a local fair or event.

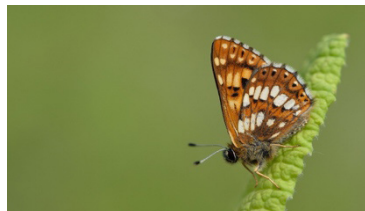
**Please get in touch if you are interested.**



## Some of our successes:

### The Duke of Burgundy

This species has a very restricted distribution in our area but is one of our recent successes: given winter work parties to manage habitats, the 'Duke' has now colonised three areas adjacent to an existing colony. This helps to offset the loss of another colony in the last three years.



### The Downland Plume moth

Presumed extinct in the UK for nearly 50 years, this inconspicuous and rare moth was rediscovered in the Chilterns in 2013. Further surveys have found it at other sites in recent years - another success for Branch volunteers carrying out surveys, recording and monitoring; and then delivering conservation work to help the moth survive.



### Striped Lychnis (caterpillar)

A very localised species, occurring only in a few scattered localities in the south of England. The distinctive caterpillars feed on the flowers of Dark Mullein. Volunteers have planted Dark Mullein on a number of sites to encourage this scarce moth.



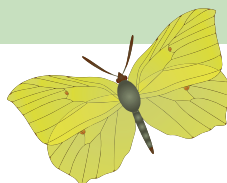
**If you would like to help out in any capacity, please get in touch.**

**Peter Philp**

**[volunteer-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:volunteer-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)**

Please tell us a little about yourself: what you would like to do, where you live, and any relevant skills or experience. We can then try to place you in a meaningful and rewarding role, within reasonable travelling distance.

**THANK YOU**

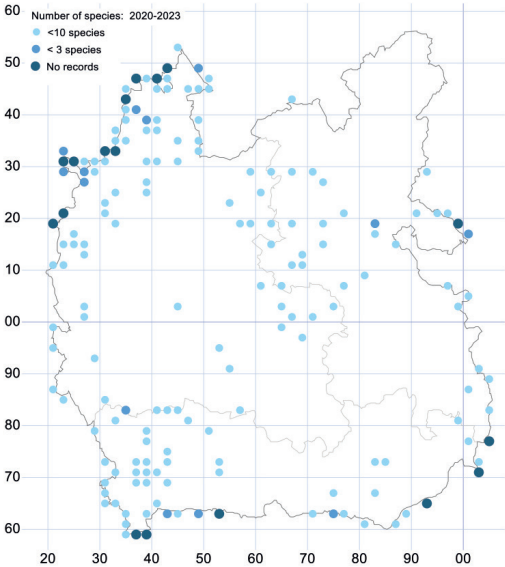




# Target Areas for Butterfly Recording: 2024 Season

At the beginning of this 2024 flying season, we are looking to fill remaining gaps in our butterfly recording coverage in this the last year of the current 5-year cycle of recording. The main gaps are as follows:

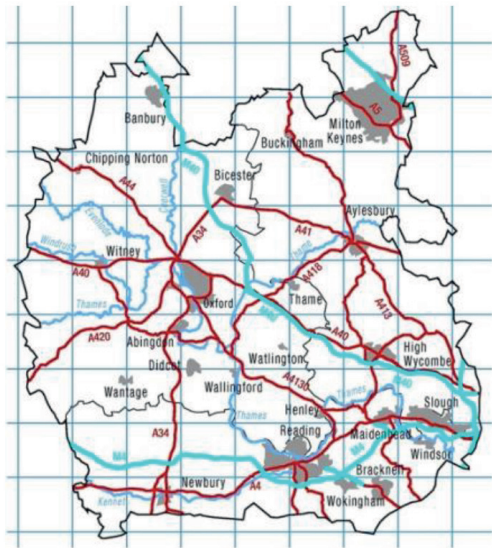
## 1. Unvisited and poorly covered areas



The updated map alongside shows (at 2km square resolution) where there are areas not yet visited, or with only limited recording in 2020-23, where we encourage visits this year.

The remaining empty 2km squares are all around our boundaries with neighbouring branches, with a number in north-west Oxfordshire (from just W of Idbury, via NW of Chastleton, NW of Great Rollright, W of Shenington and NW and NE of Hornton); and in west Berks (S of Combe and Combe Hill; and S of Crookham).

To help you orient yourself on this map and the later maps, the map below shows the major centres and roads in our area.



There is still a wide scatter of squares with fewer than 10 species recorded (and a few with <3 species recorded) and we should try to fill these too.

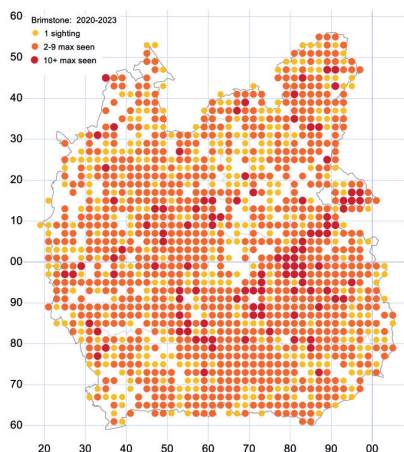
There are local concentrations of these in W Berks, NW Oxon (heading NW from Chipping Norton and West from Witney) and in the Vale of Aylesbury and the areas N of Brill and E and NE of Bicester.



