

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch



Newsletter 115



Butterfly
Conservation

October 2023



*New Forest Butterfly Transect Group
Moth Fest*

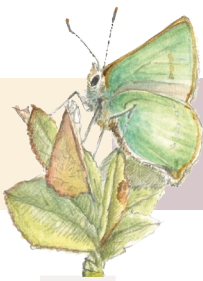
Maiden's Blush. Chris Humphries

Brown Silver-line. Keith Brook

Jersey Tiger. Kate Phillips

Female and Male Common Heath. John French





Contents

2	Chair's Message	18	New Forest Butterfly Transect Group
5	Branch AGM and Members' Day 2023	20	Larval Searches with a UV Torch
6	Photographic Competition 2023	24	Friends of Portswood Rec are the Bees Knees
7	Easyfundraising	28	Showcase
8	Reserves News	29	New Elm Website
13	Members' Day at Magdalen Hill Down	30	Obituary: John Vetterlein
14	Hampshire Field Trip Highlights 2023	32	Useful Contacts
16	Isle of Wight Field Trip Highlights 2023		





Chair's Message

The autumn issue of the Branch Newsletter always offers an opportunity to reflect on the year to date and, I have to say, we've had very mixed fortunes, primarily driven by weather patterns. Most observers would agree that, while 2022 would be considered an 'early' year, 2023 is shaping up to be a relatively 'late' year, with species emerging later than we might normally expect, by up to three weeks in some cases. We are also starting to see the impact of the long, hot summer of 2022, with inevitable winners and losers. Unfortunately, it is still too early to draw any conclusions, especially since some species that are likely to have been impacted, such as the Common and Adonis Blues, have more than one brood, with the later broods often larger than the first.

We therefore need to reserve judgement, but this is my opportunity to emphasise the importance of your records from which we can observe trends! While the Big Butterfly Count has recently concluded, there are still opportunities to contribute year-round. This includes the Garden Butterfly Survey <https://gardenbutterflysurvey.org>, formal butterfly transects, the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS), iRecord <https://irecord.org.uk>, the use of Excel spreadsheets (see the branch website) and MapMate (for moth recorders, especially). If this sounds confusing, then do please look at the branch website that will help you determine the mechanism that might best suit you.

Ever the optimist, I have to say that the resilience of our Lepidoptera fauna never ceases to amaze me. This was really highlighted at the New Members' Day that the branch runs each year. I would, of course, like to thank all of those who attended and those that helped to organise and present. We were particularly challenged this year, since the event fell on the wettest day of the week that both preceded and followed it! However, the butterflies, especially, did not disappoint as members were shown around Magdalen Hill Down in between shower bursts, and I did a 'double take' when a Hummingbird Hawkmoth decided to join us for a nanosecond before it disappeared as quickly as it came!

The merest hint of warmth, when it wasn't raining, saw several species take to the air, not least the stunningly beautiful Chalk Hill Blue. I must admit that I absolutely love this species and this site! A single Adonis Blue was also seen, along with the tiny Brown Argus that is a specialty of MHD. Even the

ubiquitous Meadow Brown put on a good show and, just as the Speckled Wood is a constant companion in woodland sites, we should not forget common grassland species that delight us. Of course, getting to know each species in some detail adds to their fascination – the single-brooded Meadow Brown must have one of the longest flight periods of all our butterflies. Being able to show the attendees the larval foodplants of the species we saw, and point out certain behaviours, was an absolute pleasure!

Branch Vacancies

Our branch has a few vacancies. If you are at all interested in helping the branch continue to go from strength to strength, then we would be delighted to hear from you! Please contact me in the first instance at pete@eeles.net or by calling 07796 331061.

The **Events Coordinator** plans the branch's annual programme of events and ensures that all events are resourced with a leader, volunteers and equipment. We are invited to attend various events each year, and we also set up our own, such as a New Members' Day. This is a Main Committee appointment.

Andy Barker will be standing down as **Chair of the Conservation and Records Subcommittee** at the AGM in November. If you are passionate about conservation or have a keen interest in the records collected by the branch, then do get in touch. This is also a Main Committee appointment.

Jacky Adams will also be standing down as the **Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey Champion**, and this is an opportunity to help with the recording of butterflies away from the usual hotspots, in places such as farmland and urban green spaces.

