

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 76 Spring 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chair's Report.....	<u>2</u>
Members' Day Report.....	<u>4</u>
Photographic Competition Winners.....	<u>6</u>
50th Anniversary Event	<u>9</u>
Beningfield.....	<u>9</u>
Beningfield Weekend.....	<u>11</u>
Lyme Disease.....	<u>14</u>
Small Blue in Herts & Middx	<u>15</u>
Churchyard Butterfly Survey	<u>17</u>
Four-spotted Moth Survey	<u>18</u>
Speckled Woods at Knebworth.....	<u>20</u>
Why Record?.....	<u>22</u>
Attracting White-letter Hairstreaks	<u>23</u>
EIG AGM.....	<u>25</u>
Butterfly Haiku	<u>26</u>

To receive future newsletters by e-mail, as pdf files, please contact the editor



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

50th Anniversary



Chair's Report, by Malcolm Hull

Happy 50th Birthday Butterfly Conservation

Its 50 years since BC first started back in March 1968.

March has been a month of celebrations, with special 50th anniversary cakes (see photo on [Page 4](#)).

I was particularly pleased that our first Conservation Day at Millhoppers Butterfly Reserve and our Annual Members Day were so well attended. And a big welcome to Paula Reid, Christine Ridley and Chris Hilling, who have all joined the Committee.

What have we achieved?

Over the last fifty years, several butterfly species have died out in our two counties. Wood White, Pearl Bordered Fritillary and High Brown Fritillary all disappeared in our area in the 1970's. Duke of Burgundy and Wall Brown in the 1990's. Since then there have been no further losses. In fact there has been good news, as five further species which had not been recorded for several years in the Branch area have reappeared. Silver-washed Fritillary and Purple Emperor are both now quite widespread. Dark Green Fritillary has set up strongholds on our north-western borders. Small Blue is spreading nicely, mostly in west Herts and Brown Hairstreak is a recent arrival in the far south-west of Middx.

Our local branch in Herts & Middx has been in existence only since the mid-nineties. Our main impacts have been

- Recording butterflies and providing information through our website, annual reports and publications (*our recent joint publication 'Butterflies of Hertfordshire and Middlesex' is available from the HNHS website <http://www.hnhs.org/publications>*)
- Providing information on habitat requirements, lobbying landowners and managers and encouraging everyone with a garden to plant butterfly-friendly plants.
- Running butterfly walks to show members and the public how to find and identify butterflies and enjoy their beauty.
- Many butterfly populations are still declining and in most cases the cause is some form of human activity. With over 1300

members locally and 34,000 nationally we are a powerful force standing up for butterflies and moths.

What lies ahead?

As part of our 50th anniversary programme, we are joining with the Natural History Museum at Tring for a special celebration of the late Gordon Beningfield, celebrated artist, former Branch member and President of Butterfly Conservation (see article from [Page 9](#)). We will be putting on a display at the museum, running two special butterfly walks to mark the occasion, one of which to our own Butterfly Reserve at Millhoppers, which itself is dedicated to Gordon. Full details of the activities planned for the Beningfield weekend are presented from [Page 11](#).

Our recording work remains at the core of what we do. We will be contributing records to the forthcoming London Natural History Society butterfly atlas.

We will increase our work for Small Blue (see article on [Page 15](#)) and stepping up our research on Four Spotted moth (see article on [Page 18](#)).

Another bumper programme of Butterfly Walks and moth events – do come along and feel free to bring your family and friends. (details are in the enclosed leaflet and also on the Branch website (web address on [Page 27](#)))

BC's new Conservation Strategy is due to be published this year. It will provide a focus for us to redouble our efforts, both for widespread and declining species and also those rarities which we still retain. And we are hoping to find opportunities to increase our work on moth conservation.

Many thanks

At our AGM Margaret Noakes, for many years our membership secretary, stood down from the Committee and from her role as Vice-Chair. Subsequently, John Hollingdale, who until recently had been our Treasurer, has also stood down from the Committee.

Both John and Margaret have been actively involved with the work of the Branch right from the start. Without their hard work and dedication we would not have laid the foundations upon which we have achieved so much. Thanks also to Margaret Huitson, John's wife, who has also resigned from the Committee, where she was our minutes secretary.

Members' Day Report, by Ian Small

Members' day, held on 24th March in Old Welwyn, was very well attended, with over 60 already present for the brief AGM at the start of the day, and final numbers topping 80.

Following the formal proceedings, the fun began with the sharing of photographs by several Branch members, all to the usual high standard. The subjects included both butterflies and moths, from locations spanning the UK, and France, but also as far afield as Brazil and Madagascar.

To align with the Butterfly Conservation theme of conservation in 2018, two of the new joint wardens gave a presentation of the habitat management planned at the only reserve owned by the Butterfly Conservation in Herts and Middlesex, Millhoppers Pasture.

The four different types of habitats present within the reserve were described along with a brief rationale for why habitat management is required in conservation. The practical approaches planned for the monthly work parties to increase the quality of the habitats were detailed. The ultimate aim from the new management regimens being to increase the overall biodiversity of the reserve and strengthen the populations of the butterflies and moths present.

During the lunch break, those present had time to view the many (>100) photographs entered into the photographic competition - thanks again to Andrew Wood for coordinating this, printing most of the photos and mounting them all for display.

