

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch



Newsletter 93



Butterfly
Conservation

September 2012



Diary of Events

Friday 5 October

Work Party, Yew Hill

Meet: at roadside at end of Old Kennels Lane near the junction of Port Lane and Millers Lane (SU451 269). **Time:** 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Saturday 13 October

AGM and Members' Day

Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall, The Hall Way, Littleton, Winchester SO33 6QL (SU455 324). **Time:** doors open 1.00pm. See details on pp. 12 & 13.

Sunday 14 October

Blackmoor Apple Day

Please note date which was wrongly printed in the April Newsletter. Contact Jayne Chapman jayne.t.chpman@hotmail.com for details of this event.

Friday 19 October

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down

Meet: at top of track between the Stonemasons and Morn Hill Cemetery on Alresford Rd (B3404), Winchester (SU512 295). **Time:** 10.0am to 4.00pm.

Sunday 21 October

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down

Details as for 19 October.

Wednesday 31 October

Work Party, Bentley Station Meadow

Park in the pay and display Station car park and walk across the track to the Meadow (SU 792 432). **Time:** 10.00am to 3.00pm.

Friday 9 November

Work Party, Yew Hill

Details as for 5 October.

Friday 16 November

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down

Details as for 19 October.

Sunday 18 November

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down

Details as for 19 October.

Wednesday 5 December

Main Committee meeting

Sunday 9 December

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down

Details as for 19 October.

Friday 14 December

Work Party, Yew Hill

Details as for 5 October.

Wednesday 9 January 2013

Work Party, Bentley Station Meadow

Details as for 31 October.

Sunday 13 January

Details as for 19 October.

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down**Friday 18 January**

Details as for 5 October.

Work Party, Yew Hill**Sunday 27 January**

Details as for 19 October.

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down**Monday 28 January**

An illustrated talk by Brian Fletcher using many slides donated by the late John Taverner.

Time: 7.30pm at St. Barnabas Church Hall, Fromond Rd, Weeke, Winchester. Joint with HWT. Raffle and refreshments.

“Out and About in the New Forest”**Sunday 10 February**

Details as for 19 October.

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down**Saturday 16 February**

See details on p. 17.

Moth Conference**Sunday 24 February**

Details as for 19 October.

Work Party, Magdalen Hill Down**New volunteers needed**

Many people have expressed an interest in joining us at a work party but have found week days difficult because of work commitments. We have decided to include Sundays this winter for those of you who sit at a desk during the week. We hope we can look forward to meeting a few much needed new volunteers this season.

NB: my cake-making abilities have come on in leaps and bounds!

New to conservation work?

As well as the dates listed above I also send out an email for extra work parties when we have one-off jobs to tackle or when we have had to cancel any of the pre-planned dates. If you would like to be added to this list please send me your contact details to: jayne.t.chpman@hotmail.com

Work parties

Wear suitable clothes and footwear. Bring gloves and food. Contact Reserves Officer Jayne Chapman (01962 808400. Mobile: 07909 968 657) for additional information if it is your first time.

If the weather forecast is bad please check by phone to see if the work party has been cancelled.

Cover photo - Chalkhill Blue - Peter Eeles



Chairman's Report

It's difficult to write this report without mentioning the weather, which, I'm sure, will also feature prominently in the 2012 Butterfly and Moth Report. Despite the inevitable toll that the wettest summer for 100 years has taken on some of our lepidoptera, it's been reassuring to see just how resilient some of our species are, many of them delaying their emergence by a couple of weeks. Some species have even benefited. For example, on some sites the Chalkhill Blue has clearly made the most of an ample supply of the larval foodplant, Horseshoe Vetch, which quickly desiccates in very dry conditions. And with the last flush of summer, it's good to see some of our garden butterflies doing well; I haven't seen so many Peacocks for many years, and Red Admirals are also starting to put on a good show.

Unfortunately, the weather (have I mentioned the weather yet?) had a significant effect on our flagship event at the Longstock Park Nursery. Attendance was disappointing, and the event closed a couple of hours early. However, I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who helped out and to those who came along to support us.

On a more positive note, the New Members' Day in June was very well attended. This is an annual event when we invite new members to spend a day being introduced to the work of the Branch and Butterfly Conservation as a whole, and to see BC's flagship reserve at Magdalen Hill Down in the afternoon. The level of enthusiasm shown by everyone was quite uplifting, and I received positive feedback from several of those present. Despite the cloud cover we managed to notch up quite a few species on the Down. Again, thanks to those members who helped out and to the new members, with a special thanks to BC's chairman, David Dennis, for joining us for the day.

One item the Branch has focused on in recent months is improving the way in which we communicate with our members (and potential members) by complementing the channels we already use via our newsletters, annual reports and website. Specifically, you may be aware that the Branch has both a Facebook and Twitter account providing relatively up-to-date information about the work of the Branch. Our thanks go to our reserves officer, Jayne Chapman, for getting these up and running. In addition, anyone attending one of our events will see a couple of new Branch leaflets, ably designed by Mike Creighton.

As you'll see later in this Newsletter, the AGM and Members' Day on 13 October has some excellent speakers lined up: Michael Blencowe (Community Wildlife Officer for Sussex Wildlife Trust and Sussex BC volunteer) will be talking on the butterflies and moths of Sussex; and Jeremy Thomas, who was unable to attend the event last year, will be talking on his favourite subject of butterflies, ants and parasitoids. This event is always a highlight of my year and I strongly encourage you to attend if you can.

Finally, I would like to thank Alison Harper, who is standing down as Field Trip Coordinator; you'll find a message of thanks to Alison later in this Newsletter. This clearly leaves the Branch with a job to fill. If you're at all able to assist, please get in touch with a Committee member.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM and Members' Day. Until then, do enjoy what's left of the season.