Finally, Suzie Brown will be standing down as **Membership Secretary** at the AGM in November. This is also a Main Committee appointment that is focused on welcoming our new members to the branch, ensuring that their needs are met, liaising with Head Office where necessary, and communicating opportunities for members to become more involved with the branch.

It goes without saying that the branch will formally thank both Andy and Suzie at the AGM for their respective contributions to the running of the branch.

2023 AGM and Members' Day

Speaking of the AGM, this year's AGM and Members' Day will be held at Littleton Village Hall on Sunday 5 November, starting at 12:00, and we have quite the line up. Final details will be made available on the branch website and e-newsletter ahead of the event. Mike Slater, Chair of the Warwickshire

branch of Butterfly Conservation, will be speaking on 'Butterfly Conservation – the Warwickshire Approach' and will have copies of his book for sale. Mike Wall, county moth recorder, will also be presenting on the changes we're seeing regarding our moth fauna. We will also have Dr Max Anderson, BC's South West Landscape Officer, talking on two topics – the importance of brambles for night-time pollinators; and also the use of ultra-violet light when searching out the immature stages of Lepidoptera, which is turning out to be somewhat of a game-changer for recording.

I hope to see you there!

Peter Eeles,
Branch Chair



Speckled Wood. Rosemary Powell



Branch AGM and Members' Day 2023

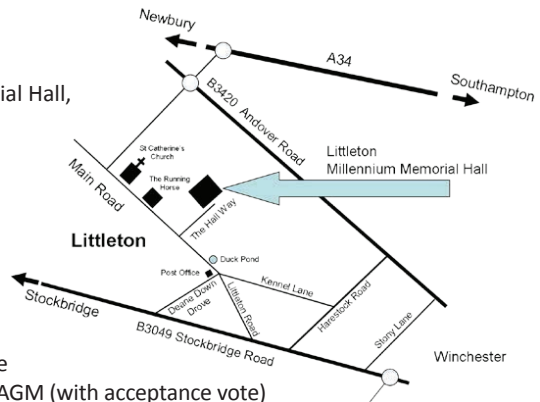
Branch members are warmly invited to attend our AGM and Members' Day, at the Littleton Millennium Hall, Littleton, near Winchester, on **Sunday 5 November 2023**.

Members are asked to bring a packed lunch, which can be eaten in the break after the formal business of the AGM, combined with the opportunity to mingle with fellow members.

Timetable for the day

11:30	Doors open
12:00-12:05	Chair's Welcome
12:05-13:00	Branch AGM – see separate Agenda below
13:00-13:45	Lunch Break
13:45-14:30	Butterfly Conservation – the Warwickshire approach, by Mike Slater
14:30-14:50	Our changing moth fauna, by Mike Wall
14:50-15:20	Refreshments and photographic competition
15:20-15:40	The importance of brambles for night-time pollinators, by Dr Max Anderson (Butterfly Conservation)
15:40-16:00	Using UV light to find immature stages of Lepidoptera, by Dr Max Anderson (Butterfly Conservation)
16:00-16:15	Results of photographic competition
16:15-16:25	Raffle

Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall,
The Hall Way, Littleton,
Winchester, SO22 6QL
Grid ref: SU 457,323



Agenda, Annual General Meeting 2023

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2022 AGM (with acceptance vote)
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Presentation of Accounts
5. Chairman's Report
6. Election of new Main Committee members
7. Health and Safety Matters
8. Any other business (notified to Chairman no later than 29 October 2023)
9. Close of AGM

Pete Eeles,
Branch Chair

Photographic Competition 2023

Prints will be displayed and judged in the following categories:

- UK Butterflies
- UK Moths
- Immature stages
- Overseas butterflies and moths
- First time entrants on any of the above subjects

The event is only open to Branch members, and all members entering images into the photographic competition do so on the following terms and conditions:

1. Image(s) must have been taken by themselves in the 18 months preceding entry into the competition.
2. Entrants agree that their images may be used for non-commercial purposes by the Branch. This includes publishing images on the Branch website, social media channels and in the Branch Newsletter and Annual Butterfly and Moth reports. Copyright will remain with the member at all times and will be acknowledged when images are used by the Branch.
3. All images must be prints not exceeding A4 size (297x210mm) in either landscape or portrait format and may be mounted or unmounted.
4. Entries are limited to three per entrant.

All members attending the meeting will be invited to complete a voting slip to identify their favourite image in each category and to choose their overall winning entry. The results will be collated and the winner announced at the end of the meeting.