To mark the 50th anniversary of BC, Liz Goodyear had baked a special cake, which was ceremonially cut by Margaret Noakes, in honour of her retirement from the Committee after such a long and distinguished service to the Branch.

The first afternoon presentation was by Mike Slater, describing his efforts, and successes, in saving the Small Blue in Warwickshire. He emphasised the importance of extensive, reliable data, both for obtaining any project funding, but of course also for monitoring the outcomes of your activities. While



the Small Blue was used as the flagship species, the management also benefitted both Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, plus the Chalk Carpet moth. The ecology of the species was studied in great detail, particularly with regard to egg-laying preferences, as by improving the availability of suitable egg-laying sites, the chances of supporting increased numbers are greatly enhanced. Mike described both failures as well as successes, e.g. the time when 1000 newly-planted Kidney Vetch plants were dug up by badgers! - he now plants seeds instead. Other approaches have involved the systematic use of large stones to create warm micro-habitats, favoured by the Skippers for egg-laying.

Mike described the landscape approach in great detail, and the results were plain to see, with increased numbers of colonies of each of the target species. This was a very inspiring presentation, amply demonstrating that, with sufficient understanding of the habitat requirements, then with hard work it is possible to reverse the declines of our threatened species.

The picture for the Small Blue in our area was then summarised by Andrew Wood and Malcolm Hull. Having previously been thought locally extinct, the creation of extensive suitable habitat at the Butterfly World site on the edge of St Albans led to it being rapidly colonised to create a very large colony. It is assumed that there must have been an overlooked remnant population close by from which this started. Unfortunately, with the closure of Butterfly World, this site can no longer be monitored but, for now at least, we understand that good numbers are still present. Further details on the current status of the Small Blue are provided in the article on [Page 15](#).

The second keynote presentation was from Bill Downie, from Surrey & SW London Branch, on the advance of the Brown Hairstreak across Surrey. Eggs are laid on blackthorn, which is abundant, but the butterflies prefer the younger growth, for which active management is beneficial. Being a butterfly of the tree canopy, the adults are very hard to find, so most recording and monitoring is done by searching for, and counting eggs - in early winter these are still bright white and can be quite conspicuous on the blackthorn branches. Group searches have proved popular, not only as a means of finding the eggs but also as a way of training new recorders on what to look for.

This monitoring has shown that the Brown Hairstreak is expanding its range northwards and eastwards, possibly following river valleys. In fact, the first records from north of the Thames, within our Branch

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

area, have now been confirmed. Unfortunately, these came just 2 weeks after publication of Andrew Wood's recent book on the butterflies of Herts & Middx!

Following the afternoon presentations, the results of the photographic competition were announced -all the winning photos and their categories are shown below. (There were joint winning photos in the moths category - but both by the same photographer !)

Following the raffle, the day's proceedings were closed by Branch Chair, Malcolm Hull. Thanks to everyone who attended, and to everyone who helped throughout the day to ensure availability of tea, coffee, biscuits, cake etc. The anniversary cake was delicious - enjoyed by everyone during the afternoon break.

Photographic Competition Winners



Winner - UK Butterflies Category
Marbled White, photo © Sue Taylor



Winner - non UK Category
Sphinx hawkmoth - photo © Paula Reid



Winner - non-adult Category
Buff-tip caterpillars, photo © Sue Taylor



Joint winning photos, UK
Moths Category

Poplar Hawk-moth (above)
and Elephant Hawk-moth
(below)

Both photos © John Gilbert

Winner - Behaviour
Category

Broad-bordered Bee
Hawk-moth nectaring

Photo © Ian Small



50th Anniversary Event, Millhoppers' Pasture

To celebrate BC's 50th Birthday the Branch held an open day at our Butterfly Nature Reserve near Tring. Despite poor forecasts all week, the weather was fine and 20 people attended the event.

We took three guided tours round the reserve, showing how the new management regime was working. The grass was far shorter than it has been for some time and the magnificent anthills were in clear view. There was much evidence of Badgers being very active on the Reserve. The streams were in full flow and the pond has returned.



The four reserve wardens put up a gazebo for the day in case of showers and were on hand to display their new tools and how they worked. They kindly laid on tea and coffee for the visitors, including a 50th anniversary cake.

Beningfield, by Margaret Noakes

Gordon Beningfield was a man who spent his life as an artist and a campaigner for the conservation of the British countryside and the traditional rural ways of life. He wrote many books and illustrated them, all reflecting his admiration for the countryside and all living things within it. He was an ardent campaigner for rural values and was not afraid to criticise the ways that modern farming could be harmful to nature.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's he made several programmes with the BBC Natural History Unit which brought him to a wider audience. In 1990 he succeeded Sir Peter Scott as President of what was then called the British Butterfly Conservation Society, later to become Butterfly Conservation. He was also a founder/ trustee and Vice Chairman of the Countryside Restoration Trust.

Gordon Beningfield was born in 1936 in his grandparents' house near the Pool of London and died much too early at the age of 61 in 1998. His father was a lighterman and in 1939 the family moved to Bermondsey, where they would experience the Blitz. With the

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

bombing of the docks there was no work for his father and the family moved to the then small village of London Colney to involve themselves in the local industry of farming. He was not an academic pupil, but his history teacher was aware of his talent for art and encouraged him to exploit this gift. At 15 he left school and was taken on as an apprentice by Faithcraft, the ecclesiastical art company of St Albans. His last few years at school at the beginning of the autumn term had given him the experience of working in the fields on farms, particularly the picking of fruit. An experience which he loved. Beningfield learnt a great deal with the company and painting, sculpture and even laying gold leaf was part of the learning process.