Peter Eeles, Chairman



New look Branch leaflets designed by Mike Creighton

Butterfly Transect Data

We currently receive data from over 90 butterfly transects in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Most of the data comes to us on Transect Walker 2, and some we receive as weekly sheets which are entered onto Transects Walker by one of our volunteers. As I usually send a request for data at the end of September, any regular transect-walkers reading this should have already received an email from me. On receipt of your transect data all entries are checked before the submissions are sent to Butterfly Conservation Head Office at Lulworth, which collates our data with data from the rest of the UK.

If any transect-walkers currently do not send their data to Butterfly Conservation via Andy Barker (Chairman, Conservation Subcommittee) or me, we would be very interested to hear from them. Contact details on back page.

Linda Barker, Transect Coordinator



Records

Butterfly Records 2012

The deadline for sending in records: Friday 2 November

Yes, it's that time of the year again. Please send your records as soon as possible, if you have not already done so. It is pleasing to receive an increasing amount of electronic data via the Branch website and MapMate.

We shall be grateful if contributors currently sending in handwritten data and who have the use of a computer would enter their data on a spreadsheet. If you do not have one, please email pauldbrock@btinternet.com, and I will send you the Butterfly Conservation Hampshire and Isle of Wight 2012 spreadsheet, with instructions. This document integrates easily into our database.

Recorders with bulk data who would like to use MapMate should contact Tim Norriss. Although we are encouraging recorders to send in their data electronically we do not wish to discourage those who prefer to use the paper recording forms, for we do want all your records. Data entry is, however, time-consuming; more so if the handwritten data is sent in any format other than on the two recording forms. Please use either the site or casual form for all handwritten records.

Please continue to send your anecdotal comments, for possible use in the Butterfly and Moth Report. If anecdotal comments contain data (numbers seen, dates, etc.) they must relate to records already submitted. Recorders who have filled in our on-line recording form do not need to send that data again, as it has already gone onto our database.

Records sent after the deadline may not be used in the Butterfly and Moth Report, but all data will be incorporated into our database however late it arrives.

Your data is a valuable contribution: it is used in the Butterfly and Moth Report and, as part of our database, it increases our understanding of the numbers and distribution of butterflies in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and consequently helps their conservation.

Thank you. We look forward to receiving your data in what has been a difficult year for both butterflies and recorders, as both have at times struggled to find suitable weather.

Paul Brock, Branch Butterfly Recorder

Moth Records 2012

Many thanks to all those who have already sent in their moth records for this year - 9,000 records have been received so far. Please remember that the deadline for definite inclusion in the Annual Report is 30 December, in order to give us time to start validation and sort out the highlights; but the earlier we can start the better. Now is an ideal time to get your records entered and sent in, before Christmas becomes the centre of your attention. Please contact Mike Wall or me with any queries and remember that you can send all your records to either of us. Also note that there is no need to separate micros and macros as all information is shared.

A Mapmate sync file is preferred (CUKs listed below) as it makes sending and receiving easier, but we do not put restrictions on recorders as to how they might want to operate; all records are welcome, although an electronic format such as Excel does make life easier. Failing that, a hard copy is fine. If you have any personal highlights or observations that you would like to bring to our attention, for potential inclusion as points of interest in the Annual Report, they would also be very much welcomed.

If you have records outstanding from previous years do let us have them too: while it is our aim to produce an accurate report every year, ultimately it is having an accurate database that is the overriding objective.

Mapmate CUKs:

Tim Norriss 1c5 (primary synch) tim@kitsmail.com

Mike Wall 2h3 mike@hantsmoths.org.uk

Tim Norriss, County Macro-moth Recorder



IOW Area Group meeting

If anyone would like to be involved in a get-together in October/November to discuss the future of butterflies and moths on the Isle of Wight and their conservation, please let me know. I can then give you a date and venue for the meeting when they have been decided.

Caroline Dudley (contact for IOW Area Group)

caroline_dudley@btoopenworld.com Tel. 01983 754935.



Reserves News

And yet another wet summer...

or, to be precise, most of the year up until August. Butterfly Conservation's press release on 10 September following the Big Butterfly Count 2012 stated, "This wettest summer for a century saw the numbers of many common butterflies fall." More than 25,000 people across the UK took part in counting over 223,000 butterflies and day-flying moths; the records submitted help us to monitor the state of butterflies and moths across the UK. This information not only shows the general picture, but is useful in monitoring how butterflies are faring on the reserves.

The survey revealed a decline in 15 of the 21 species studied compared with last year's figures, and 11 common butterflies declined by more than one third. The concern is that the wettest summer for 100 years, combined with a poor spring, has triggered population crashes that could put some already threatened species at even greater risk. Cold and wet weather increases the mortality of caterpillars and also limits the ability of adult butterflies to find mates and lay eggs, which leads to reduced numbers in current and future generations.

Most species showed year-on-year decreases. Common Blue numbers fell by 50% and the Speckled Wood was 65% down on last year's count. The Red Admiral, which was so abundant last summer, fell back sharply, with numbers down by 72%. All of the white butterflies declined, as did garden favourites such as Holly Blue and Brimstone. Peacock numbers fell by 89% compared with 2011, but a late emergence of this butterfly in better weather at the end of August and into September may allow some recovery. There has been a kaleidoscope (the collective noun) of Peacocks, Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells on my garden buddleia since 5 September.

