

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 33

MARCH 2003



**BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATION** SM

Getting Ready for Spring....

by Gavin Vicary

Spring seems to be on the way, the evenings are already getting lighter, snowdrops and primroses are in flower, woodpeckers drumming and I expect it won't be long before we start to see the first butterflies of the year.

My local haunt of Patmore Heath (see later article) has come in for some much needed conservation work this winter. Between 16 & 30 Shetland sheep have been present for several months and they have

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had a good go at invading bramble and other scrub and generally opened up areas that were starting to turn to woodland.

Having spent the last seven years helping with scrub bashing, trying to maintain the important areas of open heath, it has really been bought home to me how there really is no substitute for grazing. In a very short space of time the sheep achieved what it would have taken many work parties to do and the work parties would not have done such a good job.



A Shetland Sheep

There have also been some tree works at Patmore with felling, pollarding or lifting of approximately ten percent of the trees although a number of these had already been damaged or blown over by the strong winds at the end of October.

It is of course sometimes difficult to persuade people that cutting down trees is the right thing to do but the important wildlife at Patmore is associated with heath and would be lost if it is allowed to turn to woodland

The reintroduction of grazing on a reasonable scale is likely to have an effect on a number of butterfly species. It may take up to 18 months before we really see the difference the grazing makes but I am looking forward to seeing the effects in comparison to the last 7 years that the butterfly transect has been going. Hopefully things like Small Heath that has been declining will benefit considerably.

Interestingly, a point worthy of consideration that I have had cause to discuss with people lately is whether it is more important to have the highest number of species possible or a lesser number but with stronger populations of the more local species. My own view is the latter - for example, I would prefer Patmore to be a real stronghold for species like Small Copper and Brown Argus with less emphasis on say Purple Hairstreak which has probably only colonised in the last few decades.

All too often it seems to me that there is too much emphasis on having a variety of habitats to get the highest total of species. This does not always take in the bigger picture (or scale) and may result in a

fragmented habitat with the resultant loss of certain species which no longer have suitable habitat to support them.

Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust have contacted us concerning the possibility of assisting with butterfly foodplant monitoring on their Albury Nowers reserve near Tring. Grazing has recently been reintroduced on this site now that they have their own flock of sheep.

Albury Nowers has long been one of the best butterfly sites in our branch area and has important colonies of Green Hairstreak and Marbled White. In the past it has supported Duke of Burgundy, Grizzled Skipper and Dingy Skipper amongst others and with strong colonies of some of these close by, it is hoped that they will recolonise if suitable conditions can be maintained and grazing is likely to play an important part in this

We would appreciate input from our members and I would be pleased to receive any comments or information with regard to foodplants at Albury Nowers that can be presented to Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust to aid with the management of the site. This may result in a donation to the branch if they obtain any funding.

Late Arrival of December Newsletter, by Ian Small

You will have noted that your December newsletter probably arrived on your doorstep a month late, for which I would like to apologise. All was going well and I was working to have them ready to send out immediately after Christmas, for you to read in the quiet gap before New Year. However, the best laid plans.... In the event, the printer failed, and it was not possible to either repair or replace it until early January, and I still had almost 8000 pages to print, build into newsletters, stuff into envelopes and post. My fingers are firmly crossed that I will not have such a problem again, and that future newsletters will arrive with you on schedule.

Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton are in the process of writing up their Purple Emperor work into a report for the Herts Natural History Society. The report is taking rather a long time, but when it is written they hope that some extracts will be included in forthcoming editions of this newsletter. In the meantime, they thought everyone would like to enjoy Philip Woodward's account from last summer which he wrote for their report.

Liz and Andrew would be interested in hearing from anyone who thought they may have seen a Purple Emperor in Hertfordshire or Middlesex (or even neighbouring counties), but never told anyone as they didn't think they would be believed! It doesn't matter how long ago it might have been, they would love to know.

Please contact Liz Goodyear (01920 487066) or Andrew Middleton (020 8245 0847)

My First Sighting of the Purple Emperor – July 2002, by Philip Woodward

Summer Holidays 2002: As a schoolteacher I awoke cheerfully to the blissful prospect of a few weeks respite from work. I was looking forward to fresh air, exercise and most of all, time to search for butterflies. It was a sunny warm morning, ideal conditions to go for a walk in nearby Tring Park. As I wandered through the field it was pleasing to see several Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Marbled Whites fluttering amongst the wild flowers. I felt in a very tranquil, relaxed frame of mind as I wandered on the path alongside the slope but was suddenly shaken from my dream like state by a large, dark butterfly flying up in front of me. Immediately my feelings were a mixture of excitement and anxiety in case this butterfly should fly away before identification.