On moving to the London studios of the company he became involved in design, particularly painting and stained glass, as well as embroidery and banners for the church. He worked for the company for thirteen years, finally working on the stained glass at St Margaret's in Leytonstone. He was privileged to be asked to design and make the engraved stained glass windows for the Household Calvary in the Guards Chapel.



It is surprising how his career had some parallels with that of Thomas Hardy, which I will refer to later.

He was then able to make the decision to work for himself, having made his name with his artistic talents, during these years developing his deep love for the countryside. He spent many hours studying wildlife particularly in Dorset and Surrey and became an expert on birds; recognising that butterflies are indicators of the health of the country side. In 1978 he published his first real influential book 'Beningfield's Butterflies', full of sketches and paintings of the transient beauty of Butterflies. He continued to live in Hertfordshire, realising that to visit Dorset many times a year was something to which he could always look forward.



In 1981 Beningfield was commissioned by the Post office to design four British Butterflies as postage stamps. These ceased to be available only last month.

He was, like Hardy, devoted to Dorset and its rural beauty and wrote and painted two books 'Hardy Landscapes' and 'Hardy Country'. It is interesting to note that Hardy, as an early apprenticed architect, was commissioned to design windows and furnishings for the church and play a part in restoring them. If they had met, I would imagine they would have a lot in common; one with his love and ability for words in describing the Dorset country side and the other for his love and ability to paint that very countryside. He also did the paintings for 'Darkling Thrush' a book of Hardy's poems. His last book 'Beningfield's Villages' was published in 1996.

In 1997 the British Naturalist's Association honoured him with The Peter Scott Memorial medal. He was married in 1958 to Betty, who was his childhood sweetheart. They had two daughters; Beningfield sadly dying in May 1998.

A very significant event for us as the Herts and Middx. Branch of Butterfly Conservation was when we asked him if he would officially open our first reserve, Millhoppers. Sadly he was very ill by then and his wife kindly agreed to open the reserve in June 1998, only a few weeks after he died. The reserve was dedicated to him and his love of the country side.

Beningfield was a man to whom we owe a great deal, significantly for his foresight into how important it is for us to retain rural traditions and not to do any harm to the conservation of the countryside. He regarded Butterflies as true indicators of health, perhaps before it was truly recognised.

Beningfield Weekend, by Alice Adams (Natural History Museum)

Gordon Beningfield (1936-1998) was one of Britain's most talented wildlife and countryside artists. He was also an influential advocate for the protection of the countryside and its wildlife. In the twentieth anniversary year of his death, the Natural History Museum at Tring is hosting a weekend of special events celebrating the artist's life and work.

Perhaps best known for his love of butterflies, Beningfield is widely considered to be one of the finest butterfly artists of the last century. One of his greatest legacies is the work he did to promote awareness of

the need to conserve the habitats of British butterflies.

Friday 6 July - Sunday 8 July

A pop-up display of Gordon Beningfield's work

Discover the local hero and his work in a free pop-up display, including a rare chance to see selected original artworks. The display will be a reminder to some and an introduction to others of Gordon's skill as an artist and his passion as a campaigner for countryside conservation.

10.00-17.00 Friday and Saturday, 14.00-17.00 Sunday

Free display, no need to book

Friday 6 July

An exclusive evening of talks for adults about butterflies and wildlife art

Making a difference for butterflies: how we can meet the challenges they face. As Butterfly Conservation celebrates 50 years, join **Jim Asher, Chair of Butterfly Conservation**, to explore what has changed and why butterflies matter in our landscapes.

Nature in art: inspiring wildlife illustration.

Join Carol Roberts, wildlife artist and illustrator, including botanical illustrations for Field Studies Council identification guides. She's created work for many organisations including World Wide Fund for Nature, Royal Geographic Society, National Trust, Natural History Museum, Forestry Commission, Oxford University Press and Collins Pocket Guide' series.

19.00-21.00

Tickets £9, including glass of wine. Places limited, book in advance by calling NHM at Tring event bookings on 020 7942 6163 between 10.00-16.00, Monday to Friday.

Saturday 7 July

Wildlife Super Saturday activities for families

Drop in for a free, fun day out for adults and families in and around the Museum's grounds. The Museum has teamed up with range of wildlife organisations to create a day of activities, walks, stalls and games for

all ages.

10.00-16.00 Free event, no need to book

The celebration was the brainchild of two local Gordon Beningfield enthusiasts, who are passionate about Gordon's work and have worked hard with the Museum and other local organisations to help arrange and inspire a range of events happening throughout the year in the local area.

Search 'Beningfield 2018' online to find details

We have included 2 butterfly walks in our 2018 program as part of Beningfield Weekend. Full details (including leaders' contact details) are in the separate field trip list accompanying this newsletter, and are summarised below.

Saturday 7th July 2018

Butterfly Walk to see a range of summer grassland and woodland butterflies with the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation. Site: Tring Park Grid reference SP925111 [Landranger Map 165] or postcode HP23 6AP

Time/Meeting place: 14:00 at the Quadrangle (Tring) Natural History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, HP23 6AP. Walk to last approx. 1 ½ to 2 hours.

