

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Wood White Report 2005

Becky Woodell



Wood White (male)
Photo © Tim Watts

Surveys

1. **Whitfield Wood:** 15 seen on one day by Andy Patmore, Forestry Commission per Stuart Hodges.
2. **Little Linford Wood:** 5 seen on one day was highest count by Phil Sarre, Warden.
3. **Basildon Park, Berks:** Surveyed in 2004 by Grahame Hawker. None found. Old records exist.
4. **Whitecross Green Wood:** Recorded on transect from 12th May (Transect Week 6) to 1st July (TW 14), then a single on 2nd August (TW 18), presumed 2nd brood. Highest count 17 on 3rd June.

Ecology

1. 2004 - Predation

A Crab Spider with colour exactly matching a Wood White, was found sitting on top of a Ribwort Plantain flower stalk in the middle of the central ride at Whitecross Green Wood feeding on a Wood White. Two dead Wood Whites were on the ground below. The spider was removed to the undergrowth.

2. 2005 - Courtship and Mating

On 26 June a courting pair was followed along the central ride at Whitecross Green Wood. One was much smaller and darker than the other and was presumed male. They circled each other briefly and then settled on chickweed in open short vegetation in the centre of the ride about 15cm above ground. After some antenna stroking they very quickly paired and remained en.cop. for 38 minutes, both very still.



Courting Wood Whites
Photo © Wendy Campbell (2001)

Close observation showed white antenna tips on the larger butterfly which was therefore the male. Within 15 minutes the dark female was as large and pale as the male. Several other small dark individuals were seen during the season. Therefore, Wood Whites will fly and females at least, will mate before the wings are fully expanded. After 38 minutes the male flew away and the female flew off one minute later.

While settled so near the ground they were vulnerable to trampling. Four people passed without seeing them and one couple, deep in conversation, would have walked on them if I had not stepped in the way. No one noticed the Wood Whites.

Becky Woodell, 2005
(Posted June 2009)