

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Dark Green Fritillary Report 2017

The summer of 2013 saw a large increase in DGF population sizes at a number of sites, in particular Buttlers Hanging and Bradenham in south Buckinghamshire. On these sites the population sizes easily increased by a factor of ten and numbers remained just as strong in 2015. Reports of scattered individuals have increased considerably in recent seasons but sites once holding colonies such as the Gomm valley in High Wycombe remain restricted to occasional singletons. Our own reserve at Holtspur Bottom (and its neighbour Holtspur Bank) no longer supports the butterfly. Butterflies occur regularly at many Chiltern and Berkshire downland sites and one or two woodland sites in north-western Bucks, but no site holds large populations other than Ivinghoe Beacon.

In 2016, numbers subsided again and there were fewer dispersing individuals recorded. The earliest report was one at BBOWT's Lapland reserve where David Wilton witnessed one on June 21st.

In 2017, we had a much earlier emergence with a report from Aston Rowant on May 31st from the site warden Mick Ventners! The last reported was on the National Trust's Coombe hill transect near Wendover on August 25th, by Ryan Clark.

Dark Green Fritillaries may be seen in many places on the chalk downlands of Buckinghamshire (eg. Ivinghoe Beacon), Oxfordshire (eg. Aston Rowant NNR South) and the downs around Wantage (eg. Hackpen Hill).

In recent years there have been an increasing number of reports from the Calvert Jubilee BBOWT reserve and sailing club area. The species is established clearly in this area and does get seen in nearby woodlands. It remains a mystery as to whether these derive from adjacent railway lines or chance establishment from distant migration. The butterfly must wander away from its breeding areas to account for obscure places where it is chanced upon.

Ched George