

# Hertfordshire and Middlesex Branch NEWSLETTER

Issue 90      Spring 2025



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**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

# Chair's Report

By Malcolm Hull

**In this article, our Branch Chair Malcolm Hull reflects on the recent branch activities and the current situation for local butterflies.**

This winter has been challenging for many reasons. The huge declines in butterfly numbers last year is most concerning. As always Andrew Wood has brilliantly captured all the information in the Branch Annual Report, mailed to all members in February. Butterflies start 2025 from a low base and we have no real idea whether or to what extent numbers will recover. Increasing climate volatility is a real concern. Already records we are receiving of Small Tortoiseshells are far less than usual. You can follow the progress of the butterfly season on our [news page](#).

Butterfly Conservation nationally is not in good shape, with 25% staff cuts the result of significant drop in funding. This has particularly impacted on the Branch, with our long standing Regional Officer Sharon Hearle amongst those who have left. Steve Bolton and Emma Bickford who have worked so

hard and successfully on our Big City Butterflies project in London both also left after the project finished in March. (see [page 24](#) for a summary of the project).

It has also been a challenging time politically, with a proliferation of unhelpful government announcements. It is clear that there will be unprecedented pressures to develop large areas of green belt across our area in the next five years. The Branch will continue to attempt to influence planning policies and object to planning applications which cause a high degree of damage to butterfly and moth habitats. We will also work with developers who are committed to creating and improving sites for butterflies and moths.

Despite these pressures, there are still many good government policies. Biodiversity Net Gain is beginning to drive habitat improvements. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are being

prepared for both Greater London and Herts and the Branch has contributed fully to both of these. A new Land Use Framework is out for consultation, which aims to dramatically improve biodiversity on around 20% of farmland. A new National Pesticides Strategy was published looking to substantially reduce their use. Government recently banned the use of deadly neonicotinoids on farms in response to our declaration of a Butterfly Emergency. This particularly important in the areas of north east Herts where sugar beet is grown.

**Above:** Peacock butterfly, credit Butterfly Conservation



The butterfly year got off to a slow start, with the first Peacock not emerging from hibernation in my shed until 26th March. We had an excellent series of Winter zoom talks, many thanks to all the speakers and Liz Goodyear for organising the events program. Members Day on 12th April was well attended and we

had several great presentations including Tim Blackburn on the delights of moth recording and Chloe Edwards on the Herts LNRS. Thanks to all who spoke, helped and attended (see [page 12](#) for a summary of Member's Day).

We have a packed program of events for the Spring and Summer, which were mailed out in April. You can also check what's coming up on the Events page on the Branch Website. Do come along to any of our events to see butterflies and make new friends. Please keep your records coming in and join the Big Butterfly Count, which runs from Friday 18th July to Sunday 10th August.

We have welcomed several new volunteers to the Branch. Edie Abrahams has taken over as newsletter editor. Zain Henry is a qualified first aider who will provide support to some of our butterfly walks. Tommaso Albertini will help organise events involving our information stall. In February we had the sad news of the death of Margaret Noakes, who was a founder member of our committee. Several of us attended her funeral and there's a tribute to Margaret and all she achieved for butterflies on [page 6](#). We hope to provide a suitable tribute to Margaret and her husband John at Millhoppers nature Reserve.

# Note From the Editor

By Edie Abrahams

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Branch Newsletter!

My name is Edie Abrahams and I have recently taken over as the new Newsletter Editor for the Branch. My predecessor, Ian Small, has been the Newsletter Editor for the past 28 years, so I definitely have some big shoes to fill! Ian has been incredibly supportive and helpful throughout the handover process for this role, and I am very grateful to him for all his advice on making a good newsletter!

To say a little more about me, I recently graduated last September from the University of Oxford with a master's in Biology, where I specialized in Ecology and Conservation. I have actually volunteered with Butterfly Conservation before, having completed my Year 12 work experience at the Lulworth office! Volunteering there was my first experience of seeing species conservation in action,

and I was excited to be part of a group who were really passionate about the UK's butterflies. With this anecdote I have to admit that I'm based in Dorset, not locally— but I've been getting involved with the Branch remotely by talking to it's members and joining meetings and I've come to understand the range of projects and dedicated volunteers that make this Branch so special.





**Above:** (Left) A photo of me doing my master's research in Madeira, Portugal! (Right) My attempt at butterfly photography— A Marbled White in Swanage, Dorset

I'm very interested in science communication, whether it's through newsletters like this, blogs, podcasts, or YouTube videos! I've been involved with all of these formats, and I'm keen to spread the message of conservation to as wide an audience as possible. I think this Branch newsletter is a really valuable tool for that, so I'm dedicated to ensuring it can continue doing so for as long as I'm able to!