Sunday 8th July 2018

Butterfly Walk to visit Butterfly Conservation's only reserve in the Herts & Middx area and see a range of summer butterflies on a site where 20 different species have been recorded. Site: Millhoppers Pasture Reserve.

Meet at 10:45 at Wilstone Village Hall (grid reference SP903142 [Landranger Map 165] or postcode HP23 4PE) for a short walk across the fields to the Reserve. Walk to last approx. 2 hours

Lyme Disease, by John Hollingdale

Lyme disease gets its name from a small coastal town in Connecticut called Lyme. It was named thus in 1981. The theory is that infected ticks had escaped from a nearby laboratory.

There are 32 species of tick in the UK. Only three carry the bacterium *Borrelia* (Lyme Disease). They include the sheep tick, the hedgehog tick and the one which we are most likely to encounter, the fox tick. This can be found in local parks and some overgrown gardens.

While the course of the illness varies greatly from person to person, initial manifestations can include a unique skin lesion known as erythema chronicum migrans, headaches, musculoskeletal pain, coughing, sore throat, conjunctivitis, and minor neurological impairment.

If the diagnosis is confirmed early enough, Lyme is treated almost exclusively with short-term antibiotics, often penicillin, which are almost 100 percent effective. But if Lyme goes untreated, symptoms can progress.

Further information can be found on the following web sites

<https://www.gov.uk/government/.../tick-bite-risks-and-prevention-of-lyme-disease> 2 Apr 2013 - Factsheet providing information that will help people avoid tick bites.

Lyme Disease Action - <https://beta.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/>

Also The Big Tick Project shows a map of the threat of Lyme disease in various counties (<http://www.bigtickproject.co.uk/ticks-in-the-uk/uk-tick-threat-map/>); in Middx the threat is Med/low, in Herts Med/high.

For those who watched Matt Dawson's account, on London TV, of this disease, which he caught in Chiswick House grounds where there are no deer, this disease should be taken seriously. He ended up in Royal Brompton Hospital having treatment for a heart condition.

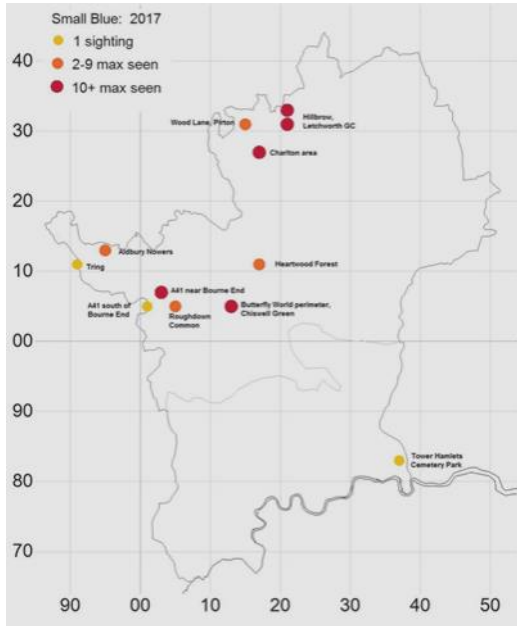
Our advice is to wear long trousers while out waking with one's trouser bottoms tucked into your socks if possible. The most recommended way to remove them is to use 'tick tweezers' which can be purchased at Boots and most well-known supermarkets (maybe in the pet section).

Establishing the Status of the Small Blue in Hertfordshire and Middlesex – Andrew Wood and Malcolm Hull

As part of our ongoing project to establish the status of the Small Blue in our area we are asking members to help with some surveying this year. This map below shows the abundance and distribution during the last year at known sites.

Existing sites:

- A41 near Bourne End
Good numbers (up to 100) seen by several recorders
- Aldbury Nowers (max 4 adults seen)
- Butterfly World perimeter (max 20 seen, no access to the disused site in 2017)
- Charlton area (Private site, best numbers so far, up to 30 on a visit)
- Heartwood forest (max transect count 2)
- Hillbrow, Letchworth (up to 30 individuals seen, seen on all 3 sites)
- Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Mile End, Middx – one seen, the first since 2011.
- Wood lane, Pirton (2 seen on transect)
- A41 south of Bourne End near the Premier Inn (in 2015 there were 2 seen near Vale farm between the A41 Bourne End junction and this site)
- Roughdown Common (2 seen, close to A41 site)
- Tring (private garden where Kidney Vetch has been planted, first record despite several years close observation)



Sites with no reports in 2017

These are sites that we would like you to visit to see if we can establish if there is a colony still there or if the previous record was a one off or a colony that has failed. Access at some of these sites is very steep and it is imperative that you do not endanger yourself on steep road cuttings or enter prohibited private property.