## 2. Gaps for spring visits

Some areas were not visited much in the early part of the season, as indicated by the relatively blank areas of the map (right) of Orange-tip records, mainly in west Oxon, west Berks and mid Bucks. These widespread and mobile butterflies should occur in all parts of our region, and the males are easy to spot because of their vivid wing-tip colour.

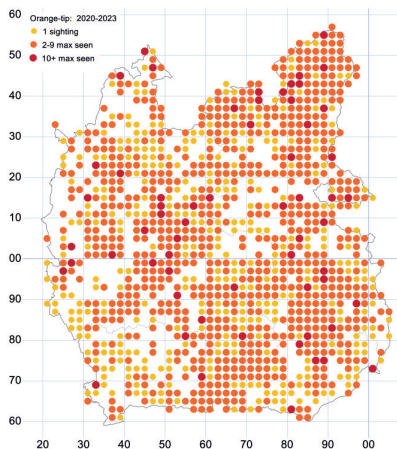
Similar gaps appear in the map of Brimstone records (below), although to a lesser extent as Brimstones are also seen in the summer months.



The map (right) shows relatively good coverage in the SE part of our branch area, but thinner areas in west Berks, west Oxon and the areas around the Oxon/Bucks border.

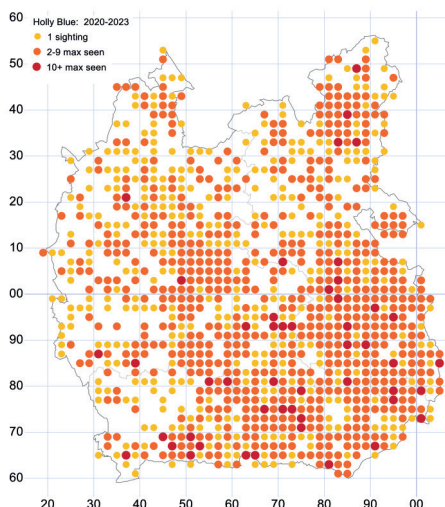
If you are sitting on previous years' records that you have not yet sent in, please do so as soon as possible. This will give us the best chance to verify these new records and update our maps to best target recording this year.

There are other common species gaps for 2020-23 at the 10km square resolution (the scale at which UK maps are usually



As Brimstones tend to be more obvious (especially the bright yellow males) in the spring months, more recording visits in these early months will help us fill these 'spring' gaps – particularly around the Vale of Aylesbury, west Oxon and the far south-west of Berks.

Holly Blue is another spring species that is relatively easy to spot, as it is generally the most likely widespread Blue species to see in spring, before Common Blues emerge.



published) and we should try to target these species in these gaps: Essex Skipper has not been recorded in SU46, SU76, SP22, SP43, SP44 or SP92; Brown Argus in SP53 or SP92; and Silver-washed Fritillary (now more widespread) in SU28, SP20, SP34, SP44, SP82 or SP92.

We will maintain an updated map through 2024 to show where poorly recorded squares remain, to provide ongoing targets for 2024. Remember that butterflies have different flying seasons, so you should be visiting and recording at least three different times of the year – late spring (May), early summer (mid-June to mid-July) and late summer (late July-August), to have a chance to see the full range of species.

In our best localities with really good butterfly habitat, such as at Bernwood, Aston Rowant and Ivinghoe Beacon, we have records of 34-36 species. In even modest patches of habitat elsewhere, along footpaths, on field and woodland edges and in gardens, we should be able to find about 15-17 butterfly species over the year in every part of the three counties. We therefore consider that any area with records of fewer than ten species has not been looked at in detail and/or not visited at adequate different times of year.

If you have any questions about recording and how you may be able to help, or if you would like more detailed information in your more local area to identify local recording targets, please contact me, Peter Ogden or Andy Spragg (our 10km square recording coordinator) for further maps and tools to help you as we go through this season. Your help with all the records to date (and those yet to come) is hugely appreciated – your records are making a difference!

**Jim Asher**

[jim.asher@btinternet.com](mailto:jim.asher@btinternet.com)

## Membership Latest

A very warm welcome to all new members who have joined since the last newsletter was published. You are most welcome to join field meetings, work parties and attend Members' Day. Up-to-date news on activities can be found on our website. There is also a monthly bulletin reminding members of events, which is sent to all members with registered email addresses.

There has been a slight increase in membership since the last newsletter. To date there are 2280 individual members in the Upper Thames Branch. Please encourage your friends to join Butterfly Conservation, so we can achieve even more for our butterflies and moths.

