

**Butterfly
Conservation**

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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Diversity in Hertfordshire's Butterflies is Recovering

by David Chandler

I was a little taken aback when I read that Butterfly Conservation Head Office had nationally labelled Hertfordshire in the press as the county in the UK that had lost more species of butterfly than any other. I know that Hertfordshire, particularly in the south, is becoming more suburban like Middlesex as SE England's population overspill pushes demand for houses past the M25, but I also know that we have still have lots of green space in the county and a band of dedicated volunteers who are very active in conserving it. So I am pleased to report that Hertfordshire's butterflies are making a comeback; the fritillaries and migrants have had a splendid year in

2006.

When I was writing this article in Hertfordshire we had seen Silver Washed Fritillaries in twenty different places, mainly in the west and centre of the county but, perhaps more interestingly, SWFs have been seen in five places in Middlesex / Greater London including some quite urban places like Highgate Woods and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. Dark Green Fritillaries and Small Blues have been making appearances in some of their former haunts in the north and west of the county.

But in possibly the most exciting end to the butterfly flight season for many a year, has been the appearance of many migrants and their progeny in our area. It all began in July when it was apparent that a large number of newly hatched Painted Ladies were emerging. The PLs are particularly pretty when fresh and have a beautiful pink flush colouration for their first few days from which their name derives. Then, in August the Clouded Yellows began to appear and we were very lucky in our county to have a hot-spot at Bunkers Park LNR Hemel Hempstead where a small family group took out temporary residence. I personally saw three CYs in one week one being a female helice variation [this in Bedfordshire], and this sighting gave me great satisfaction.



Clouded Yellow
Photo © Keith Balmer

However possibly the highlight of the migrant year was in late August and September when there was an influx of Camberwell Beauties from Scandinavia and The Low Countries as the edge of a major southerly migration in mainland Europe touched the eastern counties of England. As I write there have been about dozen sightings of Camberwell Beauty in Herts and Middx and reports of other sightings in neighbouring counties. I haven't been lucky enough to see a CB this year yet but I sense from the number of reports of sightings that this may be my best chance for some time.

I'll keep looking in likely places until the summer expires crossing my fingers that 2006 has an Indian summer. And if you believe the ducks on my friend Farmer Tim's pond in Essex, who have just hatched their second brood of the year, rather than the guys at the Meteorological Office in Bracknell, then perhaps the fine spell at the beginning of



Camberwell Beauty
Photo © Eddie John

September will last into October.

And, at the close of the flight season would it not be nice to think if some of these migrants managed to survive our winter to give us another fillip of excitement in the spring of 2007?

So perhaps the reports on species decline in Herts is not really bad news after all....??

**Copy Deadline for the December Newsletter will be
20 November 2006**

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 an article by post - address on back cover.

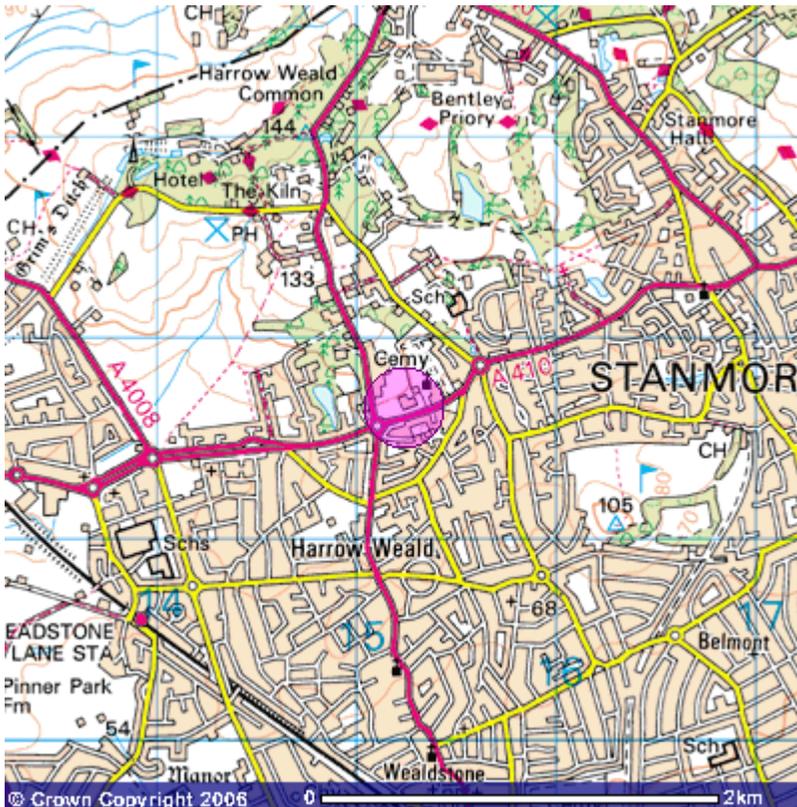
Please consider writing an article, or just a letter commenting on something you have read. The more people who contribute, then the more interesting and varied the articles will be, which all goes to increase everyone's enjoyment. Don't worry if you don't have pictures - I can usually find something.