- Alpine Meadow, near Berkhamsted (one record in 2016)
- B487, East of Redbourn (one record in 2016)
- Hedgeswood Common near Gaddesden Row (one record in 2015)
- Ickleford Railway (by the new rail viaduct) (the last colony before modern records, last record 2003)
- New Mill Meadow, Tring (two records on separate days in 2016)
- Stevenage St Nicholas churchyard
- Telegraph Hill (one record in 2009)
- Wilbury Hill (one record in 2013)
- Wilstone Reservoir Bank (one in 2016)

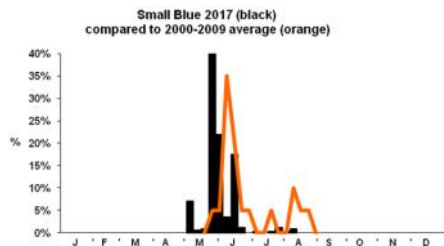
Sites with Kidney Vetch but no records

Visits are encouraged to these sites

- Around A505 Baldock bypass (south end near B197 junction, A507 near Clothall Common, Icknield Way crossing near Weston Hills, fields alongside A505/A507 off Warren Lane)
- North of Barley along B1368 a planted set aside area, not known prior to 2017.
- Therfield Heath

When to go

In 2017 there were records from 5th May to 11th August with the only break between being 11-22 July. This break may be real or could just be lack of visits in that period. The chart below shows that there was a small second brood from early July into August, but



the balance between the broods suggests a rather partial second one.

Next steps

Establishing the status of the species is only the first step in aiding its recovery. We are keen to make contact with landowners within or near to the Small Blues existing range. We will then work with them to encourage suitable actions to improve habitats.

We are already working with several of the owners of sites listed above including the Woodland Trust, Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust, Boxmoor Trust and Letchworth GC Heritage Trust. Please contact either Andrew Wood or Malcolm Hull if you would like to find out more about the Herts & Middx Small Blue Project.

Churchyard Butterfly Survey – Andrew Wood

We launched this survey in 2017 and we would like to continue it in 2018.

The take up was fairly small in the first year and it would be great if you could contact Andrew Wood if you would like to help with this simple and relatively low effort survey.

In both counties, churchyards can offer a green haven in both built-up areas and areas of intensive agriculture.

We would like to find out more about what lives there and run an ongoing survey that would be easy for volunteers to carry out.

We would like members to adopt a local churchyard and visit at least four times a year, at key flight times, to record butterflies that you see there. We will share this information with each church in the hope that it might provide pointers for butterfly friendly maintenance and more information about local diversity.

The survey has the support of Brian Cuthbertson, the Head of Environment and Sustainability in the London Diocese and Judith Taylor who coordinates St Albans diocese Living Churchyards scheme.

If you are interested in taking part please contact Andrew Wood (details on the back page). More information and recording forms will be available from the website or can be posted out to you.

Hertfordshire Target Moth 2018 – Four-spotted Moth. Volunteers Wanted ! by Sharon Hearle and John Murray

Four-spotted moth is a high priority moth in the East Anglian Regional Action Plan, and one of the national strongholds is a small area where Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire boundaries meet. The last Hertfordshire record was at Arbury Banks near Ashwell in 2005. We aim to increase this species in Hertfordshire by finding where it is surviving and improving its habitat.

In 2017 Four-spotted was found close to the Hertfordshire border at Heydon (0.5 Miles) and Langley Upper Green (1.5 miles). There is a good chance that targeted survey work this summer could put this moth back on the Hertfordshire map. It is a day flying moth that can be found on arable field margins and south-facing banks with thin calcareous soils. The caterpillar feeds on Field Bindweed which is often abundant at good sites and the adults will nectar at a range of flowers including Ox-eye Daisy and Red Clover. The moth will occasionally visit moth traps.



Survey work in Cambridgeshire and Essex has been going on for a number of years, and it is clear that regular ground disturbance is important for this species, and explains why the moth persists along railway corridors, cultivated field margins and steep road banks. The moth has been quick to colonise development sites such as new road schemes, cuttings and reservoir banks in Cambridgeshire and Essex.

We hope to work with landowners and developers to influence new developments such as Solar Farms or road schemes to include banks and features that will benefit Four-spotted moth.

North Hertfordshire is relatively under-recorded and sightings of all butterfly and moth species will be very welcome. Small Heath and Common Blue are often found at good Four-spotted sites. A brief study of the soil type map has indicated that the Moth is associated with certain soil types in Cambridgeshire and Essex and we will target those areas with the same soil type in Hertfordshire.

Survey plans for 2018

Volunteers will be provided with maps to indicate potential survey areas. The moth flies between mid-May and mid-August in two generations. A sunny day is essential, and walking through vegetation or with a dog has been shown to be helpful in disturbing the moth. It is normally seen singly, often after an hour spent looking for it, but Colin Plant recorded 100 on a single day in Essex in 2005 so anything is possible.

We will be looking for this moth in two areas:

1. Area north of Baldock and East of Royston: Caldecote, Newnham, Bygrave and Ashwell
2. Area south of Royston: Reed, Barley, Barkway, Nuthampstead and Anstey

Please register with Sharon Hearle if you are able to help, so you can be provided with target survey maps, and kept up to date with sightings as the season progresses. There will be survey work in Cambridgeshire and Essex this year as well. Sharon's contact details are:

Email: shearle@butterfly-conservation.org Telephone land line: 01638 484145 Mobile: 07920 131526