**Brenda Mobbs**

**UTB Membership Secretary**

[bc.upperthames@gmail.com](mailto:bc.upperthames@gmail.com)

# Winter Trappings

Some of our members have been busy at a time of year when perhaps most of us don't think anything of interest will be on the wing.

Often, that will mean setting up a moth trap in one's garden, which some members have been able to do with the loan of a trap from the Branch.

We'll take a look here at some of the species which have 'come to light' (sorry!) over the past few months.

Ben Paternoster was the first to post his 2024 findings, with 4 species trapped on 28th January (having been unsuccessful in four previous Januarys). Below is Ben's Common Quaker.



Linda Seward – an enthusiastic trapper – trapped around 10 moths on 2nd February, mostly Chestnuts, like the one shown below.



Linda also discovered this Pale Brindled Beauty in her UTB loan trap.

Peter Cuss (our Moth Officer) spotted the following Spring Usher on a wall in west Berks on 1st February – which just goes to show that a trap is not always needed!



And the striking Satellite moth (below) was attracted to Mark Smith's lounge window on 19th February.

If you'd like to find out a bit more about the art of moth-trapping (or would like to have your name added to the loan-trap list), please contact Peter Cuss at

[priority-moths@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:priority-moths@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)



**Derek Haynes**

# Seeking His Grace in *terra incognita*

Broadwell Disused Airfield (BDA) in west Oxfordshire is not a known Upper Thames Branch (UTB) site for the Duke of Burgundy (usually referred to by aficionados more simply as ‘the Duke’, or more obsequiously as ‘His Grace’), but there was a report (without photographs) of three specimens there on 4th June 2021. Seduced by the possibility of confirming the presence of His Grace at a previously unknown location, I made a road trip there on 19th May 2022. I didn’t see any Dukes on that occasion, nor on a more cursory return visit on 3rd June 2023 (when I was mainly concerned with surveying territory to the south with no recent butterfly records). However, I remain interested in the apparent existence of previously unrecognised aristocratic UTB colonies!

In addition to the absence of any previous records, two things are anomalous about the reported sightings in 2021: the location (SP248067) was advised by the Species Champion to be ‘miles away from the nearest known site’, and the date of the sighting is very late, at least by Chilterns standards. I decided to take a closer look at the data, to get an objective handle on where the Duke is found in the UK, and when it is to be found there. Thanks to a rejuvenated relationship between Butterfly Conservation and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN)<sup>1</sup>, I was able to download a dataset of more than 15,000 UK records for the Duke, from 1699 to 2019, in order to dig deeper.

## Where in the UK is the Duke predominantly found?

Figure 1 shows a map of the UK, with 100 km Ordnance Survey squares superimposed. The 8 squares coloured red or orange have more than 1,000 and more than 400 Duke records respectively. According to the data, the Duke has been well established in each of these 100 km squares for at least the last 5 decades.

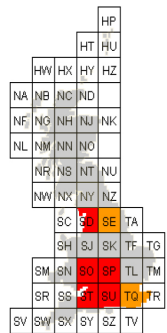


Figure 1. Predominant territory occupied by the Duke in the UK

## Where is the Duke to be found in UTB territory?

The NBN dataset only reports location at best to 2 km resolution, and does not report site names, only ‘locality’ (which is usually the county name), so the most precise location analysis that can be carried out is in terms of ‘tetrads’ (2 km squares). UTB has 67 tetrads with records for the Duke. Of those, only 23 have at least one record for the period 2010-2019: 16 for Bucks and 7 for Berks (with none for Oxon). Those 23 tetrads split fairly cleanly into two categories: 10 with a record count appreciably into double figures, of which Bucks has 8 and Berks 2, and 13 with a record count of 10 or fewer.

<sup>1</sup><https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/butterfly-conservation-makes-over-46-million-records-available-on-the-nbn-atlas>

## Where actually is the nearest known site to BDA?

Only one tetrad has a credible claim to include the nearest site to BDA: SU3282, which includes the known site of Crog Hill. Approximately 15 km from BDA, it has 54 records, distributed across every decade since 1980-1989, 38 of them in 2010-2019. All other candidates within 15 km have record counts in single figures, a long way for the Duke to migrate!

## What historical records are there in the vicinity?

We can find historical records closer to BDA, albeit not very many of them, and still a long way away from the point of view of a sedentary species like the Duke. The closest is from SP2006, at a distance of only around 8 km, with one record from each of 1970-1979 and 1980-1989, followed by SP1806 at a distance of around 12 km, with a single record from 1970-1979.

## Has the Duke's flight period altered in recent decades?

Whilst we routinely hear talk about the effect of climate change on invertebrate phenology, I have not seen any evidence presented elsewhere that the Duke has been thus affected. In particular, the most recent edition of Atlas of Butterflies in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire made no mention of a change in flight time between the decades 1995-2004 and 2005-2014. Taking a longer view, however, I calculated the average flight time<sup>2</sup> for each year from 1970 to 2019 and found clear evidence that the Duke's flight-time peak has become significantly earlier over the last 50 years.