Richard Fox at Butterfly Conservation says: "We're on track for one of the worst years on record for UK butterflies, but it actually hasn't been all doom and gloom. Meadow Brown counts rose by 186% on 2011 and this grassland species topped the chart for the first time, with the Ringlet and Marbled White also doing well. Ringlet numbers increased by 354%, seeing the species climb to 3rd most abundant species this year, while Marbled White counts increased by a staggering 503%, rising to 7th position from 17th last year."

The Six-spot Burnet moth did well for the second year in succession, reaching 6th place. This is of particular interest to me, as I remember writing just last year of the spectacle of thousands of these day-flying moths at Magdalen Hill Down. But this year we had very few on our reserves by comparison. Must be down to the new management.

The good news is that Andy Barker recorded the highest number of Chalkhill Blues in Hampshire on transect at MHD on 9 August, coming in at 1,044; and an even more astonishing report came in from Friston: "Reports of spectacular numbers in East Sussex, with 800,000 estimated at Friston Forest based on square metre counts. Certainly horseshoe vetch is lush and abundant on Hampshire sites, and larvae were reportedly very easy to find in early summer."

So we can see that the weather conditions at the time of emergence are crucial for many species, and how important it is constantly to monitor and look for any factors that may be affecting lepidoptera species in general. This is a good opportunity for me to say "Your Branch Needs YOU!" Volunteers are so crucial to the future of butterflies – whether joining in with the Big Butterfly Count once a year, or walking a transect on our reserves. For more information on transects contact Linda Barker (details on the back page).



Work party at Bentley Station Meadow

Wet summers also mean abundant grass growth, so that we are often required to think on our feet and make changes to the management on the basis of decisions that are influenced by unforeseen circumstances. This year we took a hay cut off Magdalen Hill Down. The reserves are managed mainly through seasonal grazing with either cattle or sheep or both, but occasionally this just isn't enough. The removal of biomass either by cutting or grazing is vitally important for maintaining good quality grassland.

Much of my time this year has been taken up with entering our Bentley Station Meadow Reserve into a new Natural England-funded Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement. All three of our reserves are under such countryside Stewardship Agreements. This means that just like farmers we get paid to manage our reserves sensitively. Bentley Station Meadow came to the end of its Agreement this year; after a considerable amount of work (including an excellent new management plan written by Dr Susan

Clarke) the Meadow has entered into a new 10-year Agreement with extra money for capital works (including extra funds for removing trees and replacing the fence). In the last few years scrub has encroached onto the open grassland, shading out the plant species that certain caterpillars depend on. This new funding will enable us to reclaim the meadow by reducing the height and number of trees, allowing sunlight to infiltrate the open meadow. This in turn will encourage butterflies to visit in search of nectar, and we hope boost butterfly records on transect in the coming years.

There is so much to write about, from a local-community-funded group of underprivileged children that visited MHD on 9 August (they had never been to a nature reserve or seen wildflowers or Chalkhill Blues, Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites before) to all of the sightings that come in from members of the public. It would take me more time than I have had this year to do it all justice. However, now that I am on top of things, the 2013 spring Newsletter is THE one to watch for... Oh, and don't forget to visit our Branch website, where I will shortly give a full update on the reserves, including photos of what we get up to. I will also be able to give you some very exciting news on another project that has taken much of my time over the last eight months.

You are all most welcome to visit the reserves during the winter months (they are just as wonderful at this time of the year) to go for a walk on a crisp bright day or to spend a few hours helping out at one of our regular work parties (details in the Diary of Events).

Jayne Chapman, Branch Reserves Officer

My thanks to Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation surveys manager, for the 'Big Butterfly Count' 2012 statistics.



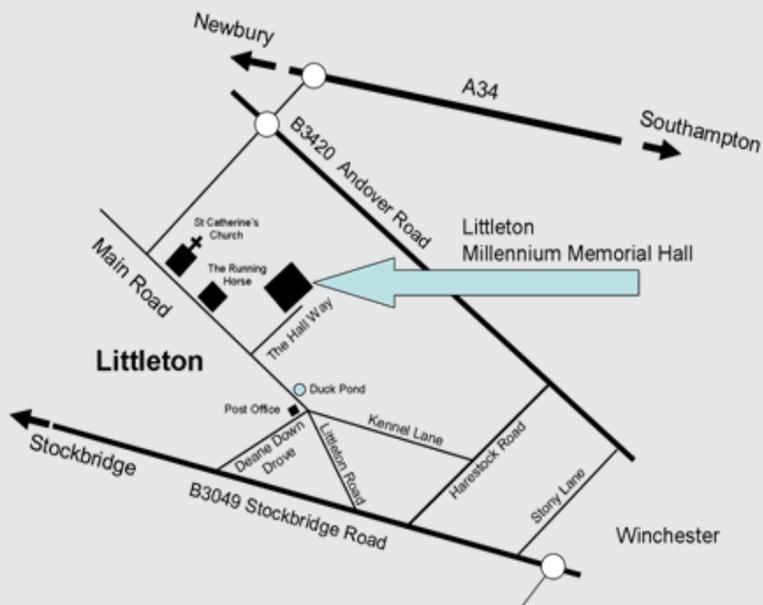
Mating Clouded Yellows - Paul Brock



Members' Day

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch
Saturday 13 October 2012

Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall, The Hall Way,
Littleton, Winchester, SO22 6QL (SU455324)



Programme

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1:00 | Doors open |
| 1:30 - 2:30 | Annual General Meeting |
| 2:30 - 3:15 | Michael Blencowe: "Once Upon a Time in the East - The Butterflies and Moths of Sussex" |
| 3:15 - 4:00 | Refreshments, "mingling" and photographic competition |
| 4:00 - 4:30 | A roundup of the butterfly and moth year |
| 4:30 - 5:30 | Professor Jeremy Thomas: "Butterflies, ants and parasitoids" |
| 5:30 - 5:50 | Results of photographic competition |
| 5:50 - 6:00 | Peter Eeles: Final comments and close of meeting. |

Members' Day

Annual General Meeting 2012

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 2011 Annual General Meeting.
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Presentation of accounts.
5. Reports of Conservation, Information, Records and Reserves Subcommittees.
6. Chairman's report.
7. Election of Committee members.