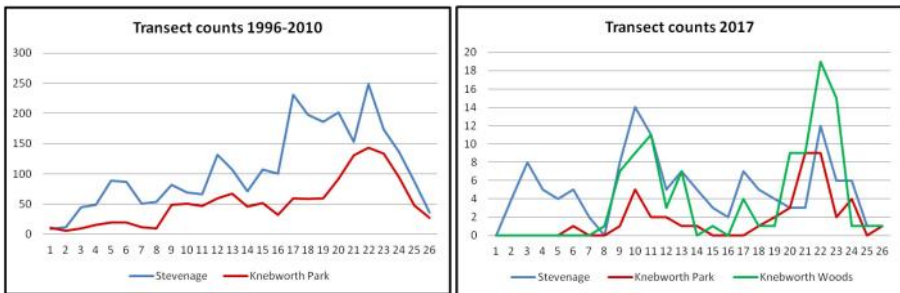
Group survey days will be led by Sharon Hearle, on weekdays beginning Monday 4th June and Monday 11th June. These survey days are totally weather dependant, as a sunny day is essential. If it's raining we will aim for a different day that week. We will meet at Therfield Heath sports club car park at 10am and then divide up into groups to survey and share sightings. Please get in touch first to check the event is going ahead.

Why So Few Speckled Woods in the Spring at Knebworth?
by Peter Clarke

Over the last ten or years or so since I started visiting Norton Green and the Knebworth Woods complex on a regular basis I have noticed how late adult Speckled Woods emerge in the spring. Very few individuals are seen here in April and May whereas usually the first significant peak of the year is in late April and early May. It is the only species known in the UK to overwinter in more than one stage (excepting perhaps the Red Admiral): a larva or a pupa. Early emergence of adults suggests that a large number of individuals spend the winter in the pupal stage or at least as final instar larvae. Does the situation in the Knebworth area mean that there is a higher mortality rate on pupae or mature larvae or simply that there is a larger proportion of butterflies here overwintering as immature larvae thus facilitating a later adult emergence?

I gathered together transect data for the Knebworth Park area walked by Ken King between 1996 and 2010 and the Stevenage transect walked by myself during this period. I have also collated data for 2017 for the two transects plus a new transect for Knebworth Woods which lies in between. The three sites are within an area of around 10 square kilometres and the altitude is about the same (100m) so I am ruling out climate as a factor in the late emergence of adults in the Knebworth transects. However, micro-climate may be an issue regarding speed of larval development. The habitat for the three transects are similar with a mix of woodlands, hedgerows and grasslands although there is comparatively more woodland in the Knebworth Woods transect, which is about half the length of the other two.

The graphs below depict the results:

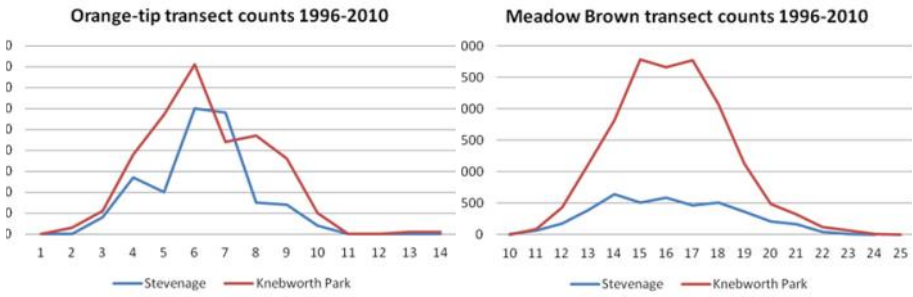


Records for the Stevenage transect are typical for Hertfordshire and Middlesex where there are normally four peaks in the flight season: late April and early May; late June; late July and late August/early September. For the Knebworth transects however, at least during the survey period and in 2017, there is a very small peak in the spring but numbers reach a higher peak in June before substantially increased abundance is attained in late August and early September. There is no notable peak in late July which probably suggests that proportionately more second generation females lay eggs later in the year.

In the autumn, there comes a point when some larvae will not have developed enough to pupate before the winter sets in. Nevertheless larvae will continue to feed in mild weather in the winter and may pupate before the spring. It is reasonable to assume that the adults emerging in July and early August have a greater chance that their offspring will be in the pupal stage by March in the following year. In the Knebworth area since more adults generally emerge later in late summer it is likely there will be relatively more larvae than pupae passing the winter. Has the phenology always been like this in Knebworth? There is no evidence so far of climate change having an impact. Interestingly, the warm and dry spring of 2017 did not see any earlier than usual adults emerging here like elsewhere. What could the reasons be for the discrepancy?

One possibility is the choice of hostplant. It is known that eggs are laid on several grasses such as False Brome, Cock's-foot and Common Couch so whichever plant is chosen at a particular site may have an effect on subsequent larval development. Is there enough food (nutrients) in the hostplant? The more acidic soils in the Knebworth area may affect the quality of some of these hostplants. Immature and smaller larvae are more vulnerable to arthropods and disease whereas mature larvae and pupae are more likely to perish through predation by birds and small mammals. Pupae, which are suspended close to the ground on a grass stem or among leaf litter, may not be as well concealed during the winter on some grasses leading to a possible increase in predation.

Are there any other species in respect of late emergence at Knebworth? I examined the phenology of two common butterflies which differ in their overwintering stages: the Orange-tip passes the winter as a pupa and the Meadow Brown as a larva. Looking at the two graphs below the phenology for these two species is similar for both Stevenage and Knebworth:



Of the remaining species, only the Large Skipper and the Marbled White, emerge marginally later at Knebworth, by about a week. These two species spend the winter in the larval stage and also feed on grasses like Cock's-foot which may warrant further investigation. From these results, it seems that the significant disparity in emergence between Stevenage and Knebworth occurs only in the Speckled Wood.