However, thankfully it returned to its original position and as I moved slowly towards it my excitement mounted. It was the moment of a lifetime; I really could not believe it! There in front on me was a **male Purple Emperor** feeding contentedly from some dried cow dung, the striking blue sheen very apparent on its wings. As I moved closer it continued feeding, oblivious to my scrutiny and appearing to be settled in the same position for some time. After several minutes my “prize” butterfly flew up into the woods above. In a euphoric state, I extended my walk around the Park, excited and hopeful of further



possible sightings. I wandered further up the slope towards the woods at the top and relished in the sight of large numbers of butterflies feeding from the wildflowers and brambles.

At about 12.30pm I walked up the slope to the woodland glade at the top. From a distance I could see a large butterfly gliding underneath a lime tree on the main path. My adrenaline started to rush again as on closer

inspection I realised another Purple Emperor was in my sight. It settled on the path near the lime tree and I could see that this butterfly was a larger specimen than the one seen earlier that day. Its wings lacked the blue coloration and I knew that I had sighted both male and female Purple Emperors with the space of a few hours.

After 10-15 minutes of gliding backwards and forwards, the female Purple Emperor flew high up into the trees above despite an extensive search in the wooded area I was unable to spot my “prize” again.

It was certainly a never to be forgotten day and one that made me realise why butterfly enthusiasts enjoy their hobby so much. Such a rare and unexpected discovery as spotting a Purple Emperor makes all those fruitless hours of searching for butterflies worthwhile.

I look forward to seeing more Purple Emperors again next summer.



Butterfly Plants for your Garden, by Malcolm Hull

This year the Branch are producing more butterfly-attracting plants than ever. Thousands of plants are growing at our extensive greenhouse in St Albans and seeds are also available. A program of sales events is being organised around the two counties.

There are many types of plants available. Some of those particularly popular with both butterflies & gardeners include

[Buddleia Weyveriana](#) – a late flowering buddleia with autumn flowers, particularly good at attracting Red Admirals.

[Hemp Agrimony](#) – attracts most types of butterflies, grows 4-5ft high with large heads of pink flowers

[Lavender Dwarf Munstead Blue](#) – a traditional variety of lavender favoured by butterflies who tend to avoid modern hybrids

[Sedum Spectible](#) – also known as Ice Plant, great for Small Tortoiseshells. Our variety is a much better butterfly attractant than some of those sold in garden centres

There are dozens of other varieties of plants grown. If you'd like to attract more butterflies to your garden, or give some butterfly plants to a friend, why not come along to one of our sales stalls listed below. If you'd like to find out what plants are currently available, ring Alan Downie (details on back cover)

This year we've already held one stall at the RSPB Lea Valley Bird Fair and raised £300 for Butterfly Conservation. Sweet William and Red Valerian plants sold very well.

Seeds packed by Malcolm Newman are available in return for a donation. Those varieties still available at the time of writing include:

[Cosmo Daisy](#), [French Marigold](#), [Nasturtium](#), [Wonder of Peru & White Sweet Rocket](#). These are available on our sales stalls for as long as stocks last. For a full list or to order by post, contact Malcolm Hull (details on back cover).

Forthcoming sales stall events already arranged are listed below. All events are open for the whole day (usually 10-5), unless otherwise mentioned. Those with free access are **in red**

Wednesday 26 March – Branch Winter Meeting, Cross Street

Centre, Upper Dagnall St, St Albans (members only 7.30-10 pm)

Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 April - Spring Country & Gardening Show, Capel Manor Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield

Saturday 17 & Sunday 18 May – The Canal Festival & Environment Fair, , The Aquadrome, Rickmansworth

Saturday 24 May – St Albans Market, St Peters Street, St Albans (probably near the old Town Hall)

Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 May – Hertfordshire County Show, The Showground, Dunstable Road, Redbourn – we're in the Flower Tent.

We will keep an up to date list on the Branch Website (<http://www.hmbutterflyconservation.org.uk>) as more events are arranged. If you know of an event in your area which might be suitable for a butterfly stall, please get in touch.