The following members are standing down from the Committee:

Andrew Bolton
Gary Richardson

In keeping with the requirements that a third of Branch Committee members should stand down at each AGM the following members (based on seniority rotation) are standing down but seeking re-election:

Dave Green
Robin Turner

Branch Rules allow a maximum of 15 Main Committee members. This means that, subject to the above members being re-elected, there will be two vacancies.

Additional nominations of members willing to serve on the Main Committee are invited. Names of those wishing to stand for election should be sent to Pete Eeles, Chairman, to arrive no later than 10 October.

8. Health and safety matters.
Any other business.
Items should be notified to the Chairman by 10 October.

Members' Day

Photographic Competition

All images must be prints not exceeding an image size equivalent to A4 (210x297mm) in landscape or portrait format. Prints may be mounted.

ENTRIES ARE LIMITED TO A TOTAL OF THREE PRINTS OVERALL

Prints will be displayed and judged in the following categories:

- UK Butterflies
- UK Moths
- Behaviour
- Immature Stages
- Overseas Butterflies and Moths

All members attending the meeting will be invited to complete a voting slip identifying their favourite image in each category and to choose their overall winning entry.

The results will be collated, and the winners announced at the end of the meeting.

As last year there will be no opportunity to show slides or digital images at this meeting.

Members unable to attend but who wish to submit prints may do so by post to: Peter Eeles, 6 Cholsey Road, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG19 4GH. Those attending should bring their prints with them.

Please ensure that you enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you wish your prints to be returned.



New Members

Welcome to the following new members who have joined since the last Newsletter. We look forward to meeting lots of you at Members' Day or at some of our other events.

Dr DP Anderson & Dr J Delve, Botley; Mr G & Mrs J Annell, Hythe; Mr SD Baker-Brown, New Milton; Mr RM Barker, Romsey; Mr S Barrett, Andover; Mr JM & Mrs A Beck, Alresford; Mr SM & Mrs T Benstead, Ryde, IOW; Mr D & Mrs I Booth, Newport, IOW; Mr IR & Mrs JL Bowes, Redenham; Mr R & Mrs K Brown, Ipswich, Suffolk; Mrs LP Burford, Wootton Bridge, IOW; Dr A & Mrs M Butterworth, Hordle;

Mr K Cairns, Alton; Mrs L Chalwin, Sherfield-on-Loddon; Mrs IJ Chichester, Martyr Worthy; Mrs E Chinner, Gosport; Miss AS Dale, Tadley; Mr GS Davis, Andover; Mrs CJ Dix, Eastleigh; Mr DK Drew, Eastleigh; Mrs E Edhouse, Southampton; Mrs EJ Field, Bishops Waltham; Mr M & Mrs K Gray, Gosport; Mr AMP Hill, Farnborough; Miss JA Holland, Yateley; Mr D Johnson, Lake, IOW; Ms S Johnson-Hughes, Beggardwood; Mrs S Lambert, Rownhams; Mr JAC St Leger, Chilbolton; Mr CJ MacGregor, Southoe, Cambridgeshire; Mr DJ Marriott, Warsash; Mr I & Mrs C Mathews & Family, Highbridge;

Miss AE Pakenham-Walsh, Longwood; Mr RK & Mrs SE Parkhurst, Horndean; Mr J Peters, Winchester; Mr BS & Mrs SL Price, Somerley; Mr G Reade, St. Sampson, Guernsey; Mr C & Mrs M Roberts, North Baddesley; Mrs J Roots, Highbridge;

Mr AC & Mrs DW Sawyer, Southampton; Mr G & Mrs A Seymour, Kings Somborne; Mr J D Sheffield, Whitchurch; Mr M & Mrs C Skittrall, Ash Vale; Mr RG Stephens, Aldershot; Mr TC Stevens, Andover; Dr DJ & Mrs AP Stewart, Winchester; Mr M & Mrs C Tate & Family, Havant; Dr JPT Thomas, Headley; Mr A Tremain, North Itchen; Ms S Upton, Bitterne; Mr M & Mrs A Ward & Family, Eastleigh; Mr SA & Mrs SC Woolfries, Bordon; Miss K Wright, Fordingbridge; Miss C Young, Eastleigh; Mr D Youngs, Tadley.



News, Reports & Events

South-east Area Group News

Horsea Island SINC

No sooner is the 'island' declared a SINC by Hants CC than Portsmouth City Council announces its intention to build 500 homes on the eastern end as part of the Portsmouth Plan, even though the site is well within the Flood Zone, and will necessitate the construction of a road bridge from Tipner on the east side of the M275 motorway. The prologue of the Plan pays lip service to the need to protect the city's natural habitats, but such noble sentiments fail to make it to the Plan's 'Objectives', which omit any mention of the natural environment.

Fareham Borough Council SDA

Better news from Fareham BC, which has now dropped its proposal to build homes on the arable farmland at the western end of Ports Down as part of its Special Development Area plan to build an 8,000-home eco-town north of the M27 motorway.

