

# *the* **Comm**

No.119 Autumn 2024

Regional Magazine of West Midlands  
Butterfly Conservation

## **UV light searches**

*Prove valuable in new applications*

## **Bleak summer numbers**

*Make our projects even more vital*

Bringing *butterflies and moths* back to Britain • [westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com](http://westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com)



## Cover story

Purple Emperor pupa under ultraviolet light at Tiddesley Wood by **Gillian Thompson** (see pages 6–7)

## Contributions

Please send articles and images to the Editor. Photographs should be as high-resolution as possible and sent as separate files (not embedded in a document).

Our copy deadlines are  
 Spring - 28 February  
 Autumn - 31 August  
 Winter - 23 November  
 (early submissions are welcome).  
 Contact the Editor for information.  
 Editor: Marian Newell,  
[comma.editor@newellporter.co.uk](mailto:comma.editor@newellporter.co.uk)

## Publisher

Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Branch. The opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Branch or of Butterfly Conservation.



BC West Midlands Butterflies and Moths



Butterfly Conservation West Midlands



@BC\_WestMids



[westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com](http://westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com)



[@westmidsbutterflyconservation](https://www.instagram.com/westmidsbutterflyconservation)

# Chairman's Address



Michael Southall

We held our second committee meeting of the year in mid-September and covered a lot of ground.

### Committee structure

As West Midlands Butterfly Conservation covers such a large area, we have decided to introduce an associate committee member title for members who do good work for the Branch but struggle to attend regular meetings for various reasons. This follows Head Office guidance on

how to run a branch. There is still room for new committee members, so don't be shy. We are particularly keen to attract younger members.

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### Future plans

A question was asked about a five-year plan for the Branch, building on our regional conservation strategy and our aim to encourage more involvement at a local level, and this is an idea we would like to develop further. Another face-to-face meeting for Branch Chairs has been arranged for mid-October, where members of Butterfly Conservation's Senior Leadership Team are due to give updates and to look ahead to next year and beyond.

### Budgets

We were able to approve an ambitious budget proposal put forward by **Ian Duncan**, our Treasurer, following many requests for funding from across the region. The requests relate to surveys, contractors, leaflets, notice boards, equipment and so on.

Ian commented how sales of Branch merchandise, along with recent legacies and donations, have given a boost to our bank reserves. Without



**Ed:** As everywhere else, the butterfly season started badly in my Shropshire garden but I was seeing more regulars by September, including this lovely example of the magazine's namesake.



## 2025 Branch Calendar

Next year's West Midlands Butterfly Conservation calendar is available for £9 including postage (£17 for two or £25 for three with a free Kentish Glory badge). All proceeds go to support our various conservation projects across the region. The cover image, chosen by a vote on our Facebook group, is a stunning shot of a Common Blue and Brown Hairstreak taken by **Julie Fox** at our Grafton Wood reserve.

To place an order, send a cheque made out to Butterfly Conservation (West Midlands Branch) to WMBC, 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8TB or, if you'd prefer to pay by bank transfer, contact Mike Williams at [wmbutterflies@gmail.com](mailto:wmbutterflies@gmail.com)

this extra income, we would struggle to achieve our objectives. We have produced a calendar for 2025 to raise further funds and hope that members will support us by buying copies.

The revised budget will enable us to move forward on a number of fronts, making best use of available funds. We decided to continue to produce three printed issues of *The Comma* each year, following positive responses to the Editor's recent request for readers' views.

### Projects

**Natalie Norton**, Butterfly Conservation's Midlands Landscape Officer, gave us an update on the Butterflies of Brownfields project funded by Natural England and based in North Walsall (see page 14). The project will be surveying for **Dingy Skipper**, **Wall**, **White-letter** and **Green Hairstreak**, and **Clearwing** moths.

**Ezz Miles** was due to give an update on the Kentish Glory project (see pages 10–11) at the Members' Day on 28 September at Pant in North Shropshire, alongside talks from **Simon Spencer** and **Steve Gray** on 'Farming for Butterflies' and 'Wild Spaces' respectively. I was looking forward to meeting some of you there and putting faces to names – more about that next time.

### Early impressions of the 2024 season

It looks as if concerns about the anecdotal lack of butterflies and moths over the summer are about to be confirmed by the statistics, leading to Butterfly Conservation announcing a butterfly emergency. The main reason appears to be the below-average temperatures earlier in the year. What the long-term effect of this will be on butterflies and moths is impossible to say. It was startling to see my empty Buddleias in the height of summer and such a contrast to past years. If it teaches us anything then it is not to take anything in the natural world for granted, and to offer it help in any way we can.

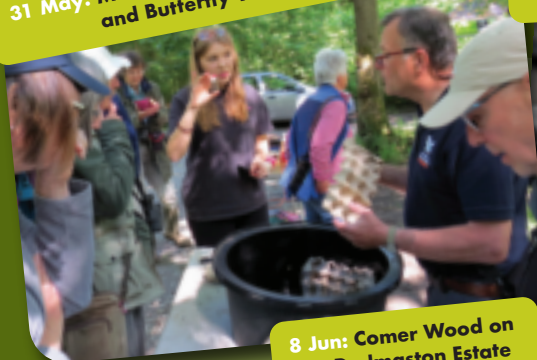
Michael Southall Branch Chair

## Butterfly Emergency

Butterfly Conservation declared a Butterfly Emergency in September, after announcing the results of the Big Butterfly Count, which showed hugely concerning declines in many species. **The average number of butterflies seen was the lowest in the count's 14-year history, down to seven from twelve in 2023.** Despite a record number of counts, total sightings fell by about a third. In an open letter to **Steve Reed**, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, BC has called for the Government to act before it's too late by banning neonicotinoid pesticides once and for all, with no exceptions.

Please sign the letter here: [butterfly-conservation.org/emergency](https://butterfly-conservation.org/emergency)

**31 May: Monkwood Moth Breakfast and Butterfly Walk**



Above:  
Examining the  
finds at  
Monkwood.

**8 Jun: Comer Wood on  
the Dudmaston Estate  
Moth Morning**



**21 May: Wyre Forest Moth Morning and  
Butterfly Walk (part of National Nature  
Reserve Week)**



Above: Poplar Hawk-moth

Left: A very successful event  
yielded a good selection of  
moths including the attractive  
Scorched Wing, always a  
crowd-pleaser.

# Events across the West

**14 Jun: Cannock Chase Welsh Clearwing Day**



Above: A great turnout from organisations that manage Cannock Chase for Steve Barnes' presentation on his two-year study into the ecology of the Welsh Clearwing moth on Cannock Chase, one of only two English sites for the species (see *Comma* 116, pages 15–17 for more information).

**16 Jun: Croome Park  
Moth Morning**



Above: Mike Southall  
unveils the trap.

Left: Pine Hawk-moth





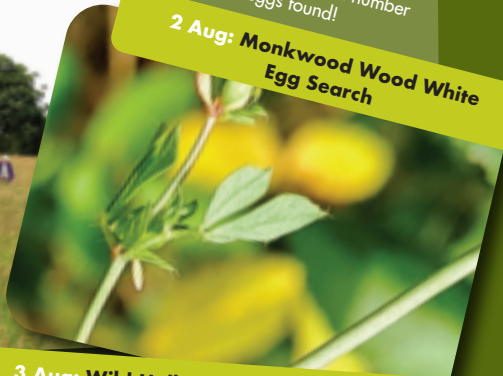
**28 Jun: Long Mynd ID Training Day**



Above: Out in the field after a workshop in All Stretton Village Hall.

Below: Record number of eggs found!

**2 Aug: Monkwood Wood White Egg Search**



**3 Aug: Wild Hollowfields Farm Open Day with Moth Morning and Guided Walk**



Above: Leader Gert Corfield displays the catch (courtesy of the Terry family who farm the land with wildlife in mind).

**3 Aug: Telford Millennium Nature Reserve Big Butterfly Count: Family Day and Guided Walk**



Above: Telford Millennium – Family Day

Right: Telford Millennium – Guided Walk



# Midlands



Male seen in Trench  
Wood car park  
(Mike Williams)

# Purple Emperor 20

This was a very interesting and exciting first season for the Purple Emperor Action Team (PEAT), with records from four existing sites at Cannock Chase, Grafton Wood, Honeybourne and Tiddesley Wood. Seven new sites were found: Crowle, Croome Estate, Kings Norton, Kinver Edge, Monkwood, Saltwells Nature Reserve and Trench Wood.