Londoners' Wildlife Gardening Day, by Emily Funnell

If you garden with wildlife in mind, the Londoners Wildlife Gardening Day is designed to give you new ideas, new friends and new inspiration. You will meet experts from some of the organisations working for wildlife in this city. Workshops will help you to find out how to provide more for butterflies in your patch with Butterfly Conservation, solve your pond problems with Froglife, design your perfect garden with the London Wildlife Trust, share your strategies for slugs and snails with Pesticide Action Network, discuss a perfect compost recipe with gardeners from Kew, and discover out all about London's hedgehogs. Talk about wildflowers, identify beetles, sort out sparrows, and solve all your relevant problems.

Beside this packed conference of talks and workshops there will be a fayre of stalls and displays. London celebrities will give their views and there will be lots of time to talk to other like minded gardeners. This wonderful day is being hosted by the Natural History Museum in the new Darwin Centre and in the Wildlife Garden. Places are limited to 120 so please book soon.

This event is being organised by member of the London Biodiversity Partnership.

**Londoners' Wildlife Gardening Day
Saturday June 28th, 10.00 – 4.00pm**

The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London (nearest tube South Kensington).

Cost – Standard £15, Unemployed £10, Professional £25.
£2.50 reduction for Butterfly Conservation members

To reserve your place, please send a booking slip, as follows:

Booking slip for Londoners Wildlife Gardening Day

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Butterfly Conservation Member - Yes / No

London Wildlife Trust Member - Yes / No

Please make cheques payable to London Wildlife Trust

Return the Booking Form to London Wildlife Trust, Harling House,
62 Copperfield Street, London SE1 0DA

Check that Rubbish! by Brian Jessop

Last September, while emptying the household rubbish ready for the dustman to collect the next morning, I lifted the full bin bag that had been left lying next to the dustbin for a few days and, to my surprise, there was this very large and wet, pale-looking caterpillar underneath. I picked it up and it curled up like they usually do, and took it indoors to check what it was. As far as I could tell, it looked very much like an Eyed Hawkmoth. Although there are similar caterpillars, I am quite sure it is an Eyed Hawkmoth because of the nearby Apple trees. I lined an ice-cream carton with paper, then filled it with garden compost and soil. The caterpillar soon buried itself and now we will have to wait until May-June to confirm what it is. It was extremely lucky not to have got squashed !

Nectaring Preference of Painted Ladies, by Ian Small

Last autumn, we were privileged to have a Painted Lady in our garden for several days. I am tempted to think it was the same individual, as it regularly settled on a particular patch of our patio. At the time, there were a number of apparently suitable sources of nectar which I had thought would be equally attractive to the butterfly – a standard purple Buddleia, some *Verbena bonariensis* and also another type of Buddleia with a white, rather than a purple, flower. The size and shape of the Buddleia flowers / spikes was essentially the same, with only the colour being different.

Knowing how Vanessids are strongly attracted to purple flowers, I was particularly surprised to note that this Painted Lady exhibited a very strong preference to getting nectar from the white Buddleia. In fact I was able to observe nectaring from its flowers on several separate occasions. In contrast, the purple flowered Buddleia and *Verbena* were completely ignored. Has anyone else observed similar behaviour?

Later in the autumn we were again visited by a Painted Lady. By this time, however, the white-flowered Buddleia was no longer in flower, but both types of purple flowers were available. Under these circumstances, that Painted Lady was more than happy to nectar from the purple Buddleia.

Patmore Heath Nature Reserve, by Gavin Vicary



Patmore Heath is one of the few remaining remnants of acid grass heathland left in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. The heath is common land and has SSSI status (Site of Special Scientific Interest) It is managed as a nature reserve by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust on behalf of Albury Parish Council

The Heath is perhaps not typical of many nature reserves in that it is surrounded by a mixture of country cottages and houses that have helped retain a rural village atmosphere despite Bishops Stortford and Stanstead Airport being only a few miles away.

Wildlife

Many of the plants are typical of dry heaths such as heath bedstraw, Harebells and Tormentil. In the wetter areas Galingale, Water avens, Devils Bit Scabious, Ivy Leafed Crowfoot and Southern Marsh orchids all occur.

Common Lizards can still be seen on Patmore Heath and the most characteristic birds are the Green woodpeckers which are often seen foraging amongst the anthills. Minotaur beetles have also be found which are a type of dung beetle that collect and roll droppings down burrows that can be over a metre deep.