Andrew Brookes, Leader, SE Area Group

Elm News

The Portchester Wych Elm

A healthy ancient Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* has been discovered in a private garden adjacent to Portchester Castle. In the opinion of Bartlett Tree Experts it is the largest specimen in Hampshire. In common with the situation of several other ancient elms surviving in southern England there is suckering English Elm *U. procera* in the immediate vicinity, which may be a critical factor. English Elm is the much preferred host of the bark beetles which act as vectors of Dutch Elm disease, raising the hypothesis that as long as there is tastier fare available, the beetles will eschew other species, thus sparing them infection. Wych Elm contains a triterpene, alnulin, which also occurs in the European White Elm *U. laevis* in greater concentrations, and is known to act as an antifeedant.

Andrew Brookes

Information Subcommittee Report

A full report on the activities of the Subcommittee will be given to the AGM, details of which appear elsewhere in this Newsletter.

The Branch continues to increase its use of the website; more of you have elected not to receive the Newsletter by post and some have also opted out of a printed copy of the Annual Report. The Branch continues to encourage members to use the website as an alternative to post; the more members opt out of a mailing, the more we have to spend on our conservation work.

We now have our own Branch leaflet that can be used at meetings, shows and talks to introduce us: if you are involved in this sort of activity, please contact me at roger@roger-jane.co.uk as I hold the main stock. We also have a leaflet for children and, again, I hold the main stock. If you are visiting a school or have children attending a function, this leaflet offers an ideal introduction to the subject and to the Branch.

An important component of our programme for members (and anyone else who wishes to attend) is our field trips/meetings. These have, for some considerable time, been very well organised by Alison Harper. She is now standing down from this role; on behalf of the Branch I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all she has done for the Branch.

This leaves an opening on the Information Subcommittee for the job of Field Meetings Organiser. If anyone would be prepared to take on the job, or is interested in joining the Subcommittee, please let Peter Eeles or me know. Alison has established the practice of attending many of the meetings that she organises, something that has been very welcome to those attending. This, however, is not an essential requirement of the post, and the responsibility for offering the support that Alison has so generously given is something that the new Organiser can share with other Committee members. So please do not feel daunted by what, at first sight, might be considered to be a role with a large time commitment.

I hope to see many of you at the AGM, the report of which will appear on the members section of the website in due course.

Roger Buchanan, Chairman, Information Subcommittee

Hampshire Moth Conference

Saturday 16 February 2013

The next Hampshire Moth Conference will be held at Littleton Memorial Hall on Saturday 16 February 2013; please put this date in your diary now. Doors will open at 12.30pm for a start at 1.00pm and will close at 6.00pm. Refreshments will be provided and there will be ample opportunity to meet and chat with old and new friends.

There will be a range of speakers; programme details will be posted later on the Hants-moths and Branch websites and on the Hantsmoths email discussion group.

Whether you are experts or beginners or even just thinking about the plunge to the dark side you will all be very welcome.

Tim Norriss, County Macro-moth Recorder

More Dates for your Diary....

The next Exhibition of the Amateur Entomologists' Society (AES) will be held on Saturday 6 October 2012 from 11.00am to 4.30pm at Kempton Park Racecourse. The Exhibition and Trade Fair hosts a mixture of society stands and traders selling entomological equipment such as moth traps, livestock, books and cabinets. The exhibition is the place to buy entomological ephemera, meet fellow enthusiasts and have a great day out. It is open to members of the public and not just to AES members.

See <http://www.amentsoc.org/events/exhibitions.html>

The next Exhibition of the British Entomological and Natural History Society (BENHS) will be held on the ground floor of the Sherfield Building of the Imperial College of Science & Technology, Imperial College Road, South Kensington on Saturday 3 November 2012. It will be open from 11.00am until 5.00pm. Refreshments and a lunchtime bar will be available. Both members and guests are welcome.

See <http://www.benhs.org.uk/site/node/18>

Tim Norriss, County Macro-moth Recorder





Potpourri

Habitat creation for the Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*)

When establishing a butterfly transect at Sparsholt College in 2008, I was pleasantly surprised to find a tiny population of the Small Blue butterfly amongst flower-rich grassland in an area known as the Shelter Belt. This, the smallest of our butterflies, exists at only 20-25 sites in the whole of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Since many of the populations are small, they are particularly vulnerable to habitat change or loss.

The Shelter Belt contains a good amount of kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, which is the sole larval foodplant of the Small Blue caterpillar. Importantly, the rabbit population at the site is low, so the plants flower well, and the butterfly is able to lay its eggs not on the leaves but amongst the seed-pods of the flowerheads. This is where the caterpillar feeds, but if sites are overgrazed by rabbits or livestock the flowers are removed, the butterfly's highly specialised life-cycle is interrupted, and a population may be lost.



In a typical year the peak count of Small Blue butterflies at the site is only around 5-7 individuals. Given such a small and vulnerable colony, I decided we needed to create more habitat to strengthen the population and improve its long-term prospects. Having convinced the farm manager to allow this to be done along the margin of an adjacent field (c.150 metres x 8 metres), the next step was to acquire a local-provenance chalk-grassland seed mix and prepare the ground for seeding. With funding from the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch of Butterfly Conservation seed was purchased in early September 2011 from Charles Flower of Flower Farms, near Marlborough who had also provided seed and advised us with the major re-seeding project at Magdalen Hill Down.

It was not possible to sow the seed in autumn 2011, but following soil-stripping in March 2012 to remove nutrients from the surface layers of this former area of arable land the seed was sown in late April. The mix contained 80% grass seed (dominated by fescue and crested dog's-tail), and 20% wildflower seed. The flower mix included 21 species appropriate for chalky soils, and crucially included 7% kidney vetch.