Go on - give it a go!

Annual General Meeting –Saturday 27th January 2007

Important date for your diary

The Branch Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 27th January 2007, at Blackwell Hall, Uxbridge Road, Harrow Weald, Middlesex. Dan Hoare, our Regional Officer for Middlesex has kindly agreed to be our guest speaker. Dan will be talking about the many projects he is involved with in the South East Region.



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Blackwell Hall is on the north side of A410 Uxbridge Road between the Leaf Robinson pub and All Saints Church and between the roads

Brookshill (A409) and Clamp Hill. The carpark is at the back of the hall which is a new red-brick building and directly on the main road. Uxbridge Road is not far from Junction 4 of the M1. The nearest stations are either Hatch End on the Silverlink Line or Stanmore on the Jubilee line. The H12 bus passes by the Hall and can be caught at either Hatch End or Stanmore Stations

Full details of the programme will be in the next newsletter. We will be holding another meeting for members in Hertfordshire but no date has been fixed.

We look forward to seeing you – non-members are always welcome.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Moth Evening - Stanmore Country Park, 27th May, by John Hollingdale

The crowd control was in place and the residents warned and if it hadn't been for Ann Piper turning up it would have all been in vain. The rain of the afternoon had passed over and a fresh N/W wind had blown the clouds away.

We set the light up at 9.45pm and before it had reached its maximum brilliance, Common Swifts and the first of many Green Carpets were whizzing around on the sheet. Moths came regularly throughout the evening and by the time the generator suddenly came to a shuddering halt at five to midnight (no I hadn't run out of petrol) we had about eighty macros of twenty-one species. The more notable moths included a Coxcomb Prominent, a May Highflier and most notably an Orange Footman. Two common Pyralids were added to the short list of species seen at this site. Three moths had to be sent away to Colin Plant to be properly identified. They were a Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet (again a first for this site), Brindled Pug and Monopsis weaverella (a member of the Tineidae) and scarce in Middlesex. Thanks Colin.

Stanmore Country Park, 2nd July (for Butterflies), by John Hollingdale

For once the weather was perfect; unbroken sunshine. Margaret and I waited at the top of Kerry Avenue for the crowds to come streaming up the hill. Did I say 10.30 am or 11am start? At 10.50 a car came towards us and parked beside mine. Out got Poppy and her dad. Poppy was doing a dissertation on butterflies and was visiting different types of site. No-one else appeared.

A Comma whizzed up and down Kerry Avenue and as we waited something else fluttered on the tree beside us. It turned out to be a White-letter Hairstreak; so low down to be easily recognised. Several more were seen on the adjacent Elms.

The other highlight of the walk was encountering Marbled Whites in three different areas of the Park. Perhaps they're here to stay. We also so saw plenty of Meadow Browns, a few early Gatekeepers and several Speckled Woods. We identified a Small Skipper and a couple of Large Skippers but all the roaming Whites eluded us. All in all a good day.