More research is required to establish why the flight pattern differs in Knebworth. Has anyone else in our branch produced similar results in the butterfly's phenology?

Why Record? By Sue Taylor

If you are reading this then you already have a healthy interest in Butterflies and probably other wildlife too, so the obvious answer is that your observations are badly needed so the state of our wildlife can be monitored and appropriately managed. But I'd like to offer up some more personal reasons to help motivate you to record if you don't already do so.

It's fun! Getting out and about to try and see more has led me to lovely locations and great walks, I've met nice people too.

It's easy. I can record butterflies in the back garden or go to a Nature reserve and find not just butterflies but other amazing species worth a good look at too.

I learn a lot, from investigating, looking things up and from meeting people who know way more than I do.

It doesn't take long. Finding a few minutes to put my records on 'i record butterflies' (or onto one of Butterfly conservations record

sheets) doesn't take long and as I do this I remember the walk, the sunshine, the conversations, the views.

Champion Butterflies. If I find butterfly species that have a champion, then the Champion will always be pleased to hear about the sighting and will often be able to tell me more about the butterfly too. I then have the satisfaction of having played a part in looking after a species that needs special care.

It's voyage of discovery. I never know what I will find. I have walked in places I know very well and found insect species that no one else has ever found or recorded in that location before. It's great sharing the discovery with people who really want to know.

Nature reserve wardens and County recorders are interested in sightings of all wildlife and your sightings can easily be put on 'i-record'. It all adds to the understanding of our wildlife and habitats and the effects of climate change and other pressures.

A feeling of achievement, to have done something genuinely useful while out enjoying myself, it seems an excellent use of time.

I don't need to be an expert, I just need to be observant. My camera helps too.

Nothing to lose... except weight! The more I see, the more I walk and the fitter I get, much better than the gym, cheaper too.

I've only been sending in records for just over a year, but I'm so glad I have. So go on, have a go...it's free!

Attracting White-letter Hairstreaks, by Bob Clift

I used to have a great spot for seeing White Letter Hairstreaks not too far away from Southern Country Park (SCP) in Bishop's Stortford where I have walked a transect since 2004. The site, in Spellbrook opposite a car wash on the London Road, was introduced to me by Liz Goodyear, who many of you will know through our local branch of Butterfly Conservation, has been, together with Andrew Middleton, a great champion of the WLH. The Spellbrook WLHs were existing on hedgerow elm but most of the bigger trees have died off now and I haven't found where the butterflies have moved on to.

Although I saw several WLH flying at the top of the hedgerow elm in Spellbrook and watched them through binoculars whilst they were

settled and feeding on honeydew, I was never lucky enough to find any lower down where I could photograph them. It was this desire that put the thought in my mind of how good it would be to have some elms of my own close by my transect, where I could observe them on a very regular basis through the WLH season. Naturally, the first person I contacted for advice on the best stand-alone elm tree variety to attract WLH butterflies was Liz, and very soon I had some links to articles and advice on the new disease resistant varieties of elm (DRE) that are now just starting to be planted. Dutch Elm Disease practically wiped out the sight of the majestic elm tree in our countryside but now after many years, some of the bigger nurseries are starting to introduce disease resistant varieties of the tree.

Along with walking a butterfly transect in SCP, I am one of the founder members of a group of Friends of SCP that meets on a regular basis to do volunteer work in the park throughout the year, in conjunction with East Herts Council and Countryside Management. So after getting an enthusiastic thumbs up from my Friends of SCP colleagues about introducing some DRE into the park – they were all very enthusiastic about the idea of having some of the ‘majestic old elms’ back in the area – I added the subject to the agenda of one of our regular meetings with East Herts Council and Countryside Management. That was back in November of 2016, and we were all delighted by their very positive response.

Considering the size that stand alone elms can grow to and where my transect is located in the park, there was only one suitable site and it seemed that I would have room for six trees. We felt it necessary to plant a minimum of 6, bearing in mind that they may not all survive to a reasonable age. Liz suggested that we choose 3 different cultivars and plant them in pairs so that we can determine, once they start to mature, which gets colonised first, and whether one variety attracts more WLH than another. The 3 cultivars that I chose were Sapporo Autumn Gold, *Ulmus laevis* and Nanguen Lutece, although the last one had to be replaced with Vada on the day due to availability. They each have their own different structure, and each one is known to attract WLH.

There are only a few nurseries at the moment that are selling DRE and through Butterfly Conservation, I was able to supply East Herts Council (who had happily agreed to fund and supply what we wanted) with a list of the DRE cultivars and where to purchase them. However, the council was able to source some quite large root-balled specimens for us from one of its regular suppliers, and they were delivered in time

for us to plant them during our Friends' November 2017 task day, November being the ideal time for new tree planting.