The butterfly transect includes a section adjacent to the re-seeded area, and I have been watching with interest as the seed has germinated. In early August I did a thorough quadrat survey to document what had come up. It is outside the scope of this short article to describe this in detail, but in essence there is a mix of waste-ground plants, arable weeds, and species from the seed mix. Round-leaved fluellen *Kickxia spuria* is an attractive species that was present throughout, but most pleasing was that out of 10 random 2x2 metre quadrats I recorded 21 kidney vetch plants. This works out at 0.5 plants per square metre, so given that the seeded area is 1200m² it seems we have at least 600 kidney vetch plants. Although not flowering yet, they are a good healthy size and should flower next spring. This being the case, we all need to keep our fingers crossed that the nearby Small Blue colony survives another year and finds the new habitat. Notwithstanding this, the habitat creation has already proved successful, with plenty of bird's-foot trefoil (already flowering) for the Common Blue, and a scattering of common sorrel plants that have already attracted the attention of the Small Copper butterfly. After the challenging summer weather of 2012 I'm optimistic that the new habitat created at Sparsholt College will lead to an increase in butterflies on transect in 2013. We'll have to wait and see.

Andy Barker, Chairman, Branch Conservation Committee

Confessions of a butterfly gardener

When I was creating a third butterfly garden, yet again on chalk, Buddleja was the unthinking choice. However, blessed on this occasion by the kindness of strangers, a wider variety of perennials was also planted, notably the *Erysimum* x 'Bowles Mauve' wallflower and *Verbena bonariensis*. Such was the success of this pair eight months later that one wonders why anyone bothers with the 'Butterfly Bush', once aptly dismissed as 'in the top rank of second-rate shrubs', and flowering for scarcely six weeks of the year.

The two perennials together provided an abundance of flowers from April to November and were easily the most-visited plants in the garden, 'Bowles Mauve' pipping *Verbena* by a neck, having enjoyed the singular attention of a Speckled Wood in May. Ergo: all the local butterflies could be attracted with just a square metre of 'Bowles Mauve' (in full sun of course), leaving the remainder of the garden free for other horticultural or recreational indulgences.

Alas, 'Bowles Mauve' soon flowers itself to death, usually after just three years. Seed sterile, it can nonetheless be easily increased by cuttings. The *verbena* on the other hand, whilst not entirely frost-hardy, self-seeds so readily as to make no difference, and it is also child's play to propagate from cuttings, even rooting in water. Colonel Hannay, proprietor of the eponymous nursery in Bath, claimed it was the most attractive of all plants to the Small Tortoiseshell, and so it has proven. For those not blessed with green fingers or potting shed, both perennials are readily available from garden centres, priced from '3-for-£10' to an extortionate £8 each.

Lies, damned lies, and hereunder summer and autumn league tables of the butterfly plants in order of attractiveness, Portchester, 2011:

Summer	No. of species
<i>Erysimum</i> x 'Bowles Mauve'	12
<i>Verbena bonariensis</i>	11
<i>Buddleja</i> x 'Lochinch'	6
<i>Buddleja davidii</i> cultivars	4
<i>Ceratostigma willmottianum</i>	1
<i>Buddleja</i> x <i>weyeriana</i> 'Sungold'	1
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	1
<i>Hebe</i> 'Great Orme'	0
<i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i> 'Goldsturm'	0

Autumn

Erysimum x 'Bowles Mauve'	5
Verbena bonariensis	5
Ceratostigma willmottianum	3
Buddleja auriculata	2
Sedum spectabile 'Brilliant'	2
Sedum spectabile 'Stardust'	2
Aster novae-angliae 'Lye End Beauty'	1
Rudbeckia fulgida 'Goldsturm'	0

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Heptacodium miconioides

The Seven Sons plant - An appraisal

Discovered a century ago in western China by the irrepressible Ernest Wilson, this remarkable plant, now extremely rare in the wild, remained almost unknown until recent years. Wilson was unable to send living material back to his sponsor, the Arnold Arboretum in Massachusetts, and it was not until 1980 that the Sino-American Botanical Expedition rediscovered the plant, and sent seeds to the USA. Proving readily increased by seed and softwood cuttings, the species is now in commerce in the UK.

A single-species genus, *Heptacodium* translates as 'seven heads', seven being the average number of the jasmine-like flowers comprising its flowering panicles. It is a member of the *Sambucus* family and thus a cousin of the elder and honeysuckle. It is most commonly a shrub but can reach six metres, and as such, with side stems removed, could also qualify as a tree. The specific epithet *miconioides* alludes to its resemblance to the unrelated meadow beauty genus, *Miconia*, a tropical family. Bearing masses of sweetly scented white flowers in September, the plant is reputedly a magnet for late Small Tortoiseshells and other vanessids. By October the corollas have fallen, exposing the bright red calyces. The bark too has its attractions: paper-like, it exfoliates readily to expose a bright tan-coloured trunk.

Cultivation could scarcely be easier: hardy to temperatures as low as -35°C (-30°F), the species is both fast-growing and shade-tolerant; indeed, some authorities maintain that it actually prefers shade. Stocked by Hilliers Nurseries, it is also available from mail-order emporia such as Burncoose Nurseries in Cornwall, priced at around £13. Other suppliers can be found in the RHS Plantfinder. For those who would rather 'taste and try', a large specimen grows next to Jermyn House in the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens at Ampfield.

Andrew Brookes, andrew.brookes@port.ac.uk,

Gardening for moths: weeds and wildflowers

It has been widely noted that the gardens with wildflowers and weeds, or those immediately adjacent to wild habitats, yield the best assemblages of moths in our traps. When promoting gardening for butterflies I have never found it easy to convince people that if they want the vanessids on their buddleia they need to help them to breed by having nettles in sunny locations. Will I have any better luck with those wishing to encourage moths? I hope so, but in any event those who have weedy wild gardens might be heartened by the thought of the many moths that they are helping.

