

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Wood White Species Champion Report 2022

Nick Board



In 2022, the first reported sighting of Wood White in our area was on the 6th May, some three weeks earlier than the previous year. Allowing for some variances in “actual emergence v reported sightings” this was still an early date for a first sighting and certainly the earliest for the last five years.

What followed was a steady record of sightings for the next two weeks at locations in Wicken Wood, Salcey Forest, Yardley Chase and Leckhampstead Wood which is privately owned

Numbers continued to increase peaking during the third week in May and into the first three weeks of June, a longer period than in the previous five years

An emergence of 2nd brood Wood White was noted during the first week of July but then a sudden “drop off” of sightings with no further sightings recorded after the 1st August. It was as if the whole flight period had been brought forward by two to three weeks compared to previous years which may have been due to the exceptionally warm weather

Neighbouring Hazelborough Forest on the Bucks/Northants border experienced a similar pattern with good numbers observed throughout the peak period at the end of May and into June but then the flight period was suddenly curtailed during July. Further industrial expansion around the Silverstone area close to well established Wood White habitat could also have a detrimental impact on numbers in the future

No new sites were reported during 2022 although there are surely some new locations to be uncovered, particularly to the north of the area along the North Bucks / South Northants border

For those of you searching for this fragile little butterfly, here is some extra information!

Habitat

Wood White breeds in **tall grassland or light scrub, in partially shaded or edge habitats**, with most colonies breeding in woodland rides and clearings

Features

The adult butterfly is creamy white and the male has a squarish black or blackish spot on the tip of its fore wings. On the other hand, the blackish spot on the female is reduced to some blackish scales between the veins



Flight pattern

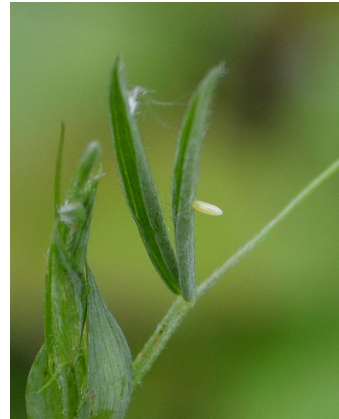
The male's flight pattern is rather feeble as it makes its way up and down the rides searching for females, bobbing up and down as he goes. Its weak flight is unlikely to be confused with other species flying at the same time, for example Orange-tip and Green-veined White, which have a far more vigorous flight

If the weather is overcast Wood White can be reluctant to fly, tending to settle on the underside of a leaf and can be difficult to see



Egg laying

During early June, the eggs are laid on birds-foot trefoil, tuberous pea or vetch family so it is a good idea to look out for these plants



Good luck with your searching during 2023 ,and please let me know of your sightings and any new locations.

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