Each root ball required a hole to be dug of 1m square by a good half a meter deep, and I can honestly say that was the hardest part of getting them planted. SCP was created 22 years ago from the spoils of a housing development of 1,000 properties and a road bypass to the south of Bishop's Stortford, so apart from about 30cm of 'top soil' anything below that is clay, flint and some chalk – and very tough going. It did impact on the time it took to dig the holes of course, especially as the site chosen for their planting was pretty dry at the time, and it soon became obvious that we would not complete the task in one day, especially as we had planned to construct tree guards around each staked tree to try to give them the best chance of survival. By the end of the first day, even with the help of the whole team (11 volunteers), we managed only to get all 6 elms planted and staked and the posts erected for the tree guards. The following week 9 volunteers met to finish constructing the tree guards, which included the use of wire mesh all around the bottoms to protect the trees from the growing population of rabbits in the park.

I can't begin to say how satisfying it was to stand back and see six newly-planted elm trees already making a mark on my transect. All I need now is for any local WLH to discover what a great new home they could have.

EIG AGM and Members' Day 4 November 2017, by Roger Gibbons

The 2017 EIG AGM was held on 4 November at the meeting rooms of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in London near King's Cross. Note that the EIG, which stood for European Interest Group, has now been re-christened as the EBG, European Butterflies Group, as EIG did not make any reference to butterflies.

The AGM was very well attended with over fifty members present, including quite a few from the Herts & Middlesex Branch. As with many such gatherings, the AGM element was undertaken first and concluded quickly, to enable proceedings to move on to the "interesting stuff" of three illustrated presentations.

The first of these was given by Martin Davies on the subject of the rare and local butterflies of Europe. Martin is a leading expert on the rare

species of Europe and regularly undertakes surveying trips to eastern Europe in search of the threatened species of the region.

This presentation was followed by one on a mark-and-release project on the Maculinea family (Large Blue and its relatives) in Hungary. This was given by Will Langdon, who was one of two recipients of an EIG (as then was) bursary in 2017. The EBG offers bursaries of 600 euros to assist with travel and other expenses for projects in Europe to study (principally) specific threatened species.

The final presentation was given by Martin Warren, who was, until his recent retirement, Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation and since then has focussed on the conservation of European species, this being the topic of his presentation.

As always with such gatherings, one of the main benefits is the “networking” of conversations and exchange of information with other members, which is why the coffee break is 45 minutes. More information on the EBG and its activities can be found on the EBG web site: <http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/index.html>

Butterfly Haiku, by Dee Cullen

Butterfly Conservation posted a Haiku on their Facebook page on national poetry day in September (2017). They invited people to write more on the subject of butterflies and moths. I wrote a couple on their page with accompanying photographs, it was a great way to spend my commute to work! I decided to pen a few more to go with my increasing library of butterfly photographs taken mainly in the summer of 2017.

A Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry with three lines, with syllable counts of 5-7-5. I hope you enjoy them, I’ve certainly enjoyed writing the poems and taking the pictures.

Welcome Gatekeeper!
I missed your friendly presence,
Stay a while my friend



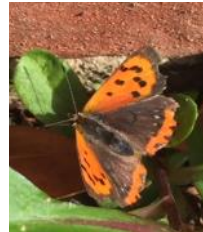
Oh elusive one,
So long have we sought you out,
Suddenly you're here!



Clever camouflage,
You blend in, hiding your blue,
Fly! Now I see it!



Tiny copper jewel,
Your bright wings glow and flutter,
Bringing hope and joy



Those who attended Members' Day in 2017 will recall Richard Harrington reading some of his butterfly-inspired poetry. You will be pleased to know that his planned book will be published in the Autumn - see http://www.bramblebybooks.co.uk/butterfly_collection.asp for details. If you get a copy, why not send in a review ?

Branch website: <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/>
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationHertsMiddlesex>
Twitter: https://twitter.com/Bc_HertsMiddx



Committee Members

Chairman and Acting Treasurer: Malcolm Hull

11 Abbey View Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL3 4QL.....(01727) 857893
malcolmhull@hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk

Branch Organiser: Liz Goodyear

7 Chestnut Avenue, Ware, Herts., SG12 7JE (01920) 487066
elizabethgoodyear@talk21.com

Membership Secretary & Newsletter Editor: Ian Small

59 Penn Way, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 2SH.....(01462) 677654
ian-small@virginmedia.com

Records Collator: Andrew Wood

93 Bengoe Street, Hertford, Herts. SG14 3EZ 0776 5098824
zoothorn@ntlworld.com

Moth Officer: John Murray

Field End, Marshalls Heath, Wheathampstead, Herts. AL4 8HS (01582) 833544
J.B.Murray@open.ac.uk

Middlesex and London Contact: Paul Busby

Eastcote, Ruislip, Middx, HA4 07749 709422
buzz113@hotmail.co.uk

EBG Liaison: Roger Gibbons

7 Lowlands, Hatfield AL9 5DY gibfam@ntlworld.com

Millhoppers Reserve Managers:

Paula Reid, 0796 2874455 or reidpaulaj@yahoo.co.uk

Christine Ridley 01442 386322 or chrisridleysen@yahoo.co.uk

Chris Hilling

Nigel Agar

34 Oakfield Avenue, Hitchin, Herts. SG4 9JB.....(01462) 459870
nigelagar452@btinternet.com

Webmaster:

Peter Clarke, 13 Lyndale, Stevenage. SG1 1UBpeterc@stevenagebutterflies.co.uk

The magazine is produced by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation (Company limited by guarantee), registered in England (2206468). Registered Office:Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP. Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268). VAT No. GB 991 2771 89 The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Committee or the National Society. Copyright 2018.