## *Training the team*

The season began on 27 February with **Sam Macvie** and **Matthew Oates**, when a group visit to the Heart of England Forest demonstrated how to find His Majesty as a caterpillar in late winter (see the magnificent photos in *Comma 118*). Then, on 10 June, we found a stunning pupa using ultraviolet torches at Tiddesley Wood (see cover photo). Similar searches in other woods were not successful.

It is noteworthy that the flight season now begins in June, when not so long ago it was early July. It was good to be able to show the butterfly to a large group of enthusiasts on our visit to Tiddesley Wood at the end of June – our thanks to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust for their help on the day.

We'll be looking for help next year in visiting potential and known Purple Emperor sites so, if you'd like to help in this important work, do get in touch.

### *Sightings during the flight period*

The first record in England was on 17 June at Knepp in West Sussex. Sightings in our region were:

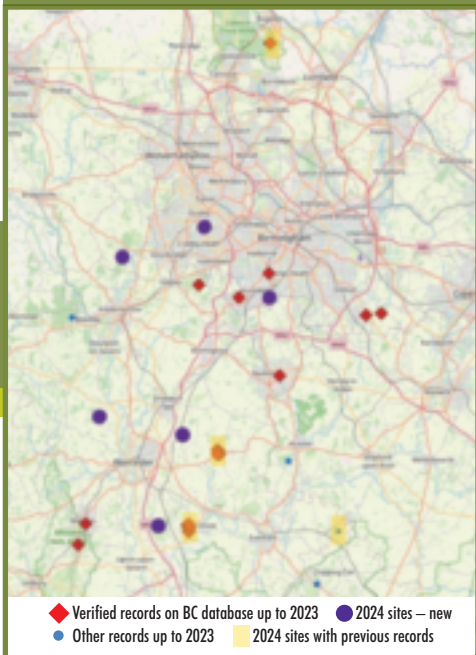
- 25 Jun – **Tiddesley Wood**  
(earliest Worcestershire record)
- 26 Jun – **Trench Wood**
- 28 Jun – **Grafton Wood**
- 29 Jun – **near Croome Estate**
- 29 Jun – **Monkwood**
- 29 Jun – **Crowle garden**
- 29 Jun – **near Kings Norton, Birmingham**
- 13 Jul – **Saltwells Nature Reserve, Brierley Hill**
- 18 Jul – **Honeybourne**
- 23 Jul – **Cannock Chase**
- 10 Aug – **Kinver Edge**  
(only the second location in Staffordshire)

29 June appeared to be a key date, especially in Worcestershire, with several sightings on that day. Some of the sightings listed, especially of single individuals, may not represent new colonies but they still confirm that Purple Emperor is on the move and show where follow-up monitoring is needed. It's remarkable how, in such a short time, this species has

been seen over such a wide area and recorded in all three of our Worcestershire reserves. Despite extensive searching elsewhere, no other sightings were reported. However, potential Purple Emperor habitat was identified at several locations and these will be revisited in coming years.



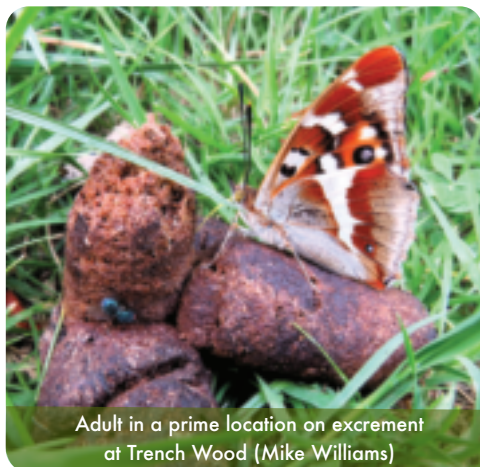
### **New and historic sightings**



### *What next?*

The next phase of recording, from mid-August to mid-October, is to look for caterpillars and feeding damage. This will be followed by 'dangle leaf' spotting after leaf-drop in November – to find out more about this technique, read Sam Macvie's article in *Comma 117*.

Article by **Ian Duncan** Map created by **John Tilt**



# 24 Season



# Malvern Hills Lost Fritillaries Project



Captive-bred adult ready for early morning release

We announced this project to reintroduce the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** to the Malvern Hills in Autumn 2020. Here are some of the things we've learned about this species since then.

A warming climate may interrupt the winter diapause for 4th instar larvae

Captive breeding data suggest that warmer winters are affecting the balance between diapause and unseasonal activity in the middle of winter, including basking and feeding. More 'traditional' colder winters help to maintain inactivity, whereas caterpillars may emerge at almost any time during warmer winters. This uses precious energy and the caterpillars may be unable to digest limited food and may die in the more shaded conditions.



4th instar larvae feeding at base of a violet plant, viewed with and without UV light



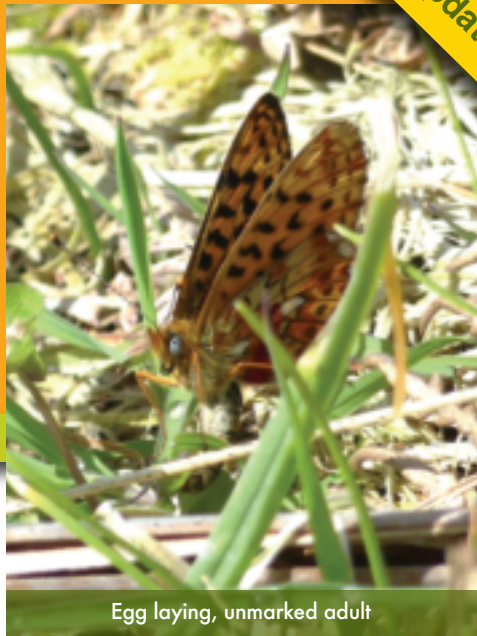
Death is normal – life is the exception

Gravid females lay up to 500 eggs in captivity but few survive predation, extreme weather and interruptions to diapause. Even fewer survive in the wild. Although each female only needs to lay two eggs that survive to produce two adult butterflies to sustain a population, this is a big ask for a species





Mating, marked and unmarked adults



Egg laying, unmarked adult

present at a dwindling number of sites: more than 90% have been lost over the last 50 years!

Despite the challenging conditions, we've reintroduced 300 adults in the past three years and created 8km of tracks on sites to encourage more larval food plants (dog violets), nectar sources and patrolling corridors. This also facilitates easier access and more effective monitoring by volunteers, who use a phone app to record and map behaviour.

In spring this year, we released 123 marked captive-bred adults and recorded 27 mating pairs. More importantly, we recorded 28 unmarked adults emerging from last year's reintroduction.

Onsite the habitat is changing from grass and pasture back to bracken and violets, but the extreme warm and wet weather is encouraging the scrub, especially bramble, to proliferate. Bluebells are spreading, a good nectar source for adults, but dense patches cool the ground and damage egg-laying sites. However, the dog violets prevail on 65% of all site sections.

...more  
than 90% have  
been lost over the  
last 50 years!

### Adult lifespan varies widely

Coloured spots on the underwings of captive adults released onsite helped to determine the maximum


lifespan in the wild – at least 16 days for a few of our releases, compared with 5–35 days for some gravid females kept in captivity and protected from predation (PBF Captive Breeding Report 2022–2023). However, the average lifespan in the wild may only be 6.5 days (*Butterflies* by Martin Warren, Bloomsbury, p79).

### Long term challenges

I'm often asked when this project will finish and when the reintroduction of Pearl-bordered Fritillary to the Malvern Hills will be considered successful. The answer to this question is far from simple.

This is only our fourth year of captive breeding, with further releases planned for spring next year. The habitats are improving and the butterflies are breeding onsite, but it will take many years to establish populations that can sustain themselves and interact with each other to form an effective metapopulation. All UK sites for this species require careful management: connectivity is the key and wider landscape management is the answer – this will be the challenge for the next generation of conservationists!