Bricket Wood – Sunday 9th July , by Malcolm Hull

Cloud and drizzle restricted the range of butterflies seen. By far the most common species was Ringlet, with over 20 seen. This species is well known for its liking of damp conditions and ability to fly in light rain. More remarkable were the numbers of Ringlets seen. It first appeared in the wood in 2000, but I'd never seen anywhere near that number on a single day in the wood before, despite walking the transect every week in season for the last 10 years!

Despite the poor weather I was able to show the 19 people who came the good spots to look for Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral. Both had a good season in this wood, with more than a dozen sightings of SWF here at different dates up to mid August. A two-hour circuit of the wood succeeded in disturbing a few other damp looking butterflies.



Silver-washed Fritillary
Photo © Ian Small

Right at the end on School Lane, the sun broke through for a few minutes and we saw a dozen Purple Hairstreaks spring into life on top of an oak tree.

The species we actually saw were Ringlet (20), Meadow Brown (5), Gatekeeper (4), Large Skipper (3), Essex Skipper (1), Small Skipper (2), Green-veined White (2) Purple Hairstreak (13) and 6 Spot Burnet Moth.

Bricket Wood – Sunday 22nd July, by Colin Everett

At this joint event convening the Herts & Middx branch with the London Natural History Society (LNHS), five people joined me in an evening field meeting dedicated to one species. Purple Hairstreak is still thought of by some as a local butterfly, perhaps glimpsed only when a recently-emerged example is found close to the ground, or when drought conditions may bring adults down to seek moisture from damp earth or low vegetation. Yet the species is widespread, easily found in egg and larval stages and – by using the appropriate field technique – as an adult. In recent years, fieldwork of just this kind has revealed colonies in a number of south Hertfordshire tetrads without previous records.

To locate populations, it is best to select an area with mature oak trees and visit on a sunny, still evening during July and August. The upper parts of the trees should then be scanned using binoculars or similar optical aids. Purple Hairstreaks will often be quite obvious flying about the west and south faces of the canopy, their undersides flashing silver as they catch the rays of the sun. At larger colonies, dozens may be seen on one tree and hundreds during the course of an evening. While close views may not be obtained in these circumstances, such counts or estimates allow comparison of numbers between different colonies and across successive years. There is little possibility of confusion with other species: Brown Hairstreak is very different in appearance (and may not currently occur in Herts); White-letter Hairstreak is plainer and less contrasting in colour, is associated with elms and most active on warm sunny afternoons; and no British moths are likely to behave in this way.

I had feared that the cloudy and increasingly breezy conditions on this particular evening would lead to very few Purple Hairstreaks being seen, but in fact a total of approximately 40 individuals was seen during the evening with the species being most obvious at around 8

pm. Malcolm Hull, who walks a weekly butterfly transect here, has told me that he found only about a quarter of that number during the following afternoon.

The walk from Bricket Wood station took us to the stronghold of Jack William's Wood, where a Marbled White, a Vapourer moth, a couple of Commas and two relentlessly sparring Red Admirals (possibly both males) compensated for the relatively low number (about half a dozen) of the target species. Similar numbers were seen near the pond at Bricket Wood Common, where the sun briefly lit the trees. The walk along the main ride produced between 20 and 30 adults, despite overcast skies. One or two more were noted along Station Road on the return to the meeting point.

Also noted during the evening was a marked southerly exodus of Swifts (about 250 birds passed over). Mick Massie of the LNHS swept a male Roesel's Bush-cricket, now a common species in the area but of course more often heard than seen.

Aldbury Nowers – Sunday 27th August , by Malcolm Hull

Chalkhill Blue was the main target species for this trip. A small number had been seen at the site in 2005 after an absence of several years.



Roesel's Bush Cricket
Photo © Ian Small

The weather conditions were cloudy and windy, but with a temperature just over 20 degrees. Good advance publicity, including an article in the Herts & Middx wildlife Trust magazine, attracted 20 people. We set off across the set-aside field towards the reserve, following the avenue of trees and the top end of the field. A few windswept butterflies shot past, including Small Tortoiseshell, Small White and Holly Blue. A Green Carpet Moth was clinging onto a grass stalk for dear life. The field had been recently mown, but it was interesting to see how well established the chalk loving wildflowers are along the edge bordering the reserve.