Figure 2 shows the results for average flight time. There is considerable variation from year to year, but the downward trend is clear, and statistical analysis confirms that it is statistically significant.

Closer scrutiny suggests that the average flight time has decreased relatively abruptly from one statistically constant value to another, with no significant change in the new millennium. This agrees with the most recent edition of the Atlas.

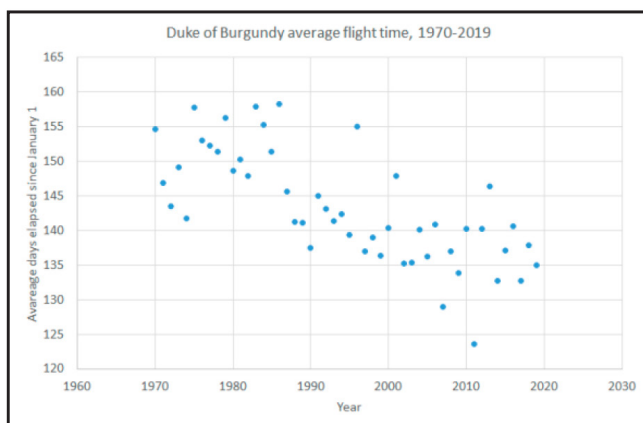


Figure 2. 50-year trend in the Duke's flight time

<sup>2</sup>"flight time" is defined as the number of days since January 1st for the year in question. There is clear evidence in the data of a second brood for the Duke, albeit only about 1% of all records. I used only primary brood records (from April, May and June) in the analysis



Table 1 below shows, for each decade, the Duke's average flight time, and 5th and 95th percentiles of flight time<sup>3</sup>, converted into actual dates:

Decade	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019
Average Flight Time	31 May	29 May	21 May	17 May	16 May

Table 1. Decrease in the Duke's flight time

The table confirms that, although the overall 50 year-trend is for the flight time to occur sooner in the year, most of the change is confined to a shorter intermediate period. The table also shows that the date of 4th June for the BDA records is at the 95th percentile of the data, i.e., only 5% of records from 2010-2019 were this late or later.

**Is there evidence of significant differences in flight period due to location?**

For a sedentary species like the Duke, whose distribution is very localised, it is plausible that individual sites might well have their own characteristic flight period depending on e.g. local topography. Anecdotally (from Nick Bowles), the Berkshire/Oxfordshire border colonies fly about a week later than those in Bucks. I thought it would be interesting to assess the evidence for differences in flight period between tetrads, not just for UTB territory but nationally (in order to use maximum data in the analysis). I cumulated the records over the last 20 years<sup>4</sup>, and analysed the data for all tetrads with at least 20 records, of which there are 91, with 8,770 records between them.

Analysis shows that the majority of these tetrads show significant differences in average flight time, up to 9 days earlier or later than the overall average of 17th May. Figure 3 illustrates these differences for each tetrad in UTB territory (shaded grey or hidden by the key) and the surrounding vicinity. Black lines are 100 km-square boundaries. Blue and red, chosen to suggest a presumed link with less- or more-sheltered (i.e. cooler and warmer) conditions, indicate later and earlier emergence, respectively. There is a clear trend for later flight in Berkshire and Wiltshire, mostly by up to a week, and earlier flight in Buckinghamshire, mostly by up to a week. The difference between Bucks and Berks colonies is thus of the order of a week, exactly as advised by Nick.

**What can we conclude about the reported sightings at BDA?**

Although the 4th June date of the reported sighting would have been in the middle of the typical flight period 50 years ago, when the average flight time was 31st May, it is now effectively at the end of the Duke's typical flight period. However, once we take site variation into account, although we only have Bucks and Berks data from which to extrapolate to Oxon, we can infer that BDA would likely be a late-emerging site, so that a date of 4th June, although late, need not be right at the upper limit of the flight period there.

<sup>3</sup> Respectively the date with only 5% of records sooner and the date with only 5% of records later; effectively the limits of the flight period  
<sup>4</sup> The analysis showed that flight period has not changed appreciably over the last 20 years or so. Cumulating the data over this period helps to counterbalance the data being spread more thinly at tetrad resolution.

## Where else in UTB territory might the Duke occur, albeit at low numbers?

So far, the focus has been on the tetrads with the most data, where we can be confident that the Duke exists because of sheer weight of record numbers. What of the other end of the distribution: the thirteen UTB tetrads with ten records or fewer? We should certainly not rule out all the locations where the record count is low. Assuming no misidentification, although most are likely to represent valid sightings of vagrants that did not manage to establish a viable colony, there may be residual locations of potential interest. There are five plausible candidate tetrads with records from more than one decade, including 2010-2019.

With six records from two decades, SU3284 may have low-level Duke occupancy. This tetrad, just east of Whitehorse Hill in Oxfordshire, is the north-adjacent tetrad to SU3282, the tetrad already identified as the nearest known site to BDA, so overspill from the primary site of Crog Hill is quite plausible.