There are a few moths that are striking, beautiful and easily identified whose caterpillars feed on nettle. I am thinking of Burnished Brass, Mother of Pearl, Angle Shades, Frosted Orange and Beautiful Golden Y.

Dock is another plant that gardeners tend to dislike, but if you love the idea of more moths in your garden then embrace docks. You might be rewarded by seeing Blood-vein, Garden Tiger, Ruby Tiger, or even Striped Hawkmoth. Ivy is the plant to grow to encourage the Old Lady and the stunning Swallow-tailed moth.

Another “baddie” is thistle, but worth having for Frosted Orange.

Moths also may benefit from those plants that might be thought of as weeds or, by those of a more charitable mind, as wildflowers. Both lady's and hedge bedstraw (*Gallium verum* and *G. mollugo*) are nice plants to have in wilder parts of the garden and worthy of inclusion as larval foodplants for Hummingbird Hawkmoths. The thrill of seeing a Hummingbird Hawkmoth nectaring on flowers in the garden is nothing compared to seeing one lay on bedstraws. The inclusion of these plants should also guarantee plenty of Common Carpets and Garden Carpets. I hope some of you will try bedstraws and report back on results. You might be lucky and get the less common Wood Carpet too.

Campanula Pug is even less recorded in the two counties than Wood Carpet, especially on the Isle of Wight. Records tend to be from chalky areas which support its two larval food plants, the very rare giant bellflower *Campanula latifolia* and the locally common nettle-leaved bellflower *C. trachelium*. I have masses of the latter growing in my garden and can recommend it as an attractive addition to flower beds.

Scabious might be used by the attractive and easily identified Lime-speck Pug. Yarrow is not out of place in the garden either, and may be used by a number of species, including (again) Lime-speck Pug, Grey Pug, V-Pug and Tawny-speckled Pug. Yarrow Pug is an interesting one. It has not been recorded on the Isle of Wight since 2002 and has only recently been recorded at eight sites in Hampshire. But guess what: most of these records have come from gardens.

Since many species breed on native shrubs it is well worth having some of them too. There is a list of food plants at the back of Chris Manley's excellent British Moths and

Butterflies giving a great choice of plants to grow. Let's make gardening for moths as popular as gardening for butterflies. There is a lot more scope for encouraging successful breeding; I would be interested to hear of your successes.

Lynn Fomison



Gardening for moths: nectar

The summer edition of *Atropos* (No. 46) carried an interesting article by Hampshire BC member Tony Dobson entitled 'Moth attractants: Blossoms versus Light-traps'.

Tony advises those of us who use light traps to search blossoms for moths as well. He recalls the interesting find of a Dotted Chestnut on willow blossom in a friend's garden where it had never been recorded at light. I know Patrick Fleet and Colin Beyer frequently searched the ivy flowers at Magdalen Hill Down by torchlight in autumn and there would usually be moths to see. Tony still remembers finding, in 1949, a moth which was new to him. It was a Blair's Mocha. I must keep a better watch on the flowering ivy by my kitchen window.

By that same window I grew *Nicotiana langsdorffi* in the hope of seeing moths nectaring at night, but no luck as yet. Still, 2012 with such poor weather was not the best year for such an experiment. Tony recommends *Nicotiana* 'Sutton's Evening Fragrance' as he had the joy of having it attract *Convolvulus* Hawkmoth. *Nicotiana* is the must-have plant if you wish to attract this species.

Tony also favours Red Valerian *Centranthus rubra*. Besides being well known for attracting Hummingbird Hawkmoths it is also very attractive to Silver Y at dusk; he has seen as many as 20 at once, although comparatively few come to light. By dead-heading he has flowers continuously from May to November in his Basingstoke garden.

Tony finds this an exciting pastime: "Much harder work, making it healthier than the much easier method of light-trapping"

Lynn Fomison

Eupatorium ligustrinum: nectar shrub

Eupatorium ligustrinum is a shrub with many botanical synonyms but it does not seem to have a readily recognised common name, although one authority dubs it “Incense Bush”. Don’t let that put you off because for late summer nectar it is unsurpassed. Dense clusters of scented filmy white flowers in terminal corymbs completely cover the bush from August onwards and are hugely attractive to butterflies and bees.

In my garden I have one of these shrubs growing next to a buddleia and it has been constantly covered by bees, Red Admirals and Silver Y moths since it came into flower, whereas the buddleia is mostly ignored.

E. ligustrinum is semi-evergreen and can in time grow to 2.5 metres, although it is perfectly prunable. It originates from Central America, was introduced to cultivation in 1867 and has gained an Award of Garden Merit (AGM). It is considered hardy to -5°C although mine has survived several severe winters with much lower temperatures. It doesn’t seem fussy as to position (I have seen it grow and flower in dry shade under a yew tree), but obviously to attract the insects it needs to be in the sun and in a fairly sheltered position.

Juliet Bloss, Newsletter Editor

Farm Lator, Hungary - early July 2012

I have often pondered the question when emptying the contents of a moth-trap, why it was that the only two members of a species in the trap would be next to each other on the same egg tray. This I am sure is more than coincidence and it was brought home to me while we were emptying a trap one morning in the wonderful Farm Lator garden when a Silver Barred took off from the egg tray in my hand. This is a species that I had seen there before, but not photographed, and had never seen in this country owing to its very restricted distribution in East Anglia. Although it has also been seen at many places around the coast from Kent to Norfolk, and twice in Hampshire, these are sightings thought to be a result of primary continental immigration. So we watched as it flew across the lawn and dropped onto the grass about 20m away: it had landed within 5cm of another Silver Barred. And they were the only two that we saw on the whole holiday. Coincidence? I think not; this is just another example of the remarkable sense of smell that insects use to find a mate.