Arriving at the chalk bank, the scene changed entirely. This small sheltered area was alive with butterflies, some nectaring, many flying around at high speed. The main species were Common Blue and Brown Argus, but we spotted at least three Chalkhill Blues, including

both male and female. An accurate count was difficult – I estimated 20 Common Blues, 12 Brown Argus, 2 Small Heath, 6 Meadow Brown, as well as Silver Y and Treble Bar Moths. I pointed out the patch of Bird's-foot-trefoil on the edge of the field where I had photographed a Small Blue on an earlier visit on 21 July this year.

Over the stile and into the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust reserve, we were out in the wind again. In the next 20 minutes we saw only one blue (Common), Meadow Brown (4), Small Heath (1), Treble Bar and Silver Y. Heading north along the Ridgeway long distance path we added Comma (1), Speckled Wood (2) and Peacock (2) to the days species list.

We then entered a clearing on a steep slope in Turlhanger Wood, the northern part of the reserve. Here we saw about 25 Brimstones, mostly nectaring ready for their winter hibernation, 10 Brown Argus, including a courting pair, 4 Meadow Browns, 3 Speckled Woods, Green Veined White, Small Copper, Small White, Common Blue, Silver Y and a Common Carpet Moth. Venturing further along the Ridgeway, we crossed the Bucks border on to a very windswept Pitstone Hill. The sun had disappeared and we saw only 3 Meadow Browns and single Common Blue, Small Heath and Brown Argus. This produced a total of 14 species for the day. It was good to see Chalkhill Blues on the site, though there is no evidence to confirm that they are breeding there. We saw nothing that could have resembled a Silver Spotted Skipper or explained the riddle of last years sighting. Maybe a further trip next year will be needed!

Purple Emperors and Woods this Summer, by Andrew Middleton and Liz Goodyear

The cold of winter spread a little into spring suggesting a later season, however temperatures began to soar during June, and the first Purple Emperor [PE] was as early as ever on the 25th, a male seen on 'capybara poo' at Paradise Wildlife Park, on the south eastern side of the Broxbourne Woods complex by Joan Childs. Liz and I had been watching a few sites, but had to wait until the 29th for our first two at Northaw Great Wood, then a male visited unmentionables for over an hour in Broxbourne Wood NR on 30th. I was able to get a photo of the male with a White Admiral in the same shot. On 2nd July, a high count of 10 was made across Hertfordshire, including a male at Tring

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

for Gillian Bladen-Clark, and one seen probing ‘mess’ on car-bonnets by Vince and Kelly Kinsler in Broxbourne. Of great interest was a site, and 10km square first, a male in Balls wood seen during the field trip led by Andrew Wood, with further sightings here later in the month. On 3rd with temperatures now well over 30°C, Liz and I traipsed the length and breadth of the ridge in Wormley Woods searching for a territory. Finally, watching in amongst some taller oaks, our saviour in the form of a woodpigeon flew over. Proving that this butterfly can see none too well, one followed in its wake a few moments later, determined to see off the intruder. At last, after several years’ searching, a territory found, and with up to three males swirling around together on more than one occasion. Sandra and Kevin Standbridge continued their searching, with a PE in Cowheath Wood on 7th, when Paul Tout & Adam Wilson saw one on Danemead HMWT reserve.

On the 8th, the joint Broxbourne Wood NR field trip with Countryside Management Service had about 50-60 people attended during the day, especially during the morning when it was rather cool. There were sightings of white admiral, purple hairstreak, red admiral, ringlet, meadow brown, large skipper, small skipper, comma, speckled wood and small tortoiseshell, plus some whites. Of special interest was a Silver-Washed Fritillary that flew along the main track during the late morning, and 3 or 4 sightings were made of this species during the day. Purple Emperors began to get active over the sallow breaks from 12.30 as it warmed up and visitor numbers fell, with 1 or 2 male emperors making occasional flights, and two females, including one perched for some time around 2.50 and one exhibiting egg-laying behaviour within a sallow. Around 2.30 several of the BC group went to Brickendon Green where 2+ White-letter Hairstreaks were soon located on top of the elms, then we moved on to Bourne Wood territory where a male was present patrolling high up in the oaks sheltered from the wind and mostly from view as well. That evening, Liz had a phone call from branch member, Jacky George who had been on the CMS walk to say that that when she returned to the east carpark with 5 others from the group they saw a male Emperor feeding on the mud on the side of a parked car (where it had splashed up) by the driver's door. It flew around and into an oak.” Jacky was absolutely thrilled. The estimated safe minimum count for the day on the reserve was four.