SP9214, which includes Pitstone and most of College Lake, should also be mentioned. It has seven records spread over three decades and is adjacent to the cluster of four tetrads that include Ivinghoe Beacon and Incombe Hole, so overspill is again quite plausible.

The north side of SU89 includes a cluster of three tetrads with records going further back than just the last decade. SU8296, with ten records, includes Bradenham and environs, and is the south-adjacent tetrad to SU8298, which includes the established site at Small Dean Bank. Overspill from Small Dean Bank is the most likely explanation of the sightings reported from the Prestwood Nature transect (in the adjacent tetrads SU8498 and SU8698), but, tantalisingly, thus far without any photographic evidence.

### Acknowledgements:

- Butterfly distribution data from the Butterflies for the New Millennium recording scheme, courtesy of Butterfly Conservation.
- NBN Atlas occurrence download at <https://nbnatlas.org> accessed on 31st October 2023.

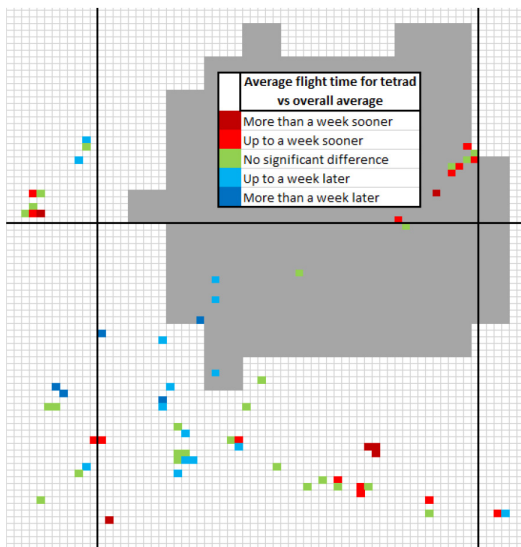


Figure 3. Site-to-site variation in the Duke's flight period

**Andy Spragg**

# Churchyard and Garden Surveys 2023

The number of people surveying churchyards for butterflies in 2023 was only 27 compared to the 50 people in 2022, with the result that only 50 churchyards were surveyed compared to 69 in 2022.



Although the number of churchyards saw a reduction, we nevertheless had some new ones covered for the first time. Hopefully, the missing ones can be revived in 2024.

Populations of butterflies seen varied greatly across the sites surveyed due mainly to the local management of the churchyard. Churches need to be encouraged to not just use blanket mowing of the grass, but to leave some uncut all summer so that any wildflowers have a chance to bloom and set seed for the following year.

In very many cases this does not happen, but from the extra data supplied by some surveyors, a few churches do

make an effort to encourage wildlife into their churchyards, with a good range of wildflowers in evidence.

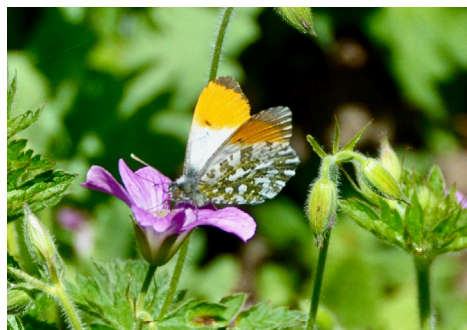
There are notable exceptions, of course, with yet again one of the best examples in our region being St. John's churchyard at Stone near Aylesbury, which this year recorded 13 species, but was deposed from the top of the leader board by St. Nicholas Churchyard at Asthall with 14 species and – even better – St. Mary's, Radnage, with 15 species! The most abundant species seen in all churchyards were Gatekeeper and Red Admiral, reflecting the result of the Big Butterfly Count, with the usual number of Whites also recorded.



Garden survey records received were up slightly at 9, compared to 5 in 2022, with Martin Walters at Loosley Row and Chris Griffiths in Reading having seen the greatest numbers of butterfly species in their gardens, together with an abundance of day-flying moths.

**Chris Woodrow**  
**Survey Co-ordinator**

# Spotting butterflies in the Chilterns...



Face it: many of us take butterflies for granted. We enjoy seeing them fluttering by and are delighted when they decorate our gardens with their ephemeral presence, but how many of us actually take the time to really look at them? It is only when we do this that their incredible beauty becomes evident. Here in the Chilterns, we have a plethora of butterfly species to enjoy. Learning a bit about how they live will enhance your pleasure when you spot them.

Why are butterflies so flighty? Like many other insects, they instinctively fly away from any sudden movements or shadows, as well as from sounds and other vibrations which is why it's tricky to get near them.

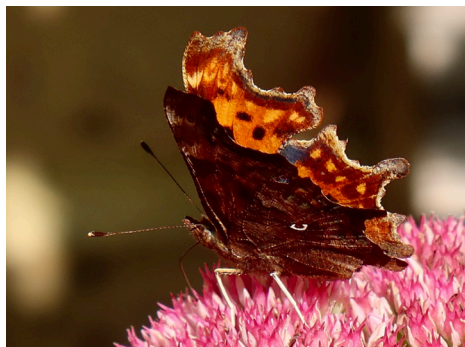
Another reason is that they have compound eyes with many lenses, enabling them to look in several directions at the same time. They can quickly pick up moving shapes and never close their eyes because they don't possess eyelids. So, move slowly and quietly, keeping your shadow out of their peripheral vision if you wish to get a close look at a butterfly.

