

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Duke of Burgundy Report 2020

Covid 19 resulted in fewer records in 2020, and even I could not visit any sites.

The earliest report was by Ricki Harrington at Ivinghoe Beacon on May 30th (normally one of our later emerging sites), and the last was from Nick Bowles on June 2nd; also from Ivinghoe Beacon.

As far as can be ascertained from reports, the large colony at Ivinghoe Beacon continues to thrive. The same may be said of the Bradenham introduction(s) (now in its tenth year) although the lesser site continues to disappoint with numbers. It is also frustrating that there is no sign of dispersal and colonisation of a number of apparently suitable areas, on neighbouring National Trust land. We were sad to learn that the effects of the pandemic has led to some redundancies of National Trust staff; including those caring for the Bradenham and other of their SSSIs.

The private site at Saunderton could not be surveyed. The more recent introduction near Wendover is struggling, much due to the poor weather at the time when most of the livestock was released. When conditions and permits allow, we do hope the colony can be strengthened with additional stock before it is deemed too late.

Another tantalising record was made in the vicinity of Prestwood Picnic Site. Although we have misgivings that this (and sightings in previous seasons) could have been released, we encourage any recorders in the area to make searching visits. There is suitable foodplant habitat in neighbouring land, although permission should be sought before access from footpaths.

Our Chairman Nick Bowles, continues to co-ordinate with various sources to improve a number of sites within the Saunderton valley. These are all privately owned, and work involves scrub-bashing in association with our friends in the Chiltern Rangers, and the planting of cowslip plants grown by the Lindengate charity. All these operations are performed by many volunteers from a number of organisations, in addition to our own Branch members.

There are several areas where Dukes still occur on the Berkshire Downs, although two are private areas and include a non-sanctioned introduction which is small and thriving. These are monitored by volunteers with permits. The downs cover quite a large area which is remote with few visitors, and a number of localities could turn up sightings for the adventurous.

Ched George, February 2021



A site in preparation for the arrival of the Duke from adjacent land; Dec 2020