A number of rare grasses can be found including Wavy Hair grass, Heath grass, Matt grass, Sweet Vernal grass, Brown Bent, Red Fescue and Sheep's Fescue.

Several sedges including Pill Sedge, Star Sedge and Common Yellow Sedge are all of importance as is Narrow Buckler Fern and a small population of Heath Rush. A carpet of Sphagnum bog moss can be found in one of the marshy areas and Thatch Moss is another notable rarity.

Butterflies and Moths

Over three hundred species of moth and twenty five different butterflies

have been recorded in recent years. The attractive but scarce Small Elephant Hawk Moth is perhaps the most notable moth and uses Heath Bedstraw as the main foodplant for its caterpillars.

Patmore is also one of the best sites in Hertfordshire and Middlesex for the Small Copper butterfly which lays its eggs on common sorrel and sheeps sorrel the latter of which is easily found on Patmore Heath. Populations of Brown Argus, Small Heath, White-letter Hairstreak and Ringlet might also be regarded as locally important.

The Ponds

There are a number of ponds and wet areas on the heath. These support all three native species of newt and in early spring enormous numbers of frogs and toads can be seen making their way to spawn.



Patmore Heath is renowned for its dragonflies and water beetles although some of the rarer ones disappeared a number of years ago as conditions on the heath changed.

Excessive drying out of the ponds has caused concern in recent times. Local debate has cited water abstraction, rupturing of the base either by tree roots or de-silting operations and a run of dry summers as potential causes. Water up-take by trees is however likely to be a major reason.

Occasional drying out of the ponds may have been a good thing in that it has prevented fish from becoming established which could have predated upon some of the rarer more notable species that have perhaps prospered due to the absence of fish.

However it is important that the ponds do dry out for too long, as has possibly been the case in recent years particularly those with long hot summers. Recent desilting works and scrub clearance appear to have resulted in some of the ponds retaining more water.

The Importance of Grazing and Why We Control Trees

For centuries local people have used Patmore Heath to graze their livestock. A very diverse range of plants resulted - particularly as pesticides and fertilisers have never been used on this site.

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Over the 20th Century as grazing ceased, the vegetation grew and trees became established - turning much of the heath into scrub and woodland.

The rare heathland plants and animals could not tolerate the increased shade and change in conditions and many declined or died out. This was repeated over much of the country and in Hertfordshire, heath is now a rare habitat as is the wildlife that it supports.

Patmore Heath is probably the best remaining example of acid grass heath in Hertfordshire so it is vital that it is conserved. Trees and scrub which have only become established in the last fifty years are therefore sometimes thinned or removed to enable the more valuable heathland plants and animals to prosper. This keeps a balance between trees and grassland and prevents a dense, dark woodland from forming.

The reintroduction of grazing helps to maintain the heathland and prevent the scrub from building up again.

Would You Like to Help?

Work parties are held on the final Sunday of every month. These help maintain suitable conditions to ensure that the rare wildlife found on Patmore Heath can survive.



Essential work is carried out such as scrub and bramble clearance and burning brash to allow the rarer heathland habitat to flourish.

Everyone is welcome. We meet at 10.00am by the notice board and normally finish at about 12.30pm.

All that is needed is stout footwear. We need all the help that we can get and we really would be pleased to see you. Dates of work parties over the coming months are:

30th March 2003

28th April 2003

26th May 2003

29th June 2003

Hope to see you there!

Enjoying This Reserve

To enjoy your visit without harming the wildlife please remember the following:

Respect Wildlife

Don't pick flowers or disturb nesting birds!

Dogs

Dogs are welcome but they must be kept under strict control. Special conditions may apply if livestock are grazing on the site. Please observe any signs on site.

Take Care

You are reminded that the countryside has inherent natural hazards and we therefore ask you to take suitable and sufficient precautions to avoid injury or harm.

About Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust is a charity that safeguards and manages 48 Nature Reserves across the two counties, and is one of a network of 47 independently run local Wildlife Trusts nationally.