Article and photographs by **Mel Mason**



Kentish Glory on birch,  
Scotland (Erinna Miles)



Taking DNA samples from wing clips  
(Erinna Miles)

# Kentish Glory

## Reintroduction Project

As reported in previous issues of *The Comma*, a project is underway to examine the feasibility of restoring the **Kentish Glory** moth to the Wyre Forest, its last English site. This is a partnership project involving West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, Twycross Zoo and, locally, Forestry England and Natural England. Since the start of February, the project has moved swiftly forward. The Twycross Zoo team (Ezz Miles and Stuart Young) ventured to Scotland in late April/early May with hopes of finding the Kentish Glory.

The aim was to visit the last known British populations of this species to obtain samples for genetic analysis and the trip did not disappoint! Twenty-five DNA samples were collected from two of these populations. The samples were obtained from wing clips; this method of genetic sampling was used because it is the most humane and effective way to collect DNA from live moths, causing them no harm.

Ezz said, 'We were extremely fortunate to have timed the trip perfectly with moth emergence. We also had the most incredible support in Scotland helping with information on the species, location and collection.'

### DNA analysis

The DNA samples were sent to The University of Leicester to be analysed by Geneticist **Rob Hammond** and Master's student **Kavi Elangovan**. The results highlighted the low levels of genetic variation within each population from which we collected samples, and the relatedness of these populations.

The Natural History Museum London also sent off nine museum specimens for DNA analysis. These were collected from the Wyre Forest before the moth became extinct in the 1970s. The results from this will enable us to see how similar the existing British moths



Wyre Forest Team – Twycross Zoo, Butterfly Conservation, Natural England and Forestry England (Alice James)



Kentish Glory in moth trap, Scotland (Erinna Miles)

are to the extinct Wyre populations. This information will be considered when providing recommendations for which populations to use for ex-situ breeding and future translocations.

### Future plans

We are now working on the next steps of the project. Ezz is in contact with experts from seven countries in Europe, where she will be sourcing museum samples for DNA analysis. She will also be working on habitat-mapping of the species, ensuring the chosen source populations are the most suitable for reintroduction.

Between collecting samples and moving to the different population locations, Stuart and Ezz also stopped at The Royal Zoological Society Scotland (RZSS) at Edinburgh Zoo, where they visited the breeding facilities of the **Dark Bordered Beauty** moth (*Epione vespertaria*). This provided an insight into what the zoo breeding facilities may look like further down the line and ideas of what would be most suitable for the Kentish Glory. Later this year, the team will also be working on plans for the breeding facilities, along with securing extra funding to ensure the longevity of the project.

Article by **Erinna (Ezz) Miles** and **Stuart Young**



RZSS's breeding facility for Dark Bordered Beauty (Adam Button)

### Supporting the Project

To help raise funds for the project, we have created a very attractive Kentish



Glory pin badge. All money raised will go back into funding further work. We are asking for a minimum donation of £3 per badge plus £1 postage; payment can be made either by bank transfer or by cheque made out to Butterfly Conservation. The badges are now ready to order: contact Mike Williams for more information at [wmbutterflies@gmail.com](mailto:wmbutterflies@gmail.com)

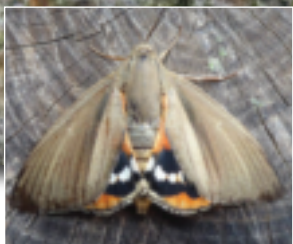


# Highlights from the 2023 VC37 Moth Review

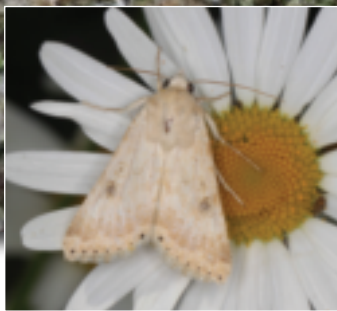
*Caloptilia honoratella*  
(Patrick Clement)



*Lyonetia prunifoliella*  
(Oliver Wadsworth)



*Paysandisia archon*  
(Oliver Wadsworth)



*Heliothis nubigera*  
(Neil Harris)

New species continue to arrive or be discovered in Vice-County 37 (Worcestershire). There were 11 new species in 2023, eight micros and three macros. Highlights included:

- A **Surreptitious Palm-borer** (*Paysandisia archon*) was found in a garden centre in Hagley by **Jared Tibbetts**. This huge moth from South America has been introduced to Europe in imported palms but cannot survive here in the wild.
- **Neil Harris** caught an **Eastern Bordered Straw** (*Heliothis nubigera*), a rare migrant, in Welland in September.
- There was a first confirmed record of **Gypsy moth** (*Lymantria dispar*) in Worcester from **Steve Whitehouse**. This is another invasive species now moving into the West Midlands.
- Two beautiful micromoths, *Lyonetia prunifoliella* and *Caloptilia honoratella*, are new arrivals in the

UK. They've been spreading from the east and south, and are expected to spread further. **Nigel Voaden** found mines of the former in Tiddesley Wood in September and **Tony Simpson** found others nearby and bred out moths. **Sue Wright** attracted our first of the latter species to light at Pedmore in July.

The full review is included in the latest Worcestershire Record, the biannual publication of the Worcestershire Recorders group, and will be available later on the group's website at [worcestershiREWILDliferecorders.org.uk](http://worcestershiREWILDliferecorders.org.uk)

Article by **Tony Simpson** and **Oliver Wadsworth**

Ed: More Gypsy moths have been reported in 2024, in both Worcestershire and Staffordshire (first record for that county).



# Just One Day

Two years ago a team from Butterfly Conservation flew in to Lower Smite Farm, the base of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, where I am a farm volunteer. They came to search for the eggs of the scarce **Brown Hairstreak** butterfly. I was intrigued so volunteered to join them – for just one day.

Little did I know that two years later I would be a regular with the 'Streakers', the group that does a weekly search in winter for Brown Hairstreak eggs and, more surprisingly, would find myself lumbering about at midnight in the pitch-dark with an ultraviolet (UV) torch trying to locate the caterpillars.

While the standard survey method for this species is to find the eggs on leafless Blackthorn in winter, a new survey technique was identified in 2023, when it was discovered that the caterpillars fluoresce under ultraviolet light.

Led by **Simon Primrose** and starting after 10pm on 6 and 19 June, we searched three hedges at Piddle Brook Meadows and the adjacent Naunton Court Fields, where eggs had been found in the last two winters. And it worked. On the first night we found 18 caterpillars brightly fluorescing under UV light and, on the second, another 32. That's 50 caterpillars, where we'd previously found 46 eggs in the same hedgerows. This was unexpected and almost certainly indicates that not only do we miss a lot of eggs during our winter searches, but also that the mortality rate of caterpillars from predation is far lower than the textbooks imply.

Monitoring eggs is an important part of assessing the number and spread of this scarce, but slowly expanding, species around its Grafton Wood stronghold – the regular work of the Streakers. However, this can only be done during the winter months and using UV light opens up the possibility of extending the search period (for caterpillars) through May, June and possibly early July.

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Article by **Ian J Reilly**

A WWT volunteer, Ian is Warden at the Trust's Piddle Brook Meadows and Naunton Court Fields reserves. He recently joined Butterfly Conservation.



Brown Hairstreak larva fluorescing (Simon Primrose)

## Safety Precautions

Used increasingly in the search for early life stages of butterflies and moths, UV torches are already proving their worth as a conservation tool. They are inexpensive (around £40) and available to order on the internet, with the main supplier being a company called Alonefire. The UV18 is rechargeable and is supplied with goggles. The use of these torches is largely a matter of common sense but it is perhaps worth passing on a few health and safety tips:

- **Wear protective gear:** use UV-blocking safety glasses and cover any exposed skin.
- **Avoid direct exposure:** never shine the UV torch directly into anyone's eyes or on their skin.
- **Use in well-ventilated areas:** ensure adequate ventilation to avoid ozone build-up (UV-C torches).
- **Keep away from children:** store UV torches safely, out of reach, to prevent accidental exposure.
- **Follow manufacturers' instructions:** always observe guidance for safe use provided by manufacturers.
- **Consider your specimen:** don't shine the UV torch on it for too long, to minimise any harmful effects.