I hope you enjoy hearing about all the amazing work our committee and volunteers have been getting up to — and if you have any contributions for upcoming newsletters, my email is [abrahamsedie@gmail.com](mailto:abrahamsedie@gmail.com). Happy reading!

# Remembering Margaret Noakes

**At the start of the year, the branch was saddened to hear of the passing of Margaret Noakes, one of the founder members of the committee and the driving force behind the acquisition of Millhopper's Reserve. Here, our committee members reflect on their memories of Margaret and her contributions to local butterfly conservation.**



“I can’t actually remember the year when I first met Margaret and John Noakes but as a new member of Butterfly Conservation I had read in the newsletter all about the then newly acquired branch reserve at Millhoppers (so sometime in the late 1990s). They were desperate for volunteers – so I drove over on several occasions to help. Those helping were then rewarded with an opportunity to join them in their lovely house at Long Marston for lunch. What generosity and as a relatively new member I was enthused by everyone’s butterfly and /or moth knowledge as we sat

talking over lunch!”

“Once I joined the committee and found myself organising more events such as the Members’ Day I knew I could always rely on Margaret to help; she was always a very willing and able helper. Whether it was pouring copious quantities of tea or coffee; making cakes or on one occasion actually helping provide a lunch I was always most grateful and her presence in recent years has been greatly missed.”

**- Liz Goodyear, Branch  
Organiser, Secretary and  
Events Organiser**





**Above:** Margaret cutting the cake for the national organization's 50th anniversary at the 2018 Members' Day

"I first met Margaret when I moved to Herts. late in 1991. This pre-dates the formation of the Herts & Middx Branch of BC, because at that time this area was included within a huge London Branch area. But the seeds of the present Branch had already been sown, and a 'committee in waiting' had been formed to commence the work of splitting that London Branch into Herts & Middx plus Surrey & SW London Branches. Margaret was sitting at the table when I first joined and was clearly strong and passionate in her belief that more could and should be done to protect, conserve and enhance the fortunes of butterflies."

"To get a flavour of that passion, I recommend that you look up the very first Branch newsletter, dated

February 1995, shortly after the Branch was formally established, a copy of which is in the Newsletters section of the website [here](#)."

"There is an impassioned article recounting her efforts to encourage butterfly-friendly planting around the new A41 – a concept that was itself in its infancy at that time. There was also a brief follow-up in the 2nd newsletter. (Remember, technology was rather different back in 1995, and so these are scans of hard copies)".

"Those same passions led Margaret and her husband John to seek protection for a site close to their home, which subsequently became Millhoppers Pasture, our only Branch Reserve. They worked their way through the logistics and politics to secure the future of the site, and John himself managed the conservation activities there for many years."

"From the formation of our Branch, Margaret took on the role of Membership Secretary, relinquishing that only in 2014 when she passed that role to

me. In those low-tech days it wasn't straightforward to track information, but Margaret's determination, combined with some spreadsheet help from her daughter, kept things together, and I will always be grateful for the smoothness of her handover of the role to me. Part of the reason for passing on that role was that she had taken on the role of Vice-Chair for the Branch in 2013 and it was impractical to continue in both roles. Margaret stayed as Vice-Chair until early 2018, when at last she stood down, both from the role and from the Committee."

"Her contributions to the Branch and to Millhoppers cannot be underestimated, and she will be sadly missed."

**-Ian Small, Membership Secretary**

"I first met Margaret at the Silver Cup pub in Harpenden, the venue for many of our early branch committee meetings in the 1990's. Margaret was the Membership Secretary and made a real effort to get to know other people as individuals,

taking an interest in my life away from butterfly activities. "



**Above:** Margaret and her husband John at the opening day of Millhoppers Pasture Nature Reserve

"Around that time Margaret and her husband John moved from London to the rural village of Long Marston near Tring. Her determination was soon in evidence again when a plot of land known as Millhoppers Pasture came up for sale. Margaret convinced the committee that this would make an excellent nature reserve and then set about fundraising to



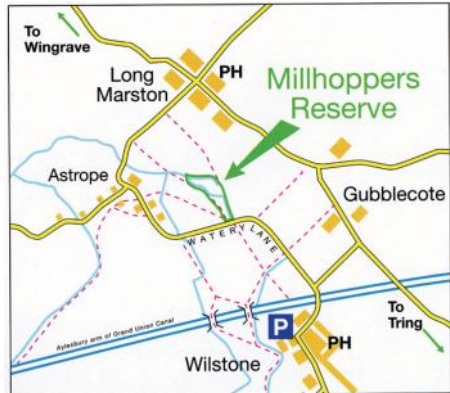
secure the money to turn her dream into reality. ”

“I well remember attending early work parties with my son Tom, cutting Blackthorn, lighting bonfires and eating lunch in Margaret and John s house afterwards. We've had many ups and downs with the site over the years, but today its in better shape than ever and remains an oasis for butterflies in an arable area.”