Sightings continued apace, but with groundings tending to be much

earlier in the morning, prior to 9am in the high temperatures and most at the beginning of July, and mid-day activity not always what it can be in lower temperatures. I joined David Gompertz at Fir & Pond Wood (HMWT) on the 12th, and we were rewarded with several clashes of 2 males around last year's oak by 1pm, but activity subsided soon after, as is typical on smaller sites. On 15th 1-2 were seen separately at Tring Park by Philip Woodward and Tom Dunbar, whilst Liz and I managed 4 males at the top of Park Wood, Ruislip on our first visit to this Middlesex woodland complex.

The second field trip at Broxbourne Wood NR was on the 16th July. About 15-20 people attended during the day and sightings were estimated to involve a minimum of c5 PE through the day. Flights were seen from 8.45am, and at 9.40 a female flew in to settle on a beech - at 10.45 it moved briefly to the shade of an oak, then back to the beech, then back in to the oak where it stayed until 2.20 - almost 5 hours of perfect weather and inactivity. This meant that everyone who came along was able to see a PE but unfortunately males were in short supply. A Silver-washed Fritillary was reported in flight and a second female PE began egg-laying in a willow nearby in the middle of the day. The oak 'feeding tree' near the car-park was again popular, with several visits for sap by PEs during the day, including two males in the vicinity around 3pm when most people had gone home. A few White Admirals were still around, also many Purple Hairstreaks, and a fresh male Brimstone was seen on betony in the clearing. A record day count of a minimum of 12 was recorded on the 16th at six sites.

Peter Clarke persisted without luck at Knebworth on 17th. Sightings flagged along with observers through the mega-heat of late July, the last being seen at Northaw on August 1st. One other success was that of finding a new area for PE on the 23rd July (a slightly cooler day), both a male and female were seen along a green lane just west of Blackfan Wood, which is just south of Bayford. So, a great year, with too many sightings to mention them all here. Of special interest to woodland visitors this summer was the regular presence of Silver-washed Fritillaries in many woods and other habitats, indicating a great dispersal. So glad the branch woodland leaflets highlighted this species, and we all hope the woods are in suitable condition for them to recolonise more widely. It surely identifies why our efforts should be put into landscape-scale positive management, when this species can disperse far and wide in a good year. However, the recent Butterfly Conservation publication 'The State of Butterflies in Britain

and Ireland' gives its lowest mark of 4/10 for 'Encouraging woodland biodiversity'. Hopefully the SWF will be seen again next year, along with our Purple Emperors and White Admirals. Fantastic.

The work of Liz and Andrew on Purple Emperors has received specific mention in the BC publication "The State of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland", acknowledging their re-discovery of the species on many sites where it had not been seen in recent times. Copies of the book can be obtained online from www.naturebureau.co.uk/shop for £14.50 including p & p (Editor).

Corrections to Annual Report 2005 Moth Review, by Andrew Wood

An error in the process that takes records from the Hertfordshire Moth database and reformats them to use in the Annual Report has caused some incorrect dates to appear. I regret that this has happened and have taken measures to ensure that this problem does not recur. I must emphasise that the data in the Hertfordshire Moth database is correct. Below is a list of corrections to the published data.

All records attributed to Jim Fish relate to 2001 and should be deleted from the 2005 report.