We still only have partial knowledge of which insects and other creatures glow in the dark so, if you do obtain a torch, please share your findings.

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**Mike Williams**

If you would like to help the Streakers find more Brown Hairstreak eggs and caterpillars – even if for only one day – contact Simon Primrose at [simonprimrose@aol.com](mailto:simonprimrose@aol.com)

# Butterflies of Brownfields Project

**Dingy Skipper, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Heath and Green Hairstreak** are just a few species that will benefit from Butterfly Conservation's new Butterflies of Brownfields project, which is receiving funding from Natural England

The project is part of the multi-partner Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project, led by Natural England. Purple Horizons is one of twelve national Nature Recovery Projects that help deliver the Nature Recovery Network: a growing national network of wildlife-rich places that are bigger, better and joined up across the country.

Butterfly Conservation is joining a partnership of local authorities, wildlife charities and government agencies, who are working together to restore and enhance fragmented heathland and associated habitats on the fringes of the West Midlands conurbation. This will connect Sutton Park National Nature Reserve and Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation to help species become more resilient to climate change. Another key aspect of the project is connecting people with nature.

Butterfly Conservation will be utilising both standard and novel survey techniques to monitor for the presence of elusive and under-recorded species such as Dingy Skipper at sites across Walsall and Lichfield, including Pelsall North Common and Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI. Overall, our aim is to increase our knowledge of the abundance and distribution of key butterfly species and day-flying clearwing moths to identify any threats to habitat availability and suitability in the urban environment.

Novel techniques such as ultraviolet photoluminescence surveys will be used, alongside standard adult surveys, to detect the larval stages of White-letter hairstreak and Green Hairstreak on their respective

larval food plants in areas of suitable habitat. This follows on from research undertaken by the University of Sussex and Butterfly Conservation, which has shown that the use of UV light can be an effective survey method for difficult-to-record species including **Black Hairstreak** (compared to traditional surveys such as egg searches) because larvae have been shown to luminesce under UV light. Pheromone lures will be used to detect elusive day-flying clearwing moths such as the **Six-belted Clearwing**, associated with brownfield sites, and **Large Red-belted Clearwing** in heathland with birch scrub. Besides species surveys, a brownfield habitat assessment will be developed and trialled to assess the quality of open mosaic habitat, with results of the surveys being used to plan and deliver small-scale habitat improvements.

As urban habitats are successional and increasingly vulnerable to changes in land use, improving our knowledge of the distribution and abundance of lepidoptera in our urban landscapes is paramount. Identifying key sites and understanding historic land use and the presence of species will require local expertise and volunteers to ensure future long-term monitoring. As part of the project, we will organise training events in both standard and novel monitoring survey techniques to provide volunteers with the knowledge and skills to take action for butterflies and moths at their local green space.

Article by **Natalie Norton**  
Midlands Landscape Officer

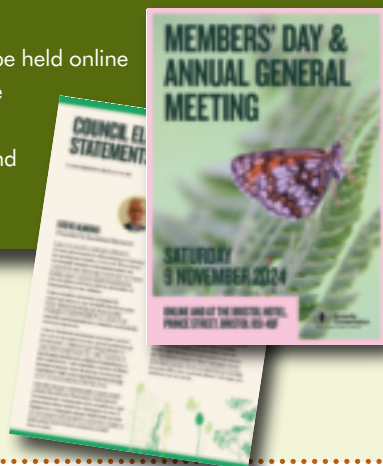
If you are interested in getting involved with surveying as part of the project or would like more information, contact me at [nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org)



## National Members' Day and AGM 2024

**Saturday 9 November 2024, Bristol**

Butterfly Conservation's national Members' Day and AGM will be held online and at The Bristol, Prince Street, BS1 4QF. A varied programme covers Wild Spaces in the Bristol area, the Big Butterfly Count, multi-taxa collaboration on Scotland's East Coast, factors around 2030 nature targets, youth inclusion and the power of citizen science. Find out more at [butterfly-conservation.org/agm2024](https://butterfly-conservation.org/agm2024)



## Birmingham and Black Country

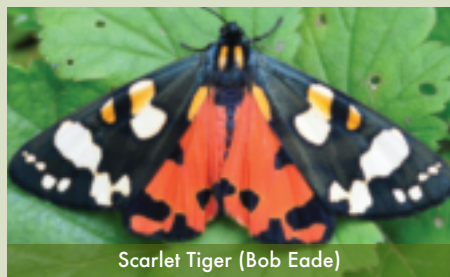
### Scarlet Tiger Work Parties, Stourbridge

Every 3rd Fri: 18 Oct, 15 Nov, 20 Dec,  
17 Jan, 21 Feb, 21 Mar

Contact Joy Stevens: 01384 372397,

[joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk)

Meeting points and tasks to be determined



Scarlet Tiger (Bob Eade)

## Herefordshire

### Ewyas Harold Meadow Work Parties

Dates to be confirmed.

11am at the northern Cwm Hill end of Ewyas Harold Common, adjacent to the top cattle grid (SO382302). Approach from Abbey Dore off the B4347 (SO384306). Bring gloves, hand tools, lunch and a drink.

Contact Natalie Norton: [nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org), 07485 372199

### Ewyas Harold Reserve and Common Work Parties

Sat: 19 Oct, 16 Nov, 21 Dec, 18 Jan,  
15 Feb, 15 Mar, 19 Apr

10am at the northern Cwm Hill end of Ewyas Harold Common, adjacent to the top cattle grid (SO382302). Approach from Abbey Dore off the B4347 (SO384306). Bring gloves, hand tools, lunch and a drink.

Contact Dean Fenton

([fenton@littleburyfarm.co.uk](mailto:fenton@littleburyfarm.co.uk)), Ian Hart

([yellowrattle4@aol.com](mailto:yellowrattle4@aol.com)) or Natalie Norton

([nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org))

### Haugh Wood Work Parties

Sat: 2 Nov, 7 Dec, 4 Jan, 1 Feb, 1 Mar

9.30am in the Forestry Commission car park on minor road from Mordiford to Woolhope (SO592365)

Contact Robin Hemming (07501 020605,

[robinhemming@btinternet.com](mailto:robinhemming@btinternet.com))

or Kate Wollen (07786 526280,

[kate.wollen@forestryengland.uk](mailto:kate.wollen@forestryengland.uk))

## Worcestershire

### Ankerdine Common

**Sun: 13 Oct** – in partnership with  
Worcestershire County Council

10am in a small lay-by on A44 close to the turn off to Martley (SO736557) off the B4193 Stourport-Harlebury road.

**Contact Trevor Bucknall: 07704 138398,**  
[trevor.bucknall@outlook.com](mailto:trevor.bucknall@outlook.com)

### Grafton Wood Work Parties

**Every Wed to the end of March 2025, ride management and coppicing**

10am at Grafton Flyford Church; tools provided; bring heavy gardening gloves, wear appropriate clothing. These are joint events with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and open to members and non-members alike. Details of ride-mowing work parties will be on the Grafton Wood Blog ([grafftonwood.wordpress.com](http://grafftonwood.wordpress.com)) and the Branch website ([westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com](http://westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com)). Details of work parties at Throckmorton landfill site and Honeybourne railway line will also be on the Branch website.

**Contact John Tilt: 01386 792458,**  
[john.tilt2@btopenworld.com](mailto:john.tilt2@btopenworld.com)

### Grafton Wood Brown Hairstreak Egg Searches

**Sat: 30 Nov, 4 Jan** (mince pie and mulled wine special), **1 Feb**

10am at Grafton Flyford Church

**Contact Simon Primrose: 07952 260153,**  
[simonjprimrose@aol.com](mailto:simonjprimrose@aol.com)

Simon says: 'Our regular **Brown Hairstreak** egg searches on Thursdays will resume, probably from mid-October, and you can read about a volunteer's experience in 'Just One Day' on page 13. If you'd like to join us – for an hour, a day or the whole season – contact me for more information.'