If you'd like to find out more about the Trust's reserves, its work or becoming a member, contact HMWT's headquarters in St Albans at: Grebe House, St Michael's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL3 4SN. Tel: 01727 858901 Email info@hmwt.org
Web: www.wildlifetrust.or.uk/herts

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Butterfly Sightings Reported in Herts & Middx so far in 2003:

The following sightings have been reported to the Branch and are listed on the Branch Web site. If you have access to the internet, why not check the site daily to find out what has been reported. Even if you are not connected, please phone Liz with your sightings – (01920) 487066 – so that they can be posted for others to see. This really is a great way to watch Spring arrive (and of course Summer etc, in due course!). The web address is: <http://www.hmbutterflyconservation.org.uk> The site also has a host of other information and links to numerous other butterfly and wildlife sites.

Red Admiral:

Saturday 25th January - a report of a Red Admiral in the Stanmore garden of Peter Peretti . Peter is the warden of Bentley Priory Open Space, Stanmore - news via John Hollingdale

Sunday 26th January Third hand report of a Red Admiral in Islington - Tom Clarke

Monday 24th January - Ally Pally (Alexandra Palace) - Tom Clarke

Brimstone:

Mon 27th January - Ally Pally (Alexandra Palace), 1 Brimstone reported today at 1.30pm - Tom Clarke

Wed 26th February - Ware (Chauncy Pool Car Park), - Andrew Wood

Wed 26th February - Ally Pally, - Tom Clarke

Sat 1st March - Kings Mead (Ware) "My first of the year., and then it rained" - Alan Reynolds

Comma:

Monday 24th February - Ally Pally, - Tom Clarke

Small Tortoiseshell:

Monday 24th February - Ware, in my Dad's garden. He said it was flying around his conifer hedge which is a sun trap. Roll on Summer - Nick Sampford

Thurs 6th March - Rye Meads RSPB - R. Cope

READERS LETTERS

From **Bryan Russell**:

It has been said, by Winston Churchill amongst others that, we should all keep a patch of nettles in a quiet corner of the garden for butterflies and many of us do. However, having read the article on parasites attacking Small Tortoiseshells it seems to me that since the parasites must find their hosts by smell or visually, then the caterpillars greatest chance of survival will be on nettles allowed to grow in the most exposed and windswept parts of our gardens.

From **Keir Mottram**:

Reading the latest copy of the branch newsletter, and conscious of your frequent exhortations to members for contributions, I was moved to the following thoughts:-

The title of Gavin Vicary's address was apt - 'Busy Times' indeed as the branch is active on many fronts, not least the newsletter where I would certainly second his remarks as to its overall excellence.

Unfortunately, the newsletter and the website are almost my only points of contact with the branch. Why? Well, I live in London and am more-or-less dependent on public transport.

Which leads me on to Liz Goodyear's report of the AGM. Now, I don't know if I'm stepping in to deep waters here, nor do I know if there's a bit of politics going on. But, nothing ventured and all that ...

I'm not sure that Liz's arithmetic is really up to scratch. Margaret Noakes tells us that "well over a third" of the branch membership lives in the London area. Not only does Liz massage this down to "c.30%" when it appears perfectly likely to be nearer 40%, she then counts 6 London-based members out of 31 AGM attendees as approximating to this figure. Hmm. Not really. Less than 20% actually. Further to this point, I note that the branch's geographical spread is to be split across two of the nationally appointed Regional Development Officers.

Anyway, I don't want to get bogged down in administrative matters. I've followed the articles on elms and White-letter Hairstreaks with great interest. The bewildering possibilities of multi-hybridisation within *Ulmus* give me hope that as conservationists we can resist the siren calls

of those who would wish to use GM technology to address the DED 'problem'. There is also the point that mature, flowering trees are not necessary to the insect's life-cycle. Abundant sucker-growth can be utilised (ref. Millenium Atlas) and it is this that supports the small colonies in Ally Pally, north London. Is this evolution at work?

From **E Chacksfield**:

Herewith a small article which might be suitable for the newsletter. I have given up my membership this year – eighty one years of age and housebound. Too distressing to read about all the events I can't get to. With all best wishes for the magazine's future...

The Pleasures of Butterflies and Moths

Mine is a suburban garden which likes to go its own way, scornful of my attempts to organise it. I'm often surprised and quite delighted at what turns up with the help of the birds, butterflies and moths. One especial pleasure was to watch a Hummingbird Hawkmoth feeding whilst its wings were quivering at high speed, abruptly stopping for a fraction of a second, and then revving up again.