“When I first became Chair, Margaret became Vice Chair and was a great source of encouragement for me.”

“Margaret was 86 when she died. Her funeral was held at Bierton Crematorium, with a gathering afterwards at Hastoe Village Hall near Tring. Her family asked for contributions in her memory to go to Butterfly Conservation for use by the branch, especially at Millhoppers.”

**-Malcolm Hull, Branch Chair**



**Above:** Map of Millhoppers Reserve (top), the Black Poplars of Millhoppers (bottom).

# Berkhamstead Declares a Butterfly Emergency

By Malcolm Hull

**In this article, Branch Chair Malcolm Hull reports on the recent declaration of a “butterfly emergency” in Berkhamstead and discusses the actions being taken to reverse these declines.**

Dire results from last years Big Butterfly Count prompted butterfly Conservation to declare a national butterfly emergency. This struck a cord with Berkhamsted Town Council and in January, I was invited to address a council meeting on what they can do to help. A resolution was passed declaring a Butterfly Emergency in Berkhamsted and this has given rise to much enthusiasm and activities aimed at boosting the number of butterflies within the town. There are now several initiatives underway, which we hope and expect will make a real difference.

Recording - with over 5,000 records on our database, we have good information on the 28 species regularly seen in the town. Less well recorded are some of the important sites in nearby countryside.

A group has been set up to walk a new transect on Berkhamstead Common and Andrew Wood has visited to provide appropriate training. Monthly counts using the i-Record butterflies app will be taking place at Rectory Lane Cemetery and Pancake/Hockeridge Woods. These are all good sites with opportunities for habitat improvements. The Branch will use the recording information as a basis for providing advice to the owners and managers of these sites.



**Above:** A species that was particularly scarce in last years' Big Butterfly Count – the Common Blue.  
Photo by Ivan Lynas

In March, Christine Ridley and I were at a well attended meeting in the Civic Centre where I gave a talk on Gardening for Butterflies and Moths. The Town Council gave away free packets of wildflower seeds for people to sow in their flowerbeds or lawns. These included a good mix of butterfly and moth larval foodplants such as Birds-foot Trefoil. Also favoured nectar sources such as Scabious and Knapweed. The council are planning a further session aimed at their allotment holders.

Most of the problems butterflies and moths are facing are caused by the actions of people. So engaging with people to make them more aware of butterflies and moths is very important. By the time you read this Christine and I will have attended "Make Space for Nature" at the Berkhamsted Open Door Cafe with our butterfly stall. We will be providing tips on creating butterfly friendly spaces, helping with craft activities for children and leading a butterfly walk (subject to weather!).

More activities are planned over the summer including a walk Christine is leading at Rectory Lane Cemetery and events for Big Green Week and the Big Butterfly Count. Keep an eye on our Event programme on the website for details. If you live in

the area and want to get involved, do get in touch. Many thanks to everyone who has helped so far, particularly Rebecca Mackenzie from the council and Emma Norrington from the Berkhamsted Eco Hub.

If you'd like to see more being done to help butterflies and moths in your area, do get in touch. We are keen to promote and support local activities and have resources to help with recording, conservation/rewilding advice and engagement activities.



**Above:** Poster for the Make Space for Nature event in April

# Members' Day 2025: Summary

By Ian Small

**About 40 members gathered for Members' Day on Saturday the 12th of April, held again this year at Greenwood Park Community Centre, near St. Albans. In contrast to previous years, parking proved problematic for some due to sporting events taking place in the grounds. Our apologies to any members affected by this, but of course we were unaware of these other events when booking the venue almost a year ago.**

Our Branch Chair, Malcolm Hull, began proceedings with a **review of activities within the Branch area** over the past year, reminding attendees not only of the prolonged poor weather affecting the butterflies themselves, but also the adverse financial climate hitting Butterfly Conservation and its consequences for staffing numbers.



**Above:** Branch Chair Malcolm Hull, photo by Ian Small

Malcolm's initial focus was on the recently-completed Big City Butterfly (BCB) project, part-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, describing the twin approaches of achieving both community engagement and a beneficial effect for urban butterflies. Thus, not only have many new butterfly-friendly habitats been created, but many people have been trained to identify butterflies, with the result that many new monitoring schemes have also been set up. A short video was shared, a copy of which can be seen [here](#).

It is important that this work continues, despite the end of the formal project, and those local

community groups will be supported by BC's Conservation Manager for the South-East, Stephen Lofting, as well as by BC Head Office. An excellent guide to the management of urban butterflies, produced as part of BCB, has been produced and a pdf copy is available via the BC website [here](#).

Outside of the BCB project, we have also been working with Transport for London (TfL), who manage large areas of both roadside and rail-side verges. Monitoring of the effects of reduced mowing has shown an increase in butterfly numbers last year despite the general downward trend everywhere else. Collaboration with TfL, and monitoring of more sites will continue this year.