The records below are correct but are incorrectly dated 27 Jun rather than just 2005 unless otherwise stated:

SESIIDAE Hornet and Clearwing Moths

Lunar Hornet Moth *Sesia bembeciformis* (larva) Bishops Stortford, 27 Jun - Colin Plant; (larva) Danemead Nature Reserve, 27 Jun - Liz Goodyear; (larva) Eastwick Ford, 27 Jun - Colin Plant; (larva) Rowneybury, 27 Jun - Colin Plant; (larva) Rye House Power Station land, 27 Jun - Colin Plant; (larva) Sawbridgeworth Marsh, 27 Jun - Colin Plant; (larva) Thorley Flood Pound area, 27 Jun - Colin Plant

TORTRICIDAE

Epinotia ramella Weston, 27 Jun - Alan Cockburn should be 21 Jun

PYRALIDAE

Pediasia contaminella Weston, 27 Jun - Alan Cockburn should be 1 Aug

LASIOCAMPIDAE - Eggars

Lackey *Malacosoma neustria* Weston, 27 Jun - Alan Cockburn should be 16 Jun

GEOMETRIDAE

Birch Mocha *Cyclophora albipunctata* Bishops Stortford, 27 Jun - T. J. Lewis; Bishops Stortford, 5 Jun - T. J. Lewis

Satin Wave *Idea subsericeata* Bishops Stortford, 27 Jun - T. J. Lewis; Bishops Stortford, 10 Jun - T. J. Lewis

Ruddy Carpet *Catarhoe rubidata* Bishops Stortford, 27 Jun - T. J. Lewis; Bishops Stortford, 14 Jul - T. J. Lewis

Dark Spinach *Pelurga comitata* Ashwell Quarry, 27 Jun - Emil de Maria; Ashwell Quarry, 9 Aug - Emil de Maria

For the four above delete the 27 June record, it is a duplicate of the correct record listed alongside it.

Water Carpet *Lampropteryx suffumata* Bishops Stortford, 27 Jun - T. J. Lewis; Weston, 27 Jun - Alan Cockburn

The Streak *Chesias legatella* Weston, 27 Jun - Alan Cockburn should be 15 October

September Thorn *Ennomos erosaria* Cuffley, 27 Jun - Alan Bolitho

Square Spot *Paradarisa consonaria* Shenley, 27 Jun - Bill & Pearl Page

Brindled White-spot *Parectropis similaria* Bishops Stortford, 27 Jun - T. J. Lewis

NOTODONTIDAE - Prominents

Great Prominent *Peridea anceps* Chiswell Green, 27 Jun - Bill & Pearl Page

LYMANTRIIDAE - Tussocks

Brown-tail *Euproctis chryssorrhoea* Bishops Stortford, 27 Jun - T. J. Lewis

NOCTUIDAE

Garden Dart *Euxoa nigricans* Cuffley, 27 Jun - Alan Bolitho

Pearly Underwing *Peridroma saucia* Ashwell Quarry, 27 Jun - Emil de Maria

Feathered Gothic *Tholera decimalis* Cuffley, 27 Jun - Alan Bolitho

Flounced Chestnut *Agrochola helvola* Ashwell Quarry, 27 Jun - Emil de Maria

Alder Moth *Acronicta alni* Wheathampstead, 27 Jun - Trevor Chapman

Small Wainscot *Chortodes pygmina* Weston, 27 Jun, 13 Jul - Alan Cockburn delete 27 Jun record

Cream-bordered Green Pea *Earis clorana* Weston, 27 Jun Jul - Alan Cockburn

Blackneck *Lygephila pastinum* Cheshunt, 27 Jun - P. Roper;

Waved Black *Parascotia fuliginaria* Cuffley, 27 Jun - Alan Bolitho

**Mudchute Local Nature Reserve in Tower Hamlets (Middx.),
by David Chandler**

I penned this woeful ode for school-teacher friend I know in South Benfleet Essex:

Dockland Green

Go down to Mudchute in Docklands on the DLR; a place of tranquillity without any cars; just a mile from urban Poplar, it's an oasis of green in the corporate grey haar.

Although I was rebuked by my school-teacher for my awful poetry, I believe it sums up pretty nicely my feelings about working in the intensely-mercantile Canary Wharf area.