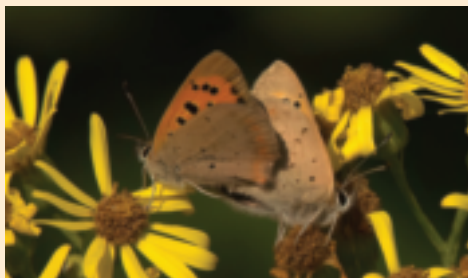
### Monkwood Work Parties

**Sun: 3 Nov, 1 Dec, 5 Jan, 2 Feb, 2 Mar**

**Thu: 17 Oct, 21 Nov, 19 Dec, 16 Jan, 20 Feb, 20 Mar**

10am in the reserve car park (SO803603), usually finished by 3pm

**Contact Phil Adams: 01905 610830,**  
[pdadamsrainbow@gmail.com](mailto:pdadamsrainbow@gmail.com)



Small Copper, 2nd brood, at Grafton Wood  
(Roger Littleover)



Volunteers pulling melilot at Monkwood in July  
(Mike Williams)

### Penny Hill Landfill Site Work Parties

**Sun: 20 Oct, 17 Nov, 15 Dec, 19 Jan, 16 Feb, 16 Mar**

10am at the site entrance off Pudford Lane, Hillside, Martley (SO752613)

**Contact Trevor Bucknall: 07704 138398,**  
[trevor.bucknall@outlook.com](mailto:trevor.bucknall@outlook.com)

### Trench Wood Work Parties

**Sun: 27 Oct, 24 Nov, 26 Jan, 23 Feb, 23 Mar**

10am in the reserve car park (SO930588)

**Contact Matthew Bridger: 08701 568334,**  
[bridge1805@btinternet.com](mailto:bridge1805@btinternet.com)

### Wyre Forest Work Parties

**Tue: 15 Oct, 19 Nov, 17 Dec, 21 Jan, 18 Feb, 18 Mar**

These are joint events with Natural England.

10am in Earnwood Copse car park (SO744784) on the B4194 Bewdley to Kinlet road and drive into the Forest. Refreshments are provided but bring a packed lunch if staying all day.

**Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552,**  
[wmbutterflies@gmail.com](mailto:wmbutterflies@gmail.com)



## Staffordshire

### **Cannock Chase Work Parties – Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**

In partnership with Staffordshire  
County Council

Work to benefit this species is planned –  
details to be confirmed

**Contact Rob Taylor, Countryside Ranger:**

07817 122760,

[robert.taylor@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:robert.taylor@staffordshire.gov.uk)

## **Expenses: mileage allowance**

The Branch committee has agreed to pay a mileage allowance to people attending work parties and committee meetings. Forms are available from the Treasurer (see page 27) and from work party leaders.

If anything else prevents you from coming to work parties, please contact **Mike Williams** (see page 27) to discuss how we could help. There's a great need for more practical help, especially from the Branch's younger and fitter members!

## Volunteer Opportunities at Bishops Wood



Owned by the National Grid and operated by Field Studies Council, Bishops Wood is in Crossway Green near Stourport-on-Severn. Various courses and experiences are run on the site, with the aim of inspiring curiosity in nature and providing outdoor learning opportunities for all ages.

Note: Wood White was recorded on this site in 2024.

### **Wildlife Recording Volunteers**

Join a group that records the site's wildlife on iRecord to gain a good picture of what species are there. The group's focus is insects but this can be broadened and everyone is welcome, novice or expert.

Thur: 3 Oct, 7 Nov, 5 Dec

### **Conservation Volunteers**

Mon: 10am to 2pm

Fri: times to be confirmed

Sat: 5 Oct, 9 Nov, 7 Dec

**Contact the Centre** ([volunteers.bw@field-studies-council.org](mailto:volunteers.bw@field-studies-council.org), 01299 250513) or **Billie Crampton**

([b.crampton@field-studies-council.org](mailto:b.crampton@field-studies-council.org)) **Find out more at:**  
[field-studies-council.org/locations/bishopswood](http://field-studies-council.org/locations/bishopswood)

## **Don't forget to check Butterfly Conservation's websites and groups for other events:**

- [westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com/events-and-work-parties](https://westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com/events-and-work-parties)
- [www.facebook.com/groups/westmidlandsbutterflyconservation](https://www.facebook.com/groups/westmidlandsbutterflyconservation)
- [www.facebook.com/groups/250738579030862](https://www.facebook.com/groups/250738579030862) (Malvern Butterfly Group)
- [butterfly-conservation.org/events](https://butterfly-conservation.org/events)

## Shropshire

### Prees Heath Common Work Parties

Wed: 16 Oct, 20 Nov, 18 Dec, 15 Jan, 19 Feb  
10.30am on the access track opposite the Steel  
Heath turning off the A49 (SJ557363)

Contact Natalie Norton: [nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org), 07485 372199



Small Copper *ab cuprinus* at Prees Heath (Susan Croft)

### Grayling Action Group conservation days

Fri 10 Jan: Pavilion Tearoom, Carding Mill Valley

Fri 7 Feb: far National Trust car park, Batch Valley

Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552,  
[wmbutterflies@gmail.com](mailto:wmbutterflies@gmail.com)

**Our calendar on sale here for the first time!**

# Charity Christmas Card Shop

St. Mary's Church  
Shrewsbury

By kind permission of  
The Churches Conservation Trust

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
to  
Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024  
Inclusive

Monday to Saturday 10.15am–4.00pm

Thousands of Cards, Calendars and  
wrapping paper, supporting 30 local and  
National Charities



Year 5 pupils from Bryn Offa C of E Primary School clearing Himalayan Balsam on Llanymynech Golf Course as part of their John Muir award (Gareth Jones)

**IMPORTANT: Always contact the organiser before attending an event.**



Llanymynech Rocks soon after the quarries became a nature reserve



Typical habitat

# Llanymynech Rocks

## a neglected jewel of butterfly diversity

Llanymynech Rocks, which is part of a larger Llanymynech SSSI, is a limestone outcrop on the Shropshire/Montgomeryshire border. It was an important source of lime for building and agriculture until quarrying stopped in 1914, having been mined in one way or another since Roman times. It was grazed until probably about 1970 and has long been regarded as a mecca for butterflies. The old quarries were designated a nature reserve in 1972.

The upper part of the SSSI is a golf course, established in 1933 and consisting of 160 acres. Much of this is mown, as one would expect, but there are large areas of scrub and woodland as well as areas of bracken. The Golf Club now leaves patches of long grass to be cut in the autumn, which is good for butterflies, and will cut some of these in alternate years, which is good for skippers.

### Past habitat management

I first got to know this site in the late 1980s and I've led butterfly walks there almost every year since. Initially it had a good population of **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, which

occurred in several places on both the Montgomeryshire side and the Shropshire side, as well as on the golf course. Jenny Joy's 1992 survey report notes it in many places. These populations shrank as scrub grew and shaded out the violets, dying out in about 2002.

Following extensive scrub clearance led by Estelle Bailey of the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT), I was commissioned by Countryside Council Wales (forerunner of Natural Resources Wales) to organise captive breeding from local stock and then reintroduce them between 2007 and 2009. The release site below Asterley Rocks had lots of bracken and the butterflies did quite well till about 2017, when numbers declined, and have not been seen since 2020.

### Current plans and funding

I am never quite sure whether Pearl-bordered Fritillary need bracken on limestone sites when violets are present but they need an active programme of scrub cutting which,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►

**Pearl-bordered Fritillary**  
(Roger Littleover)



to be sustainable, needs to be followed by grazing. The bracken in the enclosure is now choked with bramble and violets are scarce. We have tried Hebridean Sheep in the past but they have now gone. There were not enough of them and they tended to hang around either in woodland or on the top of the crags, where they could get away from flies. The Shropshire Wildlife Trust has tried Dexter Cattle on its side of the reserve but these have now gone, so that area is ungrazed as well. The scrub re-growth on previously cleared areas is dramatic, though some limestone grassland remains. The reserves had Aggregates Levy and other funding in the early 2000s but, particularly on the Welsh side, failure to treat stumps with herbicide (a requirement of organic status) was not helpful. The site is deteriorating fast.