A stroll along a coastal promenade in '96 was a mixed pleasure. Migrant butterflies (Painted Ladies) arriving across the Channel, flew very fast along the flowerbeds as though determined not to be identified. And sitting on the pebble beach one day I had the pleasure of the company of a Red Admiral. It was fluttering awkwardly, seemingly to attract my attention. I went over to it and saw that it had a damaged wing. The tide was coming in fast and so the Red Admiral let me put a towel over it so that I was able to pick it up and take it up some steps to the promenade. I sadly left it at the edge of a bed planted with shrubs.

Back home in January last year a Peacock butterfly came indoors. On the 10th March it died peacefully in my hand.

Some Memorable Sightings, by C H Veale

In 1973 we were staying in Bandol, between Marseilles and Toulon. As we were walking along a lane by the sea with some rough grass on one side and gardens with shrubs on the other, a large white butterfly, larger than any Large White, sailed past. We followed it up and it settled quite close in one of the gardens. From its size, shape and ground colour, it appeared to be a Scarce Swallowtail, but all the pictures of this species I have seen show it quite heavily streaked with black and there is no mention of reduced markings. This specimen only had a few streaks on the forewings. Is this a known variety or did I get the species wrong ?

The park at St-Nectaire, a small town in the Puy-de-Dome region of France has flower-beds by the houses and a rough grass slope up the hill. As we walked along the beds, a large, fast-flying butterfly circled us several times. Unfortunately it did not settle but it came within a



Camberwell Beauty
Nymphalis antiopa

yard, and we had a good view of it. The ground colour appeared to be very dark and the only visible marking was a pale yellow border all around the wings. “Camberwell Beauty” I said. But, the ground colour of this species is everywhere given as dark brown with no hint of red. Was it a trick of the light or was I mistaken?

The little resort of Varigotti on the Italian Riviera has a public park, the Parca degli Olivi. This is an olive-grove criss-crossed with tiled paths bearing seats and lamps. We thought it was a nice place for an after-dinner stroll and so did a lot of the locals. the ladies sat on the seats and gossiped, the men stood around in groups smoking, while the children steamed up and down the paths. Some of the olives had flowering shrubs under them and in front of these hung great grey shapes, apparently quite oblivious to the traffic, busily engaged in feeding through very long tongues. They could only be *Convolvulus* Hawkmoths, but they were not singly, but in twos and threes.

National Moth Night, 12th April 2003

National Moth Night is organised by Atropos and Insectline, with the support of Butterfly Conservation. Full details can be found at the website: <http://www.nationalmothnight.info/>

Ways in which you can take part:

- recording moths in your garden
- visiting a new site
- targeting a specific species
- holding a public event

This year's target species are Orange Upperwing *Jodia croceago* and Sword-grass *Xylena exsoleta*. Oak woodland is required for the former species, which generally is the most productive type of habitat at this time of year.

The aims of the event are as follows:

- To encourage widespread moth recording and to gather useful data.
- To stimulate wider interest in moths and raise their profile amongst the public.
- To raise funds for moth conservation projects.

An information pack about moths and details of how to build a moth-trap is available upon receipt of a SAE from Dept NMN, Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset. B20 5QP

Target Species

Orange Upperwing and Sword-grass are both are UK BAP priority species. In recent years there has been much speculation as to whether Orange Upperwing is now extinct in Britain, remains present in very low numbers or in undiscovered localities, or whether there is something about its lifecycle that we don't fully understand. Its former range included oak woodland in central, southern and south-west England, and the last records came from the Lampeter area between 15 October and 4



Sword-Grass © R. Leverton



Orange Upperwing © A. Spalding

November 1994, followed by an intriguing record of one found in a spider's web at Stover Park, Devon, on 8 October 1999. The past range and habitat of this species offer the potential for recorders over a large part of England and Wales to target oak woodlands (a good habitat for moth recording at this time of year).

Sword-grass offers the chance for recorders in Scotland, Northern England, Wales, Northern Ireland to target a specific species, it being an inhabitant of moorland and open woodland. Other scarce species on the wing at this time of year include Belted Beauty *Lycia zonaria* and Barred Tooth-striped *Trichopteryx polycommata*.

Herts & Middx Branch Event:

Andrew Wood will be running a joint moth event with Cranford Park Rangers at Cranford Park, Middx. Meet at Cranford Park Information Centre, off The Parkway, Cranford. TQ 101779. 20.30 - 22.30. Andrew's contact details are on the back cover. BC members can participate in this event free of charge.