First-time entrants

Following the success of this element of the competition in previous years and to encourage new member entries, we will be continuing with the category for images submitted by first-time entrants but otherwise on the same conditions as above.

Members unable to attend the day but who wish to submit prints may do so by posting them to **Lee Hurrell, Whitebeams, Enmill Lane, Pitt, Winchester, SO22 5QR**, to arrive by **Saturday 4 November**. Please ensure that you enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you wish your prints to be returned.

Easyfundraising

All Hampshire and Isle of Wight BC members may be interested to know that the Branch has an account with **easyfundraising**. This is a very easy and convenient way to raise free donations to Branch funds through online shopping. To date, £270 has been raised in this way.

By signing up on the easyfundraising website, each time you make an online purchase from a long list of more than 7,000 well-known brands, including John Lewis & Partners, Argos, Uswitch, eBay, M&S, Just Eat, Now TV, Domino's Pizza and Audible, the retailer makes a small, free donation to the Branch. It only takes a couple of minutes to enlist.

Once signed up, if through your online purchases you raise more than £5 in retailer donations, easyfundraising will give us a bonus £5 donation.

Here's how to join the scheme:

1. Go to: https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause/step-1/?char=65865&invite=2YJGNJ&referral-campaign=c2s&utm_campaign=raise-more&utm_medium=email&utm_content=rm-raf-e1
2. Click 'support this cause' and create an account
3. Choose from over 7,000 brands to do your online shopping as normal and our cause will receive a free donation with every purchase you make.

Thank you for your support. You'll be helping to make a real difference to Butterfly Conservation - Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch.

Graham Nicol,
Branch Treasurer



Reserves News

After a slow start, there has been an incredible abundance of butterflies on our reserves, notably Red Admiral, Small White, Brimstone, Brown Argus, Ringlet, Small Copper, Holly Blue and Small Skipper. Our nature reserves have shown again how they are a vital stronghold for our butterflies and moths.

Magdalen Hill Down

We've been blessed with sunshine on the butterfly walks (at the time of writing!) and they've been a wonderful experience, observing and learning about the different species, with a good number of people attending. My thanks to Dave and Anna Stewart for their help in leading these walks.

The South Downs National Park Ranger Volunteers spent one day clearing footpaths and three days clearing hawthorn re-growth from the Skylark fields, to prevent too much scrub developing and shading out the wildflowers.

BC volunteers Richard Lemon and Rupert Broadway attended the Bioblitz at Old Winchester Hill, run by our partners Natural England. One of the reserve staff gave an excellent talk on how they manage the sheep grazing to maintain the magnificent display of chalk grassland flowers. Our butterfly walk was well attended with over 30 people.



Youth Ranger programme

Butterfly Conservation ran a Youth Ranger programme over the summer holidays for 13- to 17-year-olds, doing various activities and having a taster of managing a chalk grassland nature reserve. Organised by Megan Lowe, BC's Engagement Officer, Suzie Duffy was also a great help in making each day a welcoming and insightful experience. The days began with a delicious banana cake for breakfast! Activities in the first two days included putting out the Butterfly Trail, clearing footpaths, butterfly and moth identification, field skills, handling slow worms and learning about conservation grazing and meeting the cows and sheep. Tony Davis, Senior Ecologist for BC, led an excellent workshop on moths and moth trapping. The Youth Rangers is a three-day programme for those interested in learning more about our wildlife and countryside for young people considering an environmental career.

*Youth Rangers at Magdalen Hill Down.
Megan Lowe*

*Magdalen Hill Down images, Fiona Scully.
Butterfly walk, White-faced Woodland sheep
and South Downs National Park
ranger volunteers*





Striped Lychnis larva.
Fiona Scully

Proposed pond

If all goes well and we secure planning permission, our new pond will be dug out this October in Tree & Shrub West, near the St Swithun's School entrance on the former arable land. The pond is funded by the South Downs Trust and will be about 8m x 5m (26ft by 16ft) in size. It's part of a network of ponds in the farmed landscape around Winchester. Dave Stewart has been an enormous help producing GIS maps for the planning application.

Magdalen's neighbours

Special thanks to Anna Stewart for driving forward improvements for managing the cemetery more sensitively for our wildflowers, relaxing the regular mowing to allow more plants to flower. We appreciate the whole of the cemetery team for being so open to our suggested management plan changes, enabling more chalk grassland flowers to bloom and for planning to devote more space for biodiversity. Zoe, the Winchester City Council ecologist, has also been instrumental in making these positive changes.