In 2021, Llanymynech Golf Club was the lead partner in a Nature Networks Fund project to clear lots of scrub on parts of the SSSI (see *Comma* 111). We have also been able to graze a large enclosure with cattle. We have tried using an electric fence to graze sheep on some of the cleared areas but it was started too late. Helen Upson and I are trying to establish a conservation grazing project in the Oswestry Hills using an ancient breed of Welsh Cattle and she is now based at the golf course but grazing other

wildlife sites, mainly in Shropshire, as well.

We applied to the latest round of Nature Networks Funding in Wales to put up more than 2km of fencing on the golf course. Although it's possible to use GPS No Fence collars to constrain the cows to a defined area, this does not stop the calves (which can't have collars) running round the golf course. The bigger areas would benefit from grazing by cattle, followed by sheep or goats (which can get to steep places that cows can't). Our bid was not successful. This is a great pity because, without following up scrub clearance with grazing, the scrub just regrows.

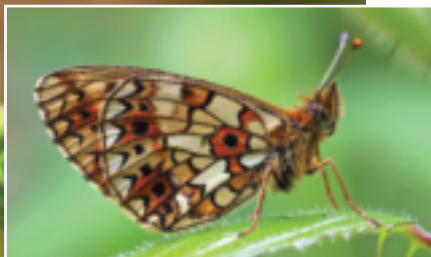
We are looking at other funding sources. Cutting with a mower is possible in places but stumps and steep slopes restrict where this is possible. Llanymynech Golf Club does what it can but has other priorities – spending a lot of money on fencing is not one of them. Under the suggested rules of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) consultation, as both an SSSI and a golf course, they would have been excluded from applying for this scheme in Wales! Fortunately, the SFS now includes SSSIs.

There are  
now 28 species,  
compared with  
32 species in  
1988



**Grizzled Skipper**  
(Richard Bullock)





Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Frank Bell)



Dingy Skipper (Nigel Ball)



Grayling (Richard Bullock)

### Other species

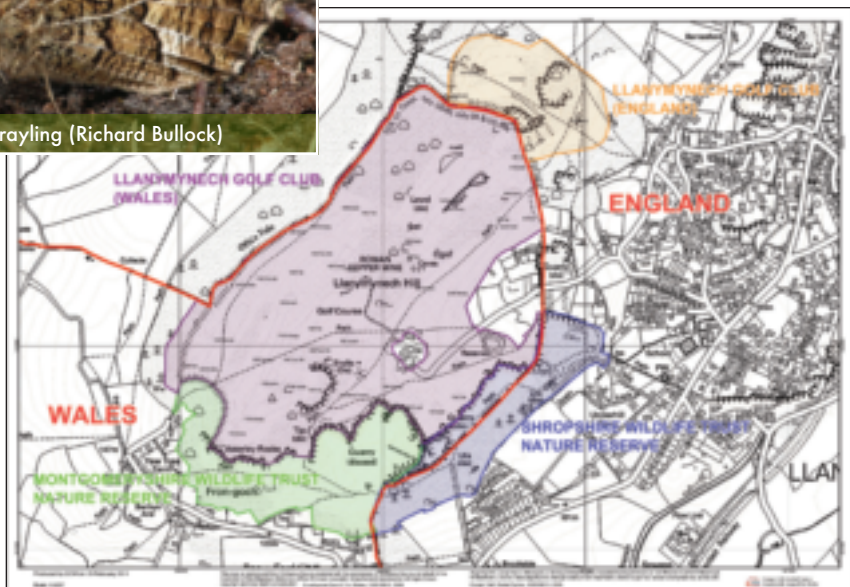
Pearl-bordered Fritillary is not the only species to be lost from Llanymynech Rocks. **Brown Argus** was present in 1993 but there has only been one record since, in 1997. **Grayling** has not been seen since 2018. The last record for **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** was in 2022 and **Dark Green Fritillary**, never common, was last seen in 2019.

There are some positives: **Silver-washed Fritillary** arrived in 2001 and is now seen regularly; **Essex Skipper** arrived in 2018; **White-letter Hairstreak** is now recorded quite often (although the absence of previous records is more to do with people not looking for it).

There are now 28 species, compared with 32 species in 1988. Many have been scarce this year, particularly the Nymphalids (such as **Peacock** and **Small Tortoiseshell**) but also **Dingy** and **Grizzled Skipper**, **Green Hairstreak** and **Small Copper**.

We are working on getting grazing back and talking to both Wildlife Trusts but we are not there yet, although MWT would probably drop organic status to enable stumps to be treated. An extensive programme of scrub clearance is needed but there is no sign of any funding for this.

Article by Simon Spencer



Map showing the four areas of the site

**Small Blue** – Prestbury Hill, Gloucestershire

# On The Move

Some of us visited Arnside Knott this year to photograph **Scotch Argus** and **Northern Brown Argus**. We were taken aback by a comment made by a couple who had travelled down to the Knott from Scotland. When I excitedly showed them my freshly taken image of open-winged Scotch Argus, the lady apologised for her lack of excitement at my first sighting of this butterfly, claiming that they see them all the time where they live and had travelled down to see **Gatekeeper**. While this species is prolific in the West Midlands, I wonder if there was a time when it couldn't be found in my home county of Shropshire. This led me to reflect on other sightings over the years.

On 15 July 2014, I found a small but healthy **Essex Skipper** colony in Farmer Phil's Field on the Dudmaston Estate near Bridgnorth in Shropshire. I remember receiving a message from friend **Paul Brewster**, who travelled from Cheshire to see this species for the first time. Seven years later in 2021, he discovered a colony in his region, indicating that Essex Skippers were spreading to the northern counties.

Two or three years ago, **Jenny Joy** asked me to let her know if I'd found any **Marbled White** colonies in Shropshire as they'd reached the Worcestershire side of Wyre Forest but hadn't been seen over the border on the Shropshire side. On 15 July 2023, I noticed one or two flitting over the long grass of Bridgnorth cemetery. This year, I recorded 14 there and an established colony on the nearby Hermitage seemed to produce more Marbled White than **Meadow Brown**.

It's not clear why certain species are spreading north so quickly but factors may include the habitats and grasses being right for them, climate change and hay movements. Less frequent mowing of road verges may

**Essex Skipper** – Dudmaston Estate,  
Bridgnorth, Shropshire



**Chalkhill Blue** – Prestbury Hill,  
Gloucestershire



be helping butterflies to spread. Habitat loss arising from urban development may also cause butterfly movements.

It's evident that some of the more southerly butterfly species are on the move. **Small Blues** are already fluttering over the Gloucestershire borders into Worcestershire. Although we have little in the way of chalk hills, **Chalkhill Blue** has been reported in Worcestershire on rare occasions.

Record numbers of a butterfly once close to extinction have been recorded at a nature reserve this year: Essex Wildlife Trust reported that 218 **Heath Fritillary** had been counted at Pound Wood Nature Reserve near Hadleigh on 18 June 2024. Habitat conservation work has been crucial in helping in the increase of this species but, who knows, they may soon be moving along the coastline and heading north.

It would appear that such habitat conservation efforts really are having a positive impact on securing the amazing species of butterfly and moths that we have in the West Midlands. Butterfly behaviour is fascinating: I do like to observe with interest and listen to what they are trying to tell us before it is too late.

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Article and photographs by **Roger Littleover**

**Marbled White** – Bridgnorth  
Cemetery, Shropshire



# Silver Studded Blue, Aberrations

I'm sure most *Comma* readers have visited Prees Heath at one time or another to witness the June/July spectacle that is the **Silver-studded Blue** on the wing. I'm fortunate that I live within a 25-minute drive of the reserve and can spend many hours there. Over the past few years I've been observing and studying this species. In this article, I'd like to share with you some images illustrating the beauty of the variations in the female.



A 'typical' female is essentially brown, with little blue colouration beyond her thorax (July 2024).

## Subspecies

The scientific name for the Silver-studded Blue is *Plebejus argus*. The British population is usually considered to belong to the subspecies *argus* despite at times large variations in form and colour. There are three other subspecies.

- *ssp cretaceous* – The colony at Portland Bill in Dorset exhibits characteristics of this subspecies.
- *ssp masseyi* – Now extinct, this subspecies occurred on the mosses of Westmorland; some females at Prees Heath exhibit this form.
- *ssp caernensis* – This is found at the Great Orme in North Wales.