There is also a public event in south London:

Sutton Ecology Centre, Festival Walk, Carshalton. 7pm til late. Organised by the London Wildlife Trust. Details 020 8669 7421.



As you know, we produce a very impressive Annual Butterfly & Moth Report, with many distribution maps. What you may not know, is that all your distribution data is entered onto computer by one person - Michael Healy. He could really do with additional help. If you think that might be you, then please either contact Michael (01582 460734) or John Murray (01582 833544) for further information.

Herts & Middx Branch. Field Trips 2003 (Provisional List)

Saturday 12th April 20.30 to 22.30

National Moth Night. Moth trapping event at Cranford Park Middlesex. Meet at Cranford Park Information Centre, off The Parkway, Cranford. TQ101779. Leader: Andrew Wood 01992.503571 or zoothorn@ntlworld.com

Saturday April 26th 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch. **Barton Hills**, Bedfordshire for Spring species and Pasque Flower. Meet at TL/166/085305 Leader: David Chandler 01582.862361

Sunday May 11th 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch. **Brigstock Country Park**, Northants for Spring species. Meet at SP/141/955850. Leader: Douglas Goddard 01604.408670 goddarddouglas@hotmail.com

Sunday 11th May at 11.00am for approx. 2-3 hours.

Joint with Upper Thames branch. **College Lake Wildlife Centre**, Tring, Bucks. A visit to BBOWT's flagship reserve, where we will be looking particularly for Green Hairstreak but others may include : Dinky and Grizzled Skippers, Small, Common and Holly Blues, Orange Tips. Meet at main car park. SP935139 OS1. From roundabout on A41, just west of Tring, take B448 NE past Tring to 200yds beyond the canal bridge at Bulborne. Reserve entrance is on left. Admission Charge £1.50 (free to BBOWT members). Home cooked lunches usually available in Barn Cafe. Picnic area also available Leader: Liz Dicks 01296 747262

Sunday 11th May, 2.00pm - Introduction to Transect Monitoring

We are looking for one or two additional observers willing to help monitor the **Bunkers Park, Hemel Hempstead**, transect route. Anyone who feels they might be interested in this nationwide butterfly monitoring scheme is most welcome to come along. Meet at Bunkers Park car park (TL086060) at 2.00pm. Leader & Contact: Michael Pearson 01582 840772. e-mail: jandmpearson@supanet.com

Saturday May 17th 11.00am

Aldbury Nowers. Herts & Middx WT reserve. Spring butterflies. Hopefully, Green Hairstreak and Grizzled Skipper amongst others. Meet at lay-by at approx. SP 952126. OS 165 on minor road just north of Tring station. Space is limited, but additional parking is available at Tring

station about 600m away. Leader: David Chandler 01582 862361.

Saturday 17th May 10.30am onwards.

Joint with Upper Thames branch. **Aston Upton Downs**. For Spring species including Duke of Burgundy, Grizzled and Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak. Meet at SU/174/550844. From A417, 1 mile east of Blewbury, turn south along narrow lane, opposite the turn to Aston Upton. Park at grain drier 1/2 mile along lane. Possible afternoon continuation at another nearby site; if planning to stay bring picnic lunch. Leader: Mike Wilkins 01235 831300

Sunday May 18th 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch: **Totternhoe**, Beds for Duke of Burgundy and Spring species. Meet at SP/165/985224 Leader: Greg Herbert 01582.663784

Tuesday 20th May 11.00am - 3.30pm

Joint with Upper Thames branch and Abingdon Naturalists Society. **Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve**. Bucks/Oxon borders. Spring butterflies including skippers and Green Hairstreak. An excellent site, which usually produces good views of the Red Kites, as well as Spring flowers and orchids. AM. Meet English Nature car park at SU/165/726696 off A40 bottom of Aston Hill. PM. Meet at 1.30pm at SU/165/721968 On B4009 first lane left south of M40 Junc 6. Park after 1/2 mile on verge by Hill Farm. Picnic lunch if coming for the day. Leader: Mike Wilkins 01235 831300

Monday 26th May 10.30am onwards

Joint with Upper Thames branch. **Greenham Common**. Berks. One of two visits to this 1200acre common planned for this year. 28 butterfly species recorded in the past, but much more remains to be explored. Extensive heathland but with many other types of habitat. Meet at Control Tower car park off Burys Bank Road, itself off old A34 at top of hill south of Newbury. Tower car park is 1½ miles, right at new roundabout. SU/174/501653. From east on A4, go south across railway at Thatcham, 1st. right into Burys Bank Road, left at roundabout after 2 miles to car park. Picnic lunch strongly recommended. Leader: David Redhead 01865 772520.