Anna also made connections with the staff and grounds maintenance team at St. Swithun's School to allow more space for long grass and wildflower areas.

Chilcomb sports ground is a forest of wild carrot, knapweed and long grass, attracting bees, hoverflies, grasshoppers and Meadow Browns. It brings life and interest into a corner of the sports field, demonstrating how creating these habitat patches or a 'Wild Space' really does make a difference.

Yew Hill

Following all the scrub clearance work by the volunteer team, Yew Hill has been left to itself this summer, with no grazing (as we've no sheep due to Hill Top being taken back by Southern Water). So the volunteers can sit back and enjoy the rewards of all their hard work. There have been sightings of White Letter Hairstreak along the bridleway track and a few other surprises. The butterfly walks led by Rupert Broadway have been a real joy. The birdlife is also notable with Bullfinch, Song Thrush, Yellowhammer and Swallow. This little reserve, despite its small size, really is a heavenly place to be. The sheep will be brought back in September/October.

Bentley Station Meadow

The Blacknest Field volunteers Sarah Womersley and Alison led a butterfly walk following a circular route they had developed. The woodland trail includes Bentley Station Meadow and opens out onto the wildflower meadows of Blacknest Fields. John Oates talked about Bentley, its importance and management. The reserve took our breath away for its

numerous Silver-washed Fritillaries sweeping through the glades, Ringlets and Gatekeepers, with a Purple Hairstreak making an appearance. There are five cows currently grazing here.

The Bentley Station Meadow volunteers had two work parties, clearing footpaths and replacing the waymarker posts to mark out the transect route. Seeing old photos of the meadows from over 10 years ago, it's hardly recognisable today from the amount of bramble encroachment. It's such a valuable plant, but it does take over and swamp everything if left unmanaged. So the volunteers have a big challenge this winter...

Volunteer Field Trip – Martin Down, led by Pete Durnell, Hampshire County Council

Martin Down was the venue for the second volunteer field trip this summer, which offered up more day-flying moths than butterflies, but was stunning for orchids and a real Mecca for chalk grassland plants. The reserve has a fascinating history and it was interesting to learn how it's managed.

Volunteer work days

These will resume in October so please do come and give a hand.

Magdalen Hill Down – every Monday, starting 2 October 2023.

Yew Hill – starting Thursday 12 October 2023 – these will be fortnightly with some days spent at **Bentley Station Meadow** on dates still TBC.

For those not already on the list and who would like to volunteer, please email me at **fscully@butterfly-conservation.org**

Thank you to all the volunteers for your help. I hope that you managed to enjoy the intoxicating sight of so many butterflies this summer. After the unsettled spell of weather in late July and August, let's hope for a fine autumn.

I look forward to seeing you out on the reserves soon.

Fiona Scully,
South Downs Landscape Officer

Magdalen Hill Down
Our flagship reserve extends to over 100 acres and is a rare example of sheep-grazed chalk downland. On the eastern edge of Winchester.



Moth recording
never been more popular



Members' Day at Magdalen Hill Down

On Saturday 5 August, branch members braved showers to attend St Swithun's School for Members' Day presentations followed by a tour of our Magdalen Hill Down Reserve. It was enjoyable to meet face to face and very encouraging to hear the level of interest and participation from members in habitat creation through gardening, in recording as citizen scientists, and for all the interest in volunteering and supporting Lepidoptera conservation. It was a great pleasure in sharing as a group the experience of the summer wildflowers on the reserve walk, and in photographing the butterflies and moths and learning more about them.

Suzie Brown,
Membership Secretary



A presentation by Fiona Scully, South Downs Landscape Officer, on Magdalen Hill Down. Suzie Brown Rufus Pateman – the youngest member attending the day. Tim Pateman Chalk Hill Blue. Suzie Brown



Field Trip Highlights – Hampshire, 2023

The weather played a big role again in the early part of the season and several trips were cancelled, but some did go ahead despite the weather being less than adequate. One of these was the first gathering at Broxhead Common, where we managed to see just one Emperor Moth. The weather was no better at Butser a week later, where the cool and cloudy conditions in the morning made counting very easy as there wasn't anything to count. However, in the afternoon the sun did come out and it was a totally different picture with lots of Duke of Burgundy, and other chalk downland species to see and, rather pleasingly, two Emperor Moths also making an appearance!

