

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Wood White Report 2009

Becky Woodell



Photo © David Redhead

The Wood White continues to decline both nationally and locally. The number of tetrads in Upper Thames Branch from which Wood Whites were recorded in 2009 was eight. This is down from 2008 as none were recorded in Whitecross Green Wood in 2009 for the first time since recording began there in 1985.

Wood Whites were recorded in the following sites in 2009:

1. Great Wood, the only part of Yardley Chase in Bucks.
2. A small private nature reserve east of Great Wood.
3. Whitfield Wood SP640390 which belongs to the Forestry Commission and is open to the public.
4. Wicken and Leckhampstead Woods SP730400. Leckhampstead is privately owned. Wicken belongs to the Forestry Commission.
5. A disused railway line. Wood Whites were seen both east and west of Salden Wood.

The disused railway line which runs past Salden Wood is being proposed for reopening and work is currently scheduled to begin in 2014. Trackside clearance for survey work was done last winter. UTB members and BC Headquarters liaised with the ecologist for the company doing the survey work and with Bucks County Council Biodiversity Officer.

During the summer twelve members of UTB surveyed 17km of the line between Steeple Claydon and Bletchley at least once between May and June and again between July and August. All butterflies and day flying moths were recorded as well as plants and any other wildlife of interest. Dave Wilton moth trapped there on several nights. Wood Whites were surveyed in more detail. Habitat use, behaviour, egg laying, host plants and nectar plants were recorded.

David Redhead provided invaluable help by setting up a method of recording our data. He also divided the 17km to be surveyed into manageable units. He marked out the Wood White area into 50m sections tied to the Ordnance Survey Grid Reference.

Three other key species, Black Hairstreak, Grizzled Skipper and Dingy Skipper were found. The Black Hairstreak colony, found by Wendy and Mick Campbell, was previously unknown.

Both first and second brood Wood Whites were surveyed. An important finding was that the track bed was used for egg laying as well as the cuttings' sides. A total of eleven egg laying incidents were observed in the first brood and thirteen in the second brood. The majority were laid along the track bed. All second brood eggs were laid by the same female on the same day and recorded by Ched George. The second brood was found over a wider area than the first.

A report on our findings will be sent to the company undertaking the work on the line and to the Bucks County Council Biodiversity Officer. Recommendations will be made for ameliorating the damage done to the habitat by the loss of the track bed.

We plan to continue surveying in 2010. Anyone who wants to help, please contact [Becky Woodell](#) or [David Redhead](#).

Those who helped in 2009 were: Jim Asher, Nick Bowles, Wendy and Mick Campbell, Dennis Dell, Ched George, Stuart Hodges, Sue Maddix, David Redhead, Wendy Wilson, Dave Wilton. Without them it would have been impossible to collect the amount of information obtained.