Wednesday 25th June 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch: **Marston Thrift**, Beds for Black Hairstreak. Meet at SP/153/978415 Leader: David Chandler 01582 862361.

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Sunday 29th June 11.00am

At the invitation of Bedfordshire & Northants branch: **Sharpenhoe Clappers**, Beds for Dark Green Fritillary and Summer species. Meet at TL/166/065296. Leader: David Chandler 01582 862361.

Sunday July 13th 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch. **Fermyn Wood**, Northants for Purple Emperor. Meet at SP/141/967859 Leader: Douglas Goddard 01604.408670 goddarddouglas@hotmail.com

Sunday 20th July, 2.00pm.

Butterfly Walk round **Bunkers Park & Long Deans NR**. (Hemel Hempstead). Target species: Marbled White, Small & Essex Skippers. Meet at Bunkers Park car park (TL086060) at 2pm. Leader & Contact: Michael Pearson, 01582 840772. e-mail: jandmpearson@supanet.com

Saturday August 2nd 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch. **Whipsnade and Bison Hill**, Beds for Chalkhill Blue. Meet at TL/165/166/000185. Leader: Greg Herbert 01582.663784

Sunday 14th September, 2.00pm

Butterfly Walk round **Bunkers Park & Long Deans NR** (Hemel Hempstead). Target Species: late summer migrants Red Admiral, Painted Lady, and perhaps Clouded Yellow. Meet at Bunkers Park car park (TL086060) at 2.00pm. Leader & Contact: Michael Pearson 01582 840772. e-mail: jandmpearson@supanet.com

Conservation Dates

Below are a series of dates across Herts. and Middlesex where you can help with essential management that aims to maintain the correct conditions on these sites for the wildlife that inhabits them. Several of the dates are run by the HMWT on their nature reserves.

Millhopper's Pasture SP 900149. Fourth Sunday of the month. Meet at 10.30 am. John and Margaret Noakes need your help. (01296) 660072.

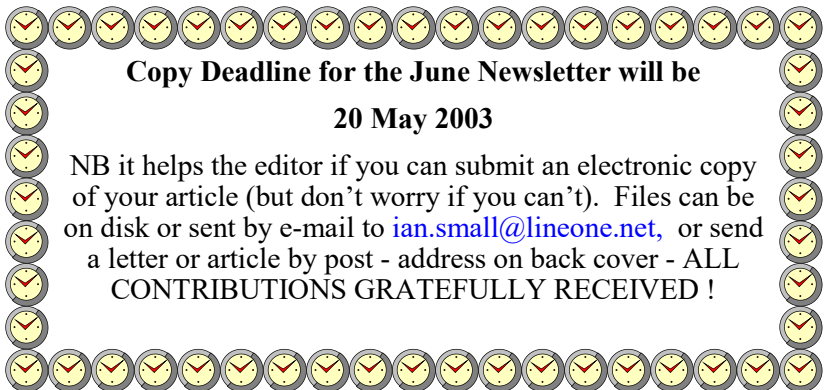
Therfield Heath, TL 335400 First Sunday of each month from 10.00 a.m. - 1 p.m. Details from Vincent Thomson (01763) 341443.

Duchies Piece (Aldbury Nowers) SP 952131. Third Sunday of each month. Meet 10.00 a.m. in the lay-by, near Tring station. For details ring Alan Strawn (new reserve warden) on (01442) 232946

Hertford Heath TL 354111. For details ring Anthony Oliver on (01992) 583404.

Fryent Country Park - details from Leslie Williams at the Brent Ecology Unit on (0181) 206 0492

Patmore Heath TL 443257. see details on pages 12 and 13.



Copy Deadline for the June Newsletter will be

20 May 2003

NB it helps the editor if you can submit an electronic copy of your article (but don't worry if you can't). Files can be on disk or sent by e-mail to ian.small@lineone.net, or send a letter or article by post - address on back cover - ALL CONTRIBUTIONS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED !

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