In the New Forest the Pearl-bordered Fritillary was seen in reasonable numbers, and at Coulters Dean there were excellent counts of Green Hairstreak and Small Blue among the rare orchids. Into early summer, the sun was sizzling and brought out some early Grayling and Silver-studded Blue. The Purple Emperor was seen at West Wood and Alice Holt Forest, and a new site for many at Micheldever Wood, where assembly points became the centre of attention.

A good turnout at West Harting Down saw several female Purple Emperors searching good areas of sallow to lay their eggs. Unfortunately the weather turned again and July into August was another damp period, but the target species for late summer such as Brown Hairstreak still appeared at Shipton Bellinger in good numbers, along with Wall Brown.

It was good to see some new faces joining the walks this year and I would like to thank all who made the effort to attend. I look forward to seeing you again in 2024.

Ashley Whitlock,
Field Meetings Organiser, Hampshire

All images, Ashley Whitlock.

Walking through Micheldever Wood

Purple Emperor on assembly point, Alice Holt Forest

Pearl-bordered Fritillary, New Forest

Female Brown Hairstreak, Shipton Bellinger





Field Trip Highlights – Isle of Wight, 2023



This year's field trips have been well attended. Our first was at Parkhurst Forest, Newport, at the end of April, where we saw too many Brimstone to count, which was really good. It was good to meet up with people we knew, and a few new faces, after the long winter.

Our three Glanville Fritillary field trips, in May, were a great success, with people coming from all over England to see this very special butterfly, and they weren't disappointed. Even though it wasn't a good year for Glanvilles, all field trippers saw them and took photographs.

On our first Glanville field trip at Ventnor, we were lucky enough to have Andy Butler leading it, and he gave us a very interesting talk about the butterfly before we started. The Mottistone Down Glanville walk was best attended, with 28 people, and we saw lots of Glanville's and other beautiful butterflies.

The weather held up for the Newtown Meadows field trip, and Marbled Whites were flying in abundance, while we also saw our first White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillary's of the year, in Walters Copse, towards the end of the walk.

Then in July, and as we all know, the weather broke. I had to cancel the Kemphill Moor Copse field trip, which was a shame, as it is a lovely copse, and we usually see the Valezina form of the Silver-washed fritillary there.

I also had to cancel the Mount Joy field trip because of rain, but I was able to run it a week later, which was good, and we were rewarded with lots of Brown Argus and other blue butterflies. We also saw a Wall Brown there, which was duly photographed by everyone.

Sadly, the Arreton Down field trip was cancelled because of rain, as it is usually such an amazing sight to see the Chalkhill Blue in large numbers up there.

I would like to thank everyone for attending and the people that helped me lead the field trips. Let's hope for better weather next year.

Kay Shaw,
Field Meetings Organiser, Isle of Wight

All images, Kay Shaw.



The New Forest Butterfly Transect Group

The New Forest Butterfly Transect Group (NFBTG) is a collective of like-minded individuals who administer and survey 51 transects in and around the New Forest, with another three being trialled. We oversee a further 16 on behalf of the branch within the New Forest District Council area. There are around 135 walkers in the group. New volunteer members are always welcome, whether it is recording that interests you or perhaps representing us at conservation events in the New Forest area.

As a group we keep a Flickr account and this is something that can really highlight the special biodiversity of the area in which we record Lepidoptera. A few examples that illustrate the New Forest area as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) include: globally important lowland heaths, mires and woodland, home to unique flora and fauna, including many species of Lepidoptera have been captured by our members here.

Contact us at nftg-inbox@googlegroups.com for more details of how to be involved or go to our page on the branch website under Area Groups to read more and see where we survey:

<https://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk>

Also, on the New Forest National Park Authority website:

<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteers/new-forest-butterfly-transect-group/>

Bob Taylor

Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Steve Keil
Heath Spotted Orchid. Trevor Bumfrey
New Forest heather and heath. Keith Brook
Silver-studded Blue. Keith Brook





Larval Searches with a UV Torch

In the last newsletter Mark Tutton gave a fascinating account of his exploits looking for Purple Emperor pupae using a UV light. I have used the same technique to search for Brown Hairstreak larvae, and encourage others to use this technique to find larvae of this and other species.