In addition to their acute eyesight, butterflies have a structure called a

chordotonal organ that transmits sound by way of vibrations to the brain. These physiological characteristics function to protect the butterfly from potential predators, and from you and me.

While a butterfly is attracted to a flower by its scent, it doesn't have a nose. They actually smell and taste with their antennae and feet. In addition to helping with balance, the antennae allow butterflies to determine if a flower is full of nectar (and if a potential mate is about). Their feet will chemically establish if the surface on which they are landing is edible.

Butterflies have four wings – two front forewings and two back hindwings. Each wing has two sides, and what I find most amazing is how different the upperwings (those that you see when the wings are open) appear from the underwings (what you see when the wings are shut).



For example, the drab mottled brown underwings of the Peacock or Comma (above) reveal nothing about the fabulous colours hidden inside.

Yet it is these unexciting textures and colours that camouflage butterflies when they are hibernating or at rest. Scrutinise

some butterflies closely to see how they seem to disappear when they shut their wings. Wing patterns can send messages, such as warning that the butterfly is toxic if consumed or perhaps just not that tasty. Large bright eyespots attempt to threaten potential predators. And as with most of the natural world, the males are usually prettier than the females, and use their splendour for courtship displays. Their brilliant colours and markings also aid in male vs male rivalry.

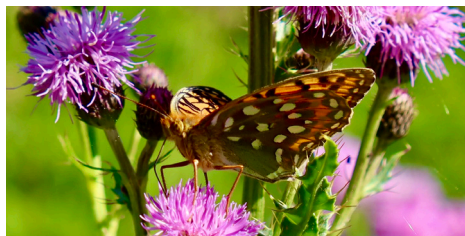
Butterfly wings are covered with delicate scales that help to insulate the butterfly for warmth and allow air to flow around the wings for loft in flight. In addition, the scales protect the butterfly as they are easily shed, permitting escape from predators and spiderwebs. The scales contain colour pigments that result in the attractive patterns we can see; they also create iridescence and shine by reflecting different wavelengths of light. Butterflies can see ultraviolet and polarised light, creating a unique visual world that we can only dream about. Reading ultraviolet light patterns on each other's wings is how they find members of their own species and, most importantly, the opposite sex.

Don't bother looking for butterflies on windy, cool or cloudy days as they will be resting or hiding out of sight. It's the sunshine and warmth that brings them out – much like us!

Research has shown that 80% of UK butterfly species have declined since the 1970s. Half of Britain's remaining species are classified as threatened or near-threatened. This is almost certainly due to man-made interference such as habitat loss, planting non-native species

and paving areas that might otherwise have produced long grass or wildflowers – such as front gardens. Early mowing of wild areas is also a detrimental factor, as are pesticides. Butterflies lay their eggs on the native plants that will feed their developing caterpillars. The caterpillars are vulnerable to predators like birds and wasps; and in order to hide, they often resemble the parts of the plants on which they are feeding. If the butterflies can't find these plants, or if the plants on which they are feeding are cut too soon, we will see fewer butterflies in the future.

The metamorphosis from a tiny egg to a voracious caterpillar to an ethereal butterfly in all its glory is one of nature's most enchanting phenomena. Studying butterflies can be a calming and enthralling occupation, good for the soul and candy for the eyes. Take a walk in the Chilterns to see how many you can find.



Dark Green Fritillary: on the wing from mid-June to late August

I am posting daily photos of nature in the Chilterns on my Instagram page:  
[www.instagram.com/quiltmaniac1](https://www.instagram.com/quiltmaniac1)

And here is my website if you wish to contact me: [www.lindaseward.com](http://www.lindaseward.com)

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The text of this article first appeared in the summer 2023 edition of Chiltern, the magazine of the Chiltern Society: <https://chilternsociety.org.uk>



# We are the Champions

Champions are very important to Upper Thames Branch (UTB). We have two sorts of Champion, Species Champion and 10K Champion, whose roles are complementary:

- A Species Champion is devoted to understanding how one specific threatened species is faring throughout our region
- Conversely, a 10K Champion is devoted to ensuring adequate recording of all the butterfly species to be found in one specific part of our region (one 10km x 10km Ordnance Survey square)

I am writing this piece in my newly-adopted role of 10K Champion Coordinator, whose function is to help all 10K Champions carry out their role as well as possible. On behalf of UTB, I would like to say a very grateful thanks to my predecessor, Jan Haseler, who took on the role in 2012 and carried it out diligently for 12 years before handing over to me.



