

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Duke of Burgundy Report 2018

This report is an update and overview of the fate of this butterfly species in the three counties. In Buckinghamshire there remains a strong colony on Ivinghoe Beacon, which stretches to Incombe Hole. The National Trust has made a considerable effort with recording the whereabouts of this species on their Estate. Additionally, the Trust has put in a lot of planning and effort to encourage the butterfly to spread to the south, to re-colonise its old site at Aldbury Nowers (owned by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust). This has yet to achieve fruition. Our other original surviving site on private land in the Saunderton valley, continues to exist in small numbers. This site has changed hands in recent years but the new owners are keen to support efforts to retain the Duke and various local species on the site. A well-known naturalist and conservationist Nigel Adams, takes the credit for management work on the site through two periods of Higher Level Stewardship. This last winter, management work has progressed under joint supervision of our Branch and the Chiltern Rangers; including the help of a group of young people from the wider area.

Branch members will be aware of the contribution that the Duke Project Officer Sarah Meredith made in progressing management of a number of former sites in the neighbouring area, and this continues with Steve Wheatley from Head Office in charge. We cannot overlook the efforts our Chairman Nick Bowles plays in driving this project along. A neighbouring site which had produced 3 or 4 sightings referred to in my last report in 2012 has regrettably produced no further records. This site has also changed ownership recently, and again the new owners are keen to continue supporting our work with the Duke.

It is no secret that our re-introduction attempt supported by the National Trust took place on their Bradenham Estate. Personally, I have been very sensitive about publicity of the Duke's return there, and following the release of adults in 2011 our Conservation and Recording Team Committee agreed that we should maintain a policy of giving the site and the butterfly's progress, a low profile. The secret has been out for some years now and I am happy to report that the last three years have seen the best numbers to date. The downside is that there is no evidence yet that the butterfly is spreading to neighbouring suitable parts of the Estate and beyond. The National Trust has requested that the Branch helps with a detailed survey of all butterfly species and any wildlife on their Estate, and a start has been made by a number of volunteers admirably led by one of our newer Branch committee members, the very enthusiastic Sue Taylor. I look forward to one of their number finding a Duke outside the current location before I do. A challenge! The Estate is also a honeypot for species such as Small Blue, Dingy Skipper and Dark Green Fritillary.

Another introduction is in progress elsewhere in Buckinghamshire and we hope to be able to report details of progress in the not-too-distant future.

It was a surprise when a worn male Duke turned up on Yoesden Bank during a Branch walk last year. Can anyone enlighten me as to its provenance?

We do have three or four sites still supporting Dukes in the extreme south-west of our area. They are all in north-west Berkshire and centre near to Crog Hill and the Lambourn Downs, although there is

another near to Hungerford. Most are generally private, and are monitored with permission by John Lerpiniere, Jim Asher and Des Sussex in particular, although Gillian Taylor has provided updates on a more public area. Some of these sites are SSSIs and come under Des's jurisdiction as the local Officer for Natural England. The colonies are small, and Steve Wheatley is supervising the Branch's influence there. One is an introduction which has persisted for at least ten years.

Ched George