Brown Hairstreaks are notoriously hard to locate. The adults have the reputation of being the hardest native butterfly species to see as an adult. They spend most of their lives high in the canopy of a large tree, reportedly favouring Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) for their assemblies in the UK, but these are hard to locate. Occasionally adults descend to nectar, but this is not regular or reliable. (I believe that these descents may be more frequent in hot weather when the aphid honeydew which forms the adults' primary food source dries up.) Adult females do come down to lay their eggs on blackthorn in hedgerows, but are surprisingly inconspicuous: they creep around twigs to identify a suitable site for depositing their eggs singly, and intersperse that activity with basking in sunlight, making short fast flights down the hedgerow before settling to sunbathe or lay an egg.

*All images, Angus McCullough.
Recently emerged larva in blackthorn
leaf bud
Brown Hairstreak ova in April –
one with exit hole from larval
emergence, the other still intact*



It was only in the second half of the 20th century that it was appreciated that searching for eggs in winter was the most reliable way of detecting the presence of the species, with painstaking inspection of young blackthorn growth for the pinhead-sized white eggs. When discovered, the eggs may be seen under a hand lens to be beautifully sculpted, especially early in the winter – like tiny sea urchins. In days gone by lepidopterists would locate the species in spring by thrashing the vegetation above a sheet to dislodge the larvae, a technique that may be considered rather disruptive to modern sensibilities.

The larvae are extraordinarily well camouflaged, with the first instar living within a blackthorn leaf bud after emergence, and later stages well hidden in the leaves. As ever, Peter Eeles' book (*Lifecycles of British and Irish Butterflies*) provides a superb illustrated account. My observations suggest that the larvae do not move many feet from the egg from which they emerged, until descending to the ground to pupate. Even so, they can be exceedingly hard to find, even when more fully grown, searching close to a marked egg site, with nearby evidence of feeding from leaf damage. The use of a UV light at night, however, entirely changes this, with larvae glowing conspicuously against the leaves. All sorts of other caterpillars and invertebrates show up clearly too, with some leaves having surprising colours under UV at night. An amazing unseen world is revealed...



Basic UV torches are available inexpensively online. Most seem to use a number of LEDs, with up to 100 LEDs on the bigger models. I am not a physicist, but UV torches on the market seem to produce ultraviolet light of a wavelength between 365 and 395 nanometres. I haven't discovered whether the precise wavelength is significant in the ease of searching for larvae. My torch emits light at 365nm and seems quite powerful (it claims 2800mW 'luminous power'), but with quite a narrow beam. It is currently available for just over £40. It works well for inspecting individual twigs and branches, including lifting them up to check the undersides of the leaves on the twig. In searching for Purple Emperor pupae I would imagine that a torch with a wider beam might be more effective.



Excited at discovering how much easier it was to locate Brown Hairstreak larvae using UV light at night, I tried the same technique in winter to look for eggs. I expected these to show up as bright pinpricks of light that were even more conspicuous than in daylight. Unfortunately, that was not the case. The eggs showed no bioluminescence at all.

After writing the account above of my amateur efforts, I have just discovered an academic paper published in the *Journal of Insect Conservation*, in May 2023: *Evaluating the use of UV photoluminescence for surveying the immature stages of rare butterflies: a case study using the Black Hairstreak (Satyrium pruni)*,

2023, by Tilley, Anderson, and Stewart, from the University of Sussex. This paper provides objective data in relation to the Black Hairstreak that matches my own subjective findings in searching for Brown Hairstreak larvae using UV light. The full text is freely available online, for those interested. They too found that UV light was of no benefit in searching for eggs, but that 'surveys under UV flashlight were highly successful in detecting many larvae that would otherwise have been missed by conventional daytime searches'. They highlight the importance of this technique to determine the presence of Black Hairstreak butterflies, and better understand their larval ecology, as well as its potential for studying other butterfly and moth species.



*All images, Angus McCullough.
Brown Hairstreak larva
The same larva with UV light*

As it happens, they were using exactly the same torch as I have (the Alonefire SV13 described above and available from Amazon), but also tried 'a standard 100 LED UV flashlight' emitting at 395nm, which was also found to be effective.