## Observations

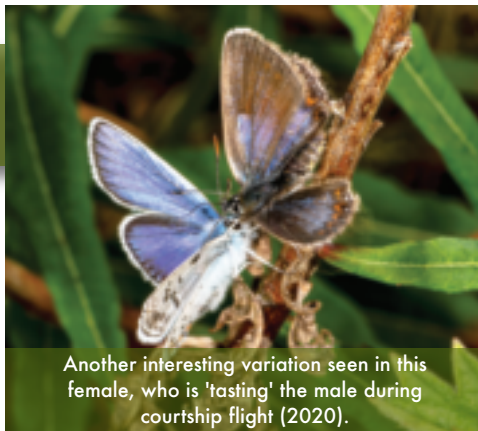
Thomas *et al* (1999) provided an analysis of the British populations (Great Orme, Prees Heath, Holy Island, Llyn Hafod-y-Llyn, Cumbria) and found that only a few females at Prees Heath had more than 5% blue scales. That is not the finding from my analysis of images taken there this year. I estimate that nearly 50% of the females exhibited more than 5% blue in the field to the south of the car park.

The considerable variation in females at Prees Heath has been noted by other visitors. My recent post of 20 variations on the BC West Midlands Facebook group attracted ten more in the replies! Variations range from a light dusting of blue to forewings and hindwings with





This female has a light dusting of bluish-silver scales on her forewings and blue dots on the hindwing (July 2024).



Another interesting variation seen in this female, who is 'tasting' the male during courtship flight (2020).



Here the bluish-silver scales extend towards the wing edges, forming dots on the forewings and a border on the hind wings.



This is a particularly interesting example as, to my eyes, it is very similar to historical specimens of the extinct subspecies *masseyi*. The Westmorland colony was found on the mosses: could it be that we see this variation at Press Heath because the habitat there is similar to the nearby Shropshire mosses?



This female is more typical but has extensive blue dusting on her hind wings, with light blue dusting on her forewings near the thorax.

a majority of blue coloration.

My gut feel is that the number of blue variations in females has increased and 2024 appears to have been a good year for variations. I hope you will find these examples interesting. For further reading, I recommend the excellent UK Butterflies website (see References).

Finally, my thanks to **Andrew Magnay** for valuable input during the preparation of this short article.

Article and photographs by **Nigel Ball**

References: 1. Thomas, C, Glen, S W T, Lewis, O T, Hill, J K and Blakeley, D S (1999) 'Population differentiation and conservation of endemic races: the butterfly, *Plebejus argus*'. *Animal Conservation*. 2. UK Butterflies website [ukbutterflies.co.uk/species.php?species=argus](http://ukbutterflies.co.uk/species.php?species=argus)



Wood White

As a child I spent many an hour in the garden with cabbage white butterflies: seeing them still takes me back to the long summers of my happy childhood in the Cotswolds.

Of course, 'cabbage white' is a misnomer for the two species whose favourite host plant for laying eggs is the cabbage: **Large** and **Small White**. This is a reminder that, for us to enjoy butterflies on the wing, caterpillars must 'munch'!

Large Whites can sometimes be not much larger than Small Whites, so size is not a reliable way to identify them. The Large has a bigger black marking extending over both upper and outer edges of its wingtips, whereas the Small has a smaller and greyer mark mainly on the upper edge of its wingtips and extending only slightly down the outer edge.

The **Green-veined White**, which is often identified as a 'cabbage white' but does not feed on brassicas, can be mistaken for a Small White when seen from

# White Butterflies

## far from ordinary



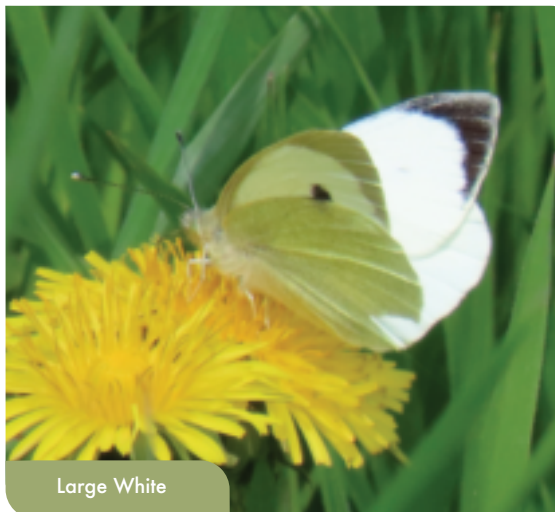
Brimstone



Green-veined White



Small White



Large White

above but is easily identified when the underwings are visible, with the greenish-grey streaks that follow its wing veins.

### Other whites

One of the first Whites to emerge in spring is the **Orange-tip**. While the male has bright orange wingtips, the female has black or grey wingtips similar to other Whites; however, both males and females have the most stunning camouflage pattern on their underwings.

A beautiful White that's unlikely to visit gardens is the **Wood White**. It is well worth going to observe this species: you'll be rewarded by its slower fluttering flight and dainty beauty.

### Not quite white

The female **Brimstone** is such a delicate pale cream colour that, in flight with other butterflies, it can be mistaken for a white butterfly. The Whites and Yellows are grouped together in one family, the *Pieridae*. Brimstone overwinter as adults and so are among the first species to be seen in spring.

### White in name only

The **Marbled White** (see page 19) is classified as a Brown (*Satyridae*), despite the wonderful marbling from which it gets its name. This species is spreading north and loves grasslands, where it nectars on the flora. A favourite of mine, it is delightful to observe as it flutters.



Orange-tip (female)

Black with a striking white flash, the **White Admiral** is classified as one of the *Nymphalidae* (like the **Red Admiral**). It is truly majestic on the wing, gliding through the treetops.

### Migrants

And, finally, let's not forget the **Bath White** and **Black-veined White**, which we all hope to be in the right place at the right time to see. Both are occasionally recorded in the UK.

Article and photographs by **Deborah Hotchkiss**



Lesser Fiery Copper  
(female)  
with full tails



## Butterfly Highlights from

# Western Taurus Mountains of Turkey

Mike Williams's latest adventure took us on an exciting week-long journey in the Western Taurus Mountains of Turkey. Our group of eight travelling from England were met in Turkey by our familiar butterfly expert Safi, young Turkish butterfly expert Alperen and local guides and driver. We stayed at the very hospitable Turker Camp in the small village of Yaylakuzdere, 1000 metres up which made an excellent base for excursions up into the higher peaks and for days out down at sea level.

### Day 1

On our first outing we headed up higher into the wooded mountains but not very far before we stopped at an open meadow area. As soon as we got out of the bus, **Safi** and **Alperen** started calling out interesting butterflies to photograph. The first species I saw were **Ripart's Anomalous Blue** and **Anomalous Blue**. I spent a while chasing a battered male

Fiery Copper (male)



Eastern Rock Grayling



**Meleager's Blue** but I needn't have bothered as we probably saw more of that species of blue than any other on the trip. All of the **Meadow Browns** here were interesting – **Turkish**, **Dusky** and **Oriental** were all identified. As we descended an open slope, Alperen found our first male **Turkish Furry Blue** looking splendid with his powdery white upper wings. **Freyer's Grayling** and **Hermit** were also photographed. Some of the group saw **Orbed Red Underwing Skipper** and **Mallow Skipper** before a sudden downpour brought a swift conclusion to a very productive day.

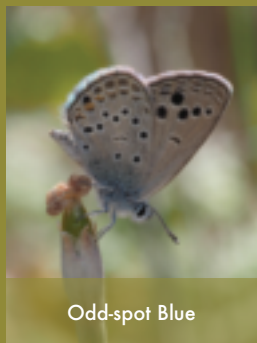
### Day 2

On our second day we explored habitats along the main roads. Our first stop was a short valley on a bend which Alperen knew as a site for **Ionian Emperor**. Our guides were quick to find a couple of beautiful male





Anatolian Fiery Copper



Odd-spot Blue



Guides Alperen and Safi, with Susie and Chris



Hermit



Turkish Furry Blue (male)

**Anatolian Fiery Coppers** laying claim to an area of discarded rubbish. While trying to chase the endemic **Lydian Tawny Rockbrown**, I was suddenly commanded to freeze so that the group could photograph an **Ionian Emperor** that landed on my cap. I hear they got some good photos but all I got was to see its shadow as it circled round my head! The day's last stop at an area of flowering mint produced **Odd-spot** and **Turquoise Blues**.