Mudchute LNR itself is a LNR green space in The Isle of Dogs – I'm sure you will recognise it because it is featured every day on the map in the opening credits of the Eastenders soap opera as the green bit just before the bend of the Thames opposite Greenwich, near The Millenium Dome (or O2 or whatever its called these days).

Mudchute LNR about as far south and east as you can get in Middlesex so just about on our recording tetrad maps. Never-the-less its a smashing little reserve with lots of wild places and a magical haven for butterflies considering its location. The area was formed around 1870 when a marshy area next to the Thames south-east of Millwall Dock was banked up with soil and the silt deposits dredged up from the London docks were pumped down by pipe there in a form of slurry to leave to settle in the enclosed areas.

In the latter half of the 19th century the site was an industrial dump but in 1915 the area was turned into gardeners' allotments. In the 1960's the site was allowed to return to nature and today, some forty years on, it is a pleasant small local nature reserve where the real Eastenders of London's new docklands area can enjoy a real taste of the country.

I started walking around Mudchute in my lunch-hours to give myself an alternative to the shopping malls and wine bars of Canary Wharf; it takes me about fifteen minutes to get there from my office desk by the docklands light railway. Immediately from stepping off the platform at Mudchute Station you enter the park and into a different world.

Perhaps not surprisingly because of its marshland heritage the most common butterfly is The Green-Veined White but Small Whites and Meadow Browns can be seen in good numbers. There is a small copse/hedgerow along the pathway that follows the railway track and

here Holly Blues, Essex Skippers, Speckled Woods, Gatekeepers, Brimstones, Commas, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells can be found. At the top end of the park almost at the Crossharbour DLR Station / ASDA Superstore end is a grassland area where I've found Meadow Browns, Red Admirals, Painted Ladies, Small Skippers, Common Blues and Small Coppers.

The total for the number of species seen during 2006 by me - 17.

I've enjoyed my summer visits to Mudchute; it's a little gem of a site in an urban sprawl.

Butterfly and Moth Books & Gifts by Post, by Malcolm Hull

A wide selection of butterfly books, gifts and free butterfly information leaflets are available by post. A full list is kept on the Sales Goods section of our website at

<http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/>

Orders can be made by post, e-mail or phone to Malcolm Hull (contact details on back cover). In addition to the above, goods will also be available from our sales stall at the following events. Please note no plants will be available this autumn. An updated list of events will be kept on the website.

Forthcoming sales stalls:

Saturday 30 September & Sunday 1 October – Gordon Beningfield Exhibition, Redbourn

Redbourn Village Museum, Silk Mill House, The Common, Redbourn (next to the Cricketers Public House). An exhibition of paintings, sketches, prints, books and stamps by Gordon Beningfield, who lived in Redbourn, was the first Patron of the Village Museum and President of Butterfly Conservation. More info at www.redbourn.org.uk

Opening hours - Saturday 2.00pm - 5.00pm, Sunday 12.00pm - 5.00pm. Admission: Adults £1.00, children 50p

Sunday 1 October – Broxbourne Woods Open Day. Broxbourne Wood, Pembridge Lane, near Brickendon. 11am – 4 pm. An open day to explore Hertfordshire's National Nature Reserve. Our stall will

be located near the west car park. Parking restrictions apply – follow local directions.

Natural England Budget Cuts - We Need Your Help (from Martin Warren, Chief Executive, Butterfly Conservation)

We urgently need your help on a vital matter concerning the future of nature conservation, and butterflies and moths, in England.

A very worrying threat has emerged to the budget of Natural England (NE), even before the new organisation starts in October. Defra has announced that it has a shortfall of **£200 million** in its budget and has asked Natural England to cut over **£13 million** from its budget this year, though this could rise. On top of this, NE has to find another **£15 million** from various other unbudgeted costs.

This will have a very serious effect on the funds spent on biodiversity and reversing the declines of butterflies, moths and other wildlife.