If you do try searching for larvae or pupae using this technique, happy hunting! Keep safe, and don't forget the need for protective eyewear. I'd be very interested in your discoveries: angus.mccullough@1cor.com

Angus McCullough



Friends of Portswood Rec are the Bees Knees

A number of you probably know about the Bees Needs Award. It's an annual award, given by DEFRA to 'recognise and celebrate examples of exceptional initiatives undertaken by local authorities, community groups, farmers and businesses to support pollinators'. But did you know that there's a Bees Needs Champion in Southampton? – one of only 25 across the country.



It's been awarded to a group of volunteers who help Southampton City Council (SCC) to maintain and improve a small park in Portswood. Officially, it's called Portswood Recreation Ground, but is known affectionately by locals as The Rec. And we are Friends of Portswood Rec (FOPR), who have worked to fund and carry out improvements throughout the park. Five years ago a subgroup came together to restore the neglected garden area. This comprises a large central bed with borders on the four surrounding edges. In a previous incarnation, SCC had created a moth garden but sadly, owing to severe financial constraints, they had to give up on the maintenance. Brambles and 'weeds' had taken over; while both have wildlife value, they were definitely in the wrong place ... and there are plenty of both elsewhere in the Rec!

From the outset we decided that we would create a garden that was attractive to park users and to wildlife, especially pollinators. We have tried to be as environmentally conscious as we can. We cleared the beds by hand and haven't resorted to any chemicals. We've only used peat-free compost and have tried to source our plants responsibly; a number came from a local nursery, Mayfield, which is run as a social enterprise with MIND. Even our T-shirts are made from organic cotton! We felt this approach was important, to fit in with our ethos of conserving nature, wherever it may be.



All images, Denise Long.

Since we started planting up in the autumn of 2019, trying always to use pollinator-friendly plants, we've been looking to create more space and resources for wildlife year on year. We have wood piles and rotting logs scattered throughout, a bug hotel beloved of solitary bees and a large saucer of fresh water for insects, birds and hedgehogs. We've created a wildflower meadow and beetle bank, and have recently installed two compost bins so that we can deal with some of our gardening waste on site. We have a section of border which is planted to attract moths and this is currently a work in progress. We're planting night-scented flowers such as evening primrose, tobacco plants and sweet rocket, but the germination of seeds of these biennial species has had variable success, and the patch has yet to become fully self sustaining.

Added to the mix, we have a small area of cornfield annuals, bird and bat boxes throughout, bumblebee nests and an attempt at creating a suitable environment for mining bees. The latter have declined to take up residence, but a colony of ants has found the sandy substrate to their liking, which adds to the biological mix.

We feel we've achieved a lot, but there's still plenty to do: another bug hotel beside the meadow, more native hedging, a dead hedge and, in an ideal world, a pond. That would be the pinnacle of achievement, but unfortunately there are lots of things that have to be taken into consideration in a public space, and for us it would be a massive project, both financially and practically.

We feel we've made a huge difference and have definitely seen an increase in numbers of pollinators: bees, beetles, hoverflies, an occasional dragonfly and, of course, butterflies ... and hopefully moths. We have so far only attracted the more common species, but they're increasing in variety and numbers, and they're always a welcome sight.

I really hope that we've demonstrated that wildlife can sit alongside humans in a busy public space, where there are tennis courts, play areas and lots of dog walkers, picnickers, etc. It is possible to cater for both, and vital that we do so to protect the future of our precious wildlife!





If you're interested in getting involved, please contact

denise.long2@btinternet.com

As well as the gardening, it would be great to be able to conduct insect surveys, carry out moth trapping, and look into catering for the needs of other stages of butterfly development and myriad other things. As gardeners, we meet most Sunday mornings.

No experience required, just bags of enthusiasm and a love of tea and cake! You would be most welcome!

Denise Long



Showcase – Farmland Butterfly Survey



Brown Argus. Suzie Brown

SHOWCASE is a project that highlights 'synergies between agriculture, biodiversity and ecosystem services to help farmers capitalising on native biodiversity'. The project 'is dedicated to the integration of biodiversity into farming practices. The project aims to deliver new insight and innovative tools facilitating the agricultural sector's transition towards more sustainable farming, and thus help meet wider societal needs'.

Run by Dr Stuart Edwards, a Post Doctoral Researcher at Reading University School of Agriculture, Policy & Development, Showcase was introduced to the branch by Dr Andy Barker, Chair of Conservation and Records Sub-Committee.

Information about the project can be read at: <https://showcase-project.eu>

One facet of the project is to match volunteer naturalists with farmer/landowners. Several transects have been established on farms throughout Hampshire, and the findings shared with the landowners. Recording Brown Argus was a highlight of the transect I undertook at Bullington.