### Day 3

An early morning drive to a lowland dry valley brought us our target **Small Bath White** before oppressive heat there drove us back up to higher altitudes for some respite. An open hillside brought plenty more **Hermits** and **Tawny Rockbrowns** and a couple of spectacularly beautiful male **Fiery Coppers**. Moving to a wetter area, Alperen found us **Wagner's Blue** and the endemic **Koçak's Blue** mud-puddling. **Gerhard's Black Hairstreak** was one of many species nectaring on mint there, with **False Grayling** nearby.

\* Kunchuy's Blue (*Polyommatus schuriani*) is a new species for the Turkish list.

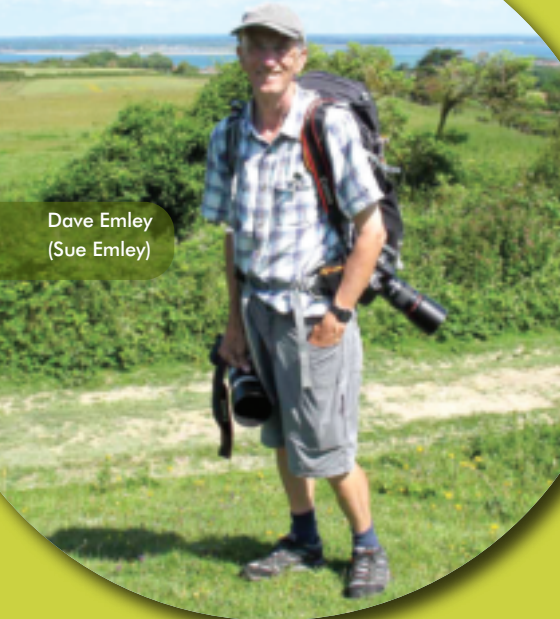
### Best of the rest

Highlights from other days included a fresh female **Lesser Fiery Copper** with her perfect little tails, several mud-puddling **Orange-banded Hairstreaks** although none were very fresh, and a mating pair of **Greek Clouded Yellows** that flew at least 200 metres away from us to get some privacy.

This was probably the best holiday I've had for **Grayling** with **Great Steppe**, **White-banded**, **Southern** and **Eastern Rock** all being seen. **Krueper's** and **Mountain Small Whites** were the other Pierid stars, and a good range of **Skippers** (including **Aegean**, **Oriental Marbled**, **Persian**, **Pigmy**, **False Mallow**, **Levantine** and **Mediterranean**) were all favourites. **Kunchuy's\***, **Loew's** and **Idas Blues** were memorable too.

Thanks to **Mike Williams** as ever for organising such a great trip, Safi and Alperen for finding us so many interesting species, and everyone on the ground in Turkey for making us feel so welcome.

Article and photographs by John Maddocks



Dave Emley  
(Sue Emley)

## New County Moth Recorder for Staffordshire

As Staffordshire recorders may already know, **Dave Emley** is retiring from the role of County Moth Recorder after 25 years. He wanted to do this while able to pass on the mantle in an orderly manner.

In his announcement to his recorders, Dave described how his role had changed. Back in 2000, computers were less common and his predecessor's records were all paper-based. Now, with 40,000 new records each year, there's a lot of data acquisition and manipulation – a big commitment for someone working alone. On top of all that, he also edits the Annual Report for the West Midland Bird Club.

In seeking a successor, Dave knew he needed more than a competent mother. His replacement had to be proficient in data manipulation and able to use spreadsheets, databases and geographical information systems. Luckily for Staffordshire, he has found such a person in **Les Evans-Hill**.

On behalf of the Branch, Mike Williams expressed his thanks for all Dave's support over the years, not only in this role but also in sharing and identifying photos on social media and in supporting the production of our regional moth book along with the online moth atlas.



My wife and I have our main home in Staffordshire, although we currently spend most of our time in south-west London for work reasons. We plan to retire to Staffordshire in about five years.

My interest in moths and moth recording began in the early 1990s in Milton Keynes. On moving to Bedfordshire in 2003, I offered my services as County Macro-moth Recorder and, as there was no electronic database, began by building one in MapMate (the tool currently used in Staffordshire).

In 2006, Butterfly Conservation asked if I would be interested in a new Data Manager role for the National Moth Recording Scheme funded by the

Heritage Lottery Fund, the role I continue to fulfil to this day. I jumped at the opportunity and moved to Dorset. From 2011 to 2016, I was also Dorset's County Macro-moth Recorder.

County recording has changed dramatically since the new millennium, in many areas becoming a full-time and often unsustainable role. I intend to form a team of recorders willing to help with data validation and verification (the latter for iRecord only).

I expect to move the Staffordshire database into Recorder 6, the tool used by Staffordshire Ecological Record and the National Moth Recording Scheme. I'll use new technologies such as QGIS for mapping and reporting back to Staffordshire recorders – I look forward to meeting many of you soon.

**Les Evans-Hill**

For all Staffordshire moth-related communication, my email address is [vc39moths@outlook.com](mailto:vc39moths@outlook.com)

# Branch contacts

## Officers

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# The Little Book of Butterflies



- **ISBN:** 9780691251745 • **Authors:** Andrei Sourakov, Alexandra A Sourakov
- **Illustrator:** Tugce Okay • **Publisher:** Princeton University Press • **Cost:** £12.99
- **Publication date:** April 2024 • **Format:** Hardback, 160 pages

With its foil-stamped cloth cover, dimensions of 3.75 x 6 inches and totalling just 160 pages, this charming little book immediately recalls the classic Observer series

that many readers will remember with great affection. However, do not let its size deceive you – this is a serious book written by father and daughter **Andrei** and **Alexandra Sourakov**, both experts in their respective fields.

This is not another field guide. In their introduction the authors state: ‘We hope this book will help the reader appreciate the duality of butterflies as biological wonders... and as living works of art that have come to symbolise everything from the human soul to the ephemerality of life.’

Therefore, the scope of the book is huge and it’s astounding how much they have managed to pack into such a small volume. It’s also beautifully illustrated with some 140 photographs and pieces of original artwork, all in colour.

## Content

The range of topics discussed is far too wide to cover in this review but includes sections on:

- **Diversity and Evolution** – when and from where butterflies evolved
- **Habitat and Biogeography** – how continental drift and different habitats drove butterfly evolution
- **Anatomy and Physiology** – how butterflies breathe, eat and mate
- **Life Cycle** – how the four stages of egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and adult provide butterflies with flexibility thereby increasing their chances of survival
- **Butterflies and Humans** – the impact of humans through habitat transformation and climate change, and how butterflies are ‘flagship species’ that help

conservationists to assess biodiversity changes and trends.

There is also a fascinating section on the part butterflies play in myth, folklore and modern cultures around the world.

The book is packed with fascinating facts. These are scattered throughout the volume, boxed and in bold type. For example, did you know that some species of skipper butterflies in the neotropics\* only fly just after dusk and just before dawn, and have been found sleeping in caves during the day? Or that a butterfly has ‘wing hearts’ in the thorax that push stale air out and pull fresh air into the wings? Or that scientists have discovered that a butterfly’s brain has the ability to learn, and grows significantly during its short lifespan? I certainly learned some new and interesting things about our favourite insects.

Also squeezed in are a useful glossary, a further reading list and an index.

## Evaluation

A few things to bear in mind about the book: although the text is written in a clear and accessible style, the information is detailed and so I would not recommend it for children; it is about butterflies worldwide and uses examples from across the globe so, while many species will be familiar, readers expecting a work on British butterflies may be disappointed; the font is small – you may (like me) need your reading glasses!

In conclusion, it is a remarkable little book and, despite its diminutive size, worth a place on your bookshelf. It would also make an ideal gift for any serious butterfly enthusiast.

## Review by Craig Jones

\* The region from central Mexico and the Caribbean islands to southern South America

We carry a book review in each issue of *The Comma*. Newly published titles are ideal but particularly interesting or useful books from the past are also worth highlighting. See page 2 for contribution details.