The highlights of the trip were many and varied. For some it was the chance to photograph the pristine Meleagers Blue, both male and female, found within a short drive of Farm Lator. We enjoyed superb close-up views of several Purple Emperors mud-puddling on a forest track and about a dozen Lesser Purple Emperors doing the same on the side of a stream. After two days looking in vain for Pallas’s Fritillary we returned to Farm Lator and found several nectaring along the path just next to the orchard. The next day on a short walk up into the forest there had been an emergence of Purple

Hairstreak and along the narrow path we also found a Brown Hairstreak; it seemed strange to find the two newly emerged together. A total of 87 species was less than seen on previous visits - probably a reflection of the unseasonally hot weather prevailing across eastern Europe at that time.

The sight of a roller persistently mobbing an imperial eagle whilst a saker falcon sat on a nearby pylon is something I will not forget. The mothing was superb as always: from the tiny but brightly coloured Oecophorid *Bisigna procerella* to the large numbers of *Catocala*, mainly Dark Crimson Underwing, that we saw not only in the moth traps but also on the trunks of many trees while we were out during the day.

The Farm Lator garden, situated in the Bukk Hills of eastern Hungary, is a wonderful place in summer. It is full of insects, birds and all manner of wildlife, from the lesser horseshoe bats roosting in the outhouse to the beautiful blue and black longhorn beetle *Rosalia alpina* that landed on Robin's chest one evening as he made his way over for dinner. This was my fourth visit and I still saw many new exciting things, including edible dormice feeding at night on the ripening apples in the orchard, and the eastern hedgehog shuffling around on the ground; and the family party of hawfinches with newly fledged young being fed sunflower seeds by their parents just yards away from us as we emptied the moth traps in the early morning. Unfortunately the regular stone martens didn't show; that will have to wait till next time.

Visit <http://www.farmlator.hu/> to see what you have been missing.

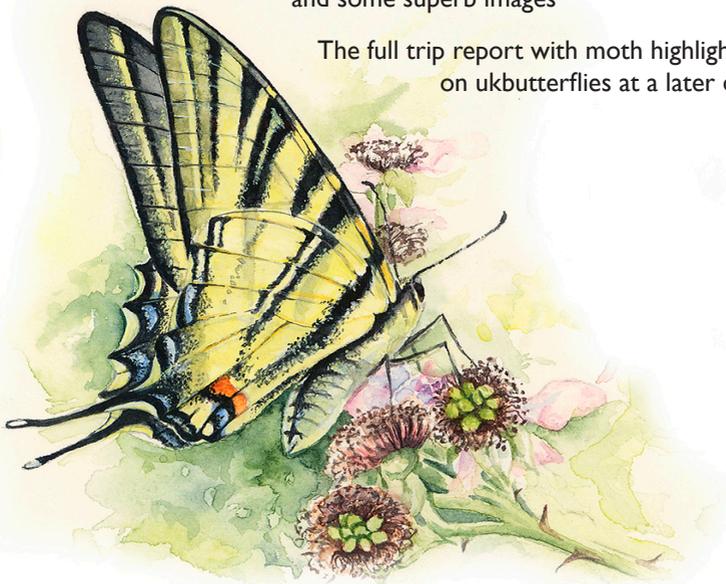
And you can also see Pete Eeles' ukbutterflies diary blog at

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=3977&start=280>

for more of the highlights and some superb images

The full trip report with moth highlights will appear on ukbutterflies at a later date.

Tim Norriss



Four-spotted Footman *Lithosia quadra*

A few years ago the Four-spotted Footman *Lithosia quadra* was something of a rarity and considered to be largely an immigrant, its status being 'Nationally Scarce A/Immigrant'. The species is unmistakable, being twice the size of most other footman moths and having an elongated shape, with three of the four dark spots visible on the female and none on the male. They look like no other moth; with pale yellow around the head and thorax and grey wings they are a striking moth with little variation.



Male



Female

The moth is said to be single-brooded, with adults flying from July to September (Waring, Townsend & Lewington). In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, however, the flight period ranges from mid-June to the end of October with two definite peaks at the beginning of August and the end of September. Overwintering occurs as small larvae which feed on lichens in mature broadleaved woodland. They pupate in a delicate cocoon formed in clefts. There are resident populations in the West Country, on the Isles of Scilly and in the New Forest, but they were until recently still thought to be immigrants elsewhere. Numbers for Cranmore (on the Isle of Wight) over the last 11 years are: nil in 2002/3, one male in 2004, one male in 2005, four males in 2006, 14 males in 2009, 13 males in 2010, four males and one female in 2011, and 11 males and two females (to date) in 2012. With reports of good numbers turning up on the Island (James Halsey recorded 9 males and 3 females at Mottistone Manor Gardens on 23 August 2011) and on the mainland it would seem that the Four-spotted Footman is becoming well established; it is hoped that it will continue to do well over the coming years.

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References: Waring, Townsend & Lewington, 2003. Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland.

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Newsletter Deadline

Many thanks to all contributors. The deadline for the spring Newsletter is 14 March 2013.

We now use Arial 10pt for text, 12pt for headings; paper size A5; bold for emphasis (not underlining). It is helpful (but not essential) for contributors to format their offerings in this way.

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Hampshire and IoW Branch.



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