Suzie Brown,
Membership Secretary



New Elm Website

An elm website has been created, dedicated to the promotion of the five new (post-2000) highly disease-resistant elm cultivars now available in the UK. All five have been successfully trialled in south Hampshire, notably at Great Fontley Farm, where they support a healthy colony of White-letter Hairstreaks.

The website describes the trees in detail, complete with photographs, and lists the suppliers. There are also sections dwelling on the butterfly, and elm in general. The site will be continuously updated to feature new developments and suppliers.

See: <https://disease-resistant-elms.org> designed by Septagrama.

Andrew Brookes

White-letter Hairstreak on bramble. Paul Harfield



Obituary: John Vetterlein



John Vetterlein at Environmental Rock, Southampton.

Many of you will know John Vetterlein, also variously known as ‘The Hat’ or simply ‘JV’. John sadly passed away on 6 February 2023 after fighting a long illness. John was a wonderful man in every conceivable way except for his Bavarian surname – not too difficult to pronounce but I lost count of the number of times I had to correct the spelling of it when written down by others!

Many people would have known John through his excellent photography, particularly from his recent ‘Bonking Butterflies’ calendar and his fine photographic display at the Harbour Lights Theatre in Southampton in 2019. Some of you may also recall that John ran a butterfly transect at Southampton Old Cemetery from 2006 to 2021. John and I set up this transect in March 2006 and I have now taken it over.

I’m afraid that I cannot recall clearly when I first met John, but I reckon that I knew him for at least 20 years. In those earlier days, I sat on two committees that no longer exist: one was a group called the Southampton Wildlife Link, which I persuaded John to join in November 2004; and the other was the Hawthorns Wildlife Association (HWA), based at the study centre (now mainly known as a café) on the old zoo site at Southampton Common. Another member of the HWA introduced me to John on a visit to Southampton Common. John always had a very keen interest in the habitats at the old cemetery and their protection, and lived within a convenient ten-minute walk of it.

John joined the committee of the Friends of Southampton Old Cemetery and became their ecological advisor. In this role John didn’t feel that he was fulfilling all of his objectives but the group did publicise

his well attended 'cemetery wildflower walks' very successfully. At one time John led his walks at all seasons of the year, including the first one that I attended on Christmas Day 2005, and in later years I occasionally stood in for him when requested. On one occasion about six years ago I led one of his summer old cemetery walks with John actually present. I was unclear of the finishing time for the walk and I asked him 'how long have I got left?' To which the reply from John was 'about 30 years'. Such was John's unmistakable sense of humour, but if he was correct I now have about 24 years left to live! Before this event I thought that the much quoted 'Trojan horse-wood anemone-wooden enemy' joke was as bad as it was ever going to get!

*John Vetterlein and Andy Barker
photographing Long-tailed Blue.*

*John Vetterlein on the Isle of Wight.
Freya Brown*



Aware of John's health issues, I was delighted to be able to show John a colony of Long-tailed Blue butterflies that I had found in the cemetery in August 2022. Naturally he was delighted and goodness knows how many photographs of these butterflies were taken by John and his friend Bruce.

I'll miss you John.

Phil Budd



Useful Contacts

www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk



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Newsletter Deadline

Please send your Lepidoptera-related newsworthy pieces and features to Kevin Freeborn... and you don't have to wait until February!

The deadline for the spring Newsletter, edition no. 116, is 16 February 2024

Lepidoptera Tale Piece... your story behind the picture

The Branch has been liaising with Jantiene T. Klein Roseboom of Imagination Design regarding a habitat creation project on 50 acres of land at Preston Candover. Jantiene is steering community-wide engagement in the venture, about which I hope to feature more in the spring Newsletter. The children of the village school were very inspired with the idea of being guardians of Lepidoptera at the new site, creating 100 pieces of amazing artwork. This example is by Joe Venner, Year-4 Robins, Preston Candover CE Primary School, and was photographed by Suzie Brown, who has been attending the engagement sessions, standing in for Fiona Scully.

*Kevin Freeborn,
Newsletter Editor*



The opinions expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of Hampshire and IoW Branch. Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268). Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP. Vat. No. 565 9070 16.

Lepidoptera Tale Piece...



*...for the full story, go to the inside back cover.
Red Admiral and butterfly friends,
by Joe Venner*