Figure 1. 10K square champ status at March 2024

The figure alongside shows the current 10K Champion ‘state of play’ for UTB. **A total of eighty 10K squares cover the entire UTB area.** Sadly, 40 of those (exactly 50%) are currently without a 10K Champion. The other 40 10K squares are currently being championed by a total of 36 10K Champions, 8 of whom would be grateful for some help.

How can the number of 10K squares being championed not be equal to the number of 10K Champions? Well, it’s complicated! Some particularly enthusiastic Champions champion more than one square; and some squares have more than one Champion (in some cases, a husband and wife team who are effectively one superchamp).

Recording operates on a five-year cycle, and the final year is always a time to try to address gaps in record coverage. A separate article by Jim Asher on page 26 in this edition of *Hairstreak* talks about this in detail. 2024 is the final year of the current recording cycle, and so we could really use as much help as possible. If you already

record, or even if you don't but are confident in your ability to identify a range of butterfly species, now would be a great time to inquire about helping out one of the Champions who needs it, or even taking on a 10K Champion role yourself!

Please contact Andy Spragg on [10k-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:10k-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk) if you think might be interested in wearing a Champion's hat in 2024.

# LONELY HEARTS

The very attractive, petite, reclusive and shy Green Hairstreak seeks a new **Champion**.

Please contact Nick at [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com) if you are interested in this key role.



## PRIORITY MOTHS 5-Year Plan (2024-28)

The following moths have been given high priority by the UTB:

Sloe Carpet	Drab Looper	Liquorice Piercer
Barberry Carpet	<b>Striped Lychnis</b>	Heart Moth
Silvery Arches	Wood Tiger	<b>Forester</b>
Pale Shining Brown	Downland Plume	Sallow Clearwing
Large Red-belted	<i>Agonopterix atomella</i>	White-barred
Clearwing		Clearwing

Please see page 20 if you can help with **Striped Lychnis** or **Forester**.

# Submitting Sightings Records

The UTB website has been updated to include more guidance on the preferred methods to be used to submit your butterfly and moth sightings (which may be overviewed at [upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording)).

Specifically:

1. **iRecord** is the recommended option (which allows for **the recording of all wildlife**):



[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/Downloads/iRecord\\_guide.pdf](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/Downloads/iRecord_guide.pdf)

2. **Butterflies for the New Millennium (BNM)**, **specifically for butterflies**:



[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/Downloads/BNM\\_guide.pdf](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/Downloads/BNM_guide.pdf)

3. **National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS)**, **specifically for moths**:



[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/Downloads/NMRS\\_guide.pdf](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/Downloads/NMRS_guide.pdf)

Sightings reported directly to the UTB website ([https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/butterfly\\_sightings](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/butterfly_sightings)) will be added to iRecord by the webmaster unless you state that you have already submitted your records via one of the above three methods.

# The Butterfly Wonderer

Given that I am writing for Hairstreak, I thought I'd write a bit about how to find the species.

We have 5 species of Hairstreak nationally, all of which are found in our area - three of which (the Brown, Black and White-letter) are **priority species**.

Green Hairstreak is the easiest to see. It is found on both chalk grassland and heathland as it has a range of foodplants including Rockrose and Bird's-foot trefoil. Adults can be seen from late April, often resting on small shrubs in the sunshine. It is the only one of the hairstreaks which does not overwinter as an egg.



Green Hairstreak



Purple Hairstreak ©David Dennis

Purple Hairstreak is more widespread than most people realise. Oak is the foodplant of the caterpillars, and the best way

to see adults is to find a large Oak tree and check out the sunny side on a warm still evening in July or early August. Take binoculars, because they will be high up... watch for feuding males. The eggs are laid next to leaf buds, so you would think it impossible to find them. But often

the eggs are laid on the lower branches; and if you find a tree that has recently fallen, it is well worth searching for eggs.



Fallen Oak, where I found the egg below



Purple Hairstreak egg

Brown Hairstreak is slowly expanding its territory in our three counties. The caterpillars feed on young Blackthorn, but the adults - which fly in August - can be elusive, so we survey for them by searching for the eggs during the



Brown Hairstreak



Brown Hairstreak egg

winter... something you can do, too, and then go back to look for adults on the wing during the species' flight period. The eggs are laid on or near where a twig joins the stem, as in the photo above.



Black Hairstreak

Black Hairstreaks also use Blackthorn. However, for reasons we don't yet understand, they are much more restricted

in their distribution. You could search for their eggs in winter, too. Unfortunately, they tend to lay on older blackthorn, which is invariably too high to search - so it's best to look for adults and pupae. The adults can be seen in late June to mid-July, so why not join one of our special walks for your best chance of seeing them?

White-letter hairstreak caterpillars feed on Elm, so the best way to find the adults is to find an elm tree big enough to flower and then - on a sunny morning

in late July or early August - stand and stare at the top of the Elm (or the adjacent tree) with binoculars and watch for males circling together as they try to establish territory.



White-letter Hairstreak

You can also search for the eggs, usually found just below a bud. Most will be too high up to find, but some are low enough to make a search worthwhile.