If the cuts continue through next year, **they could also badly affect the grants that Butterfly Conservation receives to run our core programmes on threatened butterflies and moths.**

We are therefore calling on Branches to help lobby against these highly damaging cuts by writing to all the local MPs in your area. The following is a short briefing note that can help support our case.

- Natural England will be formed in October this year, as a result of the amalgamation of English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency. This rationalising could have some beneficial effects for wildlife conservation, but only if biodiversity is central to the new organisation and is funded properly.
- Butterfly Conservation has been lobbying with our various NGO partners to ensure that biodiversity is given the highest possible priority within the new organisation. ~~We have already written to the Minister for the Environment, David Milliband, and the Treasury to raise our concerns but we need pressure to come from the grass roots as well.~~
- **Please help make our voice heard** by writing to all the MPs in your Branch area urging that they take the issue up urgently with the Minister for the Environment, David Milliband, and the Treasury.
- Say that BC xx Branch, as a group of local volunteers, works closely

with the Natural England parent organisations in helping to deliver species conservation locally. As such this good working partnership is threatened by cuts proposed to Natural England as part of the £200 million shortfall in the Defra budget.

- If you want to be specific, mention the cut of over **£13 million** required by Defra from the NE budget this year. Also express concern that NE has to find another **£15 million** from various other unbudgeted costs, which include additional costs imposed by Defra for corporate services (admin etc) and a central IT contract.
- Stress that a properly functioning NE is crucial to the delivery of biodiversity conservation in England, and especially to halt the rapid decline of butterflies, moths and other wildlife. Say that BC's recent surveys have shown that 7 out of 10 butterfly species are declining and 5 of our 60 species have already become extinct. 69% of common moths are declining too, indicating the massive loss of biodiversity.
- Say that the proposed cuts will seriously harm the delivery of the government's own targets to **halt biodiversity loss by 2010 and bring 95% of SSSIs into favourable condition.**
- Sir Martin Doughty, Chairman designate of Natural England, has gone on record saying "the scale of these cuts risks the wheels coming off the organisation even before it reaches October's launchpad."
- Ask your MP to urge that the cuts do not impact on biodiversity delivery and especially the **Species Recovery Programme** which has been so successful in beginning to improve the fortunes of our most threatened species. The recovery of the Large Blue butterfly (back to 11 sites this year) is due to this programme and work is underway to conserve the other 8 Priority Species of butterfly and over 50 moths identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. It is vital that the funding that BC receives from English Nature (one of NE's predecessors) through the Species Recovery programme is continued.
- Wildlife conservation is especially popular amongst the public and these programmes show that government takes wildlife conservation seriously. Butterflies and moths are important quality of life indicators and it is vital they are restored to conserve a healthy environment.
- Butterfly Conservation is committed to continue working with Government to reverse the loss of biodiversity and our 12,000 members contribute the equivalent of **£5 million pounds per year** in effort. However, we need a strong and properly funded government agency to tackle the deep-rooted problems facing wildlife and to harness

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

this grass roots effort.

- It is best to write to MPs at Westminster at The Rt. Hon. XX Bloggs MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. You can find the names of your local MPs via the website: <<http://www.parliament.uk/directories/directories.cfm>> . It may also be helpful to personalise the letter as much as possible to show it is not a circular, for example by including anything particularly relevant in your area that will encourage them to take action.
- I do hope you can help our cause by writing as soon as possible. Please contact me if I can provide any further information



Conservation Dates

Conservation work is one of the most important activities of the Society, as loss or neglect of suitable habitats is one of the major reasons for the decline in many of our butterflies as well as other wildlife.

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. John Noakes is compiling a list of people to call on when help is needed. If you would like to be included, please let him know, on (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. For details, please ring Michael Pearson on (01582) 840772

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. Meet at 10.00 a.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Further details from Gavin Vicary (01279) 771933

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Please direct your correspondence to the relevant committee member. The magazine is produced by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex branch of [Butterfly Conservation](#) (*Company limited by guarantee*). Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, near Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP. Registered in England No. 2206468 - Registered Charity No. 254937 - VAT No. 565 9070 16. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Committee or the National Society. Copyright 2006.