Each year is slightly different for our Hairstreaks, so keep an eye on the UTB Sightings page to establish when each species is flying and where they have been seen.

More detailed information on each species can be found on the BC website, and don't forget to join us on one of our guided walks to find these and other butterfly species.

Meanwhile, the overwintering Hairstreak eggs have yet to hatch, so grab a hand lens or magnifying glass and go out and take a look.

Happy wondering!

**Sue Taylor**

All photos ©Sue Taylor (unless otherwise stated)



# Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS)

Another opportunity for you to contribute to the work of our Branch, get out into the countryside and fresh air, and enjoy yourself.

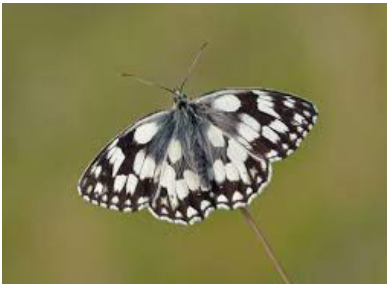
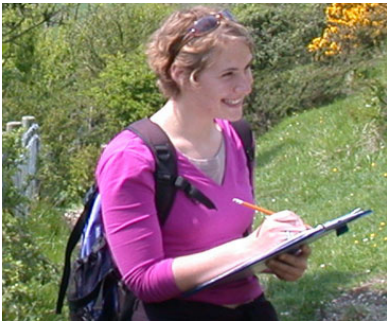
It only requires a few hours in July and August each year, plus a few hours to set up (once only). As long as you are fit to get out into the countryside (often not on paths) and you can identify our common butterfly species, YOU could do this.

Free guidance, training and support are available as required. This work contributes to an important national scheme which helps us understand how butterflies are doing in the wider countryside!

There are 34 WCBS squares in the UTB area, with **12 vacancies** for 2024. See the table below and the map on the next page:

## WCBS-BC Squares: Vacancies 2024

Square		County
SP2405	Filkins	Oxon
SP2502	Langford	Oxon
SP2818	Shipton under Wychwood	Oxon
SP3523	Dean	Oxon
SP6124	Launton	Oxon
SP7222	North of Finemere Wood	Bucks
SP8230	Mursley	Bucks
SP8502	Great Hampden	Bucks
SP9319	Horton	Bucks
SU7669	Sindlesham	Berks
SU7964	Finchamptstead	Berks
TQ0186	Gerrards Cross	Bucks



If you can help or require further information, please contact me.

**Peter Philp**  
[wcbs-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:wcbs-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

**WCBS training opportunities on the next page —>**

# Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) & Transect Training

Some WCBS training sessions have been arranged for the coming days – and there might just be time for you to participate.

## 1. Survey Technique for Transect and Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveyors

Online presentation about Survey Technique for Transect and WCBS surveyors. This online presentation will be helpful to many, but it's primarily as preparation for those attending the in-field training events that follow.



**Online Thursday 21 March at 19.30 until approx. 21.00**

Please register your interest here: <https://bit.ly/48tr9B0>

## 2. Survey Technique Training – to UKBMS Standards

If you already walk a transect or WCBS route and want to brush up on technique, or are considering starting a survey this year, this is for you.

**Saturday March 23rd at 10.00 until approx. 13.00.**

Please meet us in the barn at Collings Hanger Farm, Prestwood, Buckinghamshire. HP16 OHP on Saturday 23 March for some biscuits and tea from 09.30. The meeting starts promptly at 10.00.

Please note numbers are limited to 25 so make sure to register here:

<https://bit.ly/3TcDPIH>

## 3. Transect and Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey Technique Practice Session

This is in-field training following the on-line presentation on Thursday 21 March.

**Saturday 13 April from 10.30 until approx. 13.00.**

We will meet in Pangbourne area, Berkshire, details to follow, and practice transect and wider countryside butterfly survey techniques until 13.00.

To register interest or find out more please contact [margery.slatter@gmail.com](mailto:margery.slatter@gmail.com)

# Time for Reflection:

## Inspirational Wildlife and Conservation Quotes

- The quicker we humans learn that **saving open space and wildlife is critical to our welfare and quality of life**, maybe we'll start thinking of doing something about it. [Jim Fowler]
- It would be absolutely useless for any of us to work to save wildlife without working to **educate the next generation of conservationists**. [Jane Goodall]
- **Wildlife needs wilderness** - not just to survive, but also to live freely. Sadly, many species struggle to survive due to increased human activity and expansion into habitats they call home. [Zoe Helene]
- All over the world **the wildlife that I write about is in grave danger**. It is being exterminated by what we call the progress of civilization. [Gerald Durrell]
- It is not enough to understand the natural world; the point is to **defend and preserve it**. [Edward Abbey]
- **Nature** is not a place to visit. **It is home**. [Gary Snyder]
- The wildlife and its habitat cannot speak, **so we must and we will**. [Theodore Roosevelt]



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)  
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Holtspur Bottom Reserve  
[www.holtspurbottom.info](http://www.holtspurbottom.info)

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