We are also contributing to other 'wilding' projects, e.g. in Berkhamsted and St. Albans and collaborating with other groups, e.g. Finchley Pollinators. More information on a new project – Herts. Hedge Heroes – will come out during the year.

Malcolm also described progress at Millhoppers Pasture, our Branch reserve, where a new chalk bank has been enhanced

and a new bridge is soon to be installed. Malcolm also took time to pay a tribute to the late Margaret Noakes, who sadly died earlier this year, and was a key driving force in the creation of a reserve at this site and its subsequent adoption by the Branch. Margaret's husband John was for many years the conservation manager at the site. They are both sadly missed.

**Below:** *A Small White, photo taken by Peter Fewell in the car park on Members' Day*



Malcolm explained that our work on landscape-scale projects had not yet let to fruition, as BC seeks to prioritize its fundraising efforts - as always, there are more areas where funding is needed than there are sources of funds. The Branch has itself put aside some capital to go towards providing match funding and are hoping

that at least the Chilterns area plan will get off the ground this year.

Branch membership has seen a welcome increase, with the numbers at the end of January this year a record for the Branch. We continue to be active on social media, but Malcolm noted our recent switch from X/Twitter to BlueSky. The recently-circulated Annual Review also detailed the increasing amounts of site management advice, public engagement and planning consultations undertaken by the Branch.

Prior to closing this session, members re-elected the 3 committee members who were standing down by rotation, and elected Edie Abrahams, our new Newsletter Editor.

There was an unexpected change for the following talk, as Chlöe Edwards, our scheduled speaker, had to withdraw at short notice for personal reasons. However, she had already shared her slides, and Malcolm did an excellent job of standing in and 'speaking to them'. Chlöe's topic had been on

the **Herts Local Nature Recovery Strategy**, which Malcolm was already familiar with, having been working on it with the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust, for whom Chlöe works.

In working up the plan, habitats are classified into one of five categories (woodland, grassland & heath, rivers lakes & wetlands, farmland and urban) and those already considered to be good and those considered to be capable of improvement, identified. Where necessary, habitats are further categorised e.g. for grassland, into chalk, natural or acid. Flagship species (for which read 'poster' species) are identified for each habitat type.

Additionally, 14 species have been identified for tailored action – these include 2 butterflies, the Duke of Burgundy and the White Admiral.

**Below:** *A male Duke of Burgundy, photo by Andrew Cooper*





Following a refreshment break, the final speaker of the morning, Gerry Tissier, continued with the theme of the earlier session, this time focusing on his project the **Hackney Buzzline**. This is another Heritage Lottery funded project, initiated last year as part of Big City Butterflies. Its aim is to create a 4km pollinator corridor for bees and butterflies that links 4 parks, by planting and creating habitat every 1-200 metres along the route – a flower corridor beside an existing walking and cycling route.



**Above:** Gerry Tissier giving his talk on the Hackney Buzzline (top); Gerry and and Malcolm closing the talk (bottom), photos by Ian Small

The project employs a ‘learning cycle’, which starts by monitoring and recording what is already there, followed by putting the right plants in the right places for the conditions, and monitoring to see if it has worked. Engagement with the local community is central, with much of the work being done by community groups, youth centres and school children.

Many of those children have had no prior exposure to any type of nature or wildlife, so there are tangible benefits for them as well as for the wildlife. In its first year, the project has created links between 2 of the parks, with the next set of links scheduled for this year. Further information is available [online](#).

The project employs a ‘learning cycle’, which starts by monitoring and recording what is already there, followed by putting the right plants in the right places for the conditions, and monitoring. Thanks to all who helped with making the day a success.

Special thanks Mandy Floyd for providing the excellent sandwiches, cakes and biscuits, and to Christine Ridley & Ann Piper for their help in providing hot drinks in all the breaks.

## Members' Day 2025: Afternoon Summary

By Malcolm Hull

**In this article, our Branch Chair Malcolm Hull summarises the afternoon session of this year's Members' Day, which included talks from Tim Blackburn and Leslie Williams.**

Tim Blackburn kicked off the afternoon session talking about his passion for moths. He traps on the roof terrace of his flat in LB Camden, close to Hampsted Heath. In this urban environment he has recorded over 400 different species in just a few years, with that number continuing to grow. Like many of us, he wonders why the abundance, diversity and distribution of species is so variable.



**Above:** *Tim Blackburn, credit UCL*

As an experienced ecologist and Professor of Invasion Biology at University College London (UCL), Tim has been studying these questions for thirty years. His recent book, "The Jewel Box - how moths illuminate nature's hidden rules", looks at these questions.

So far we have named 1.5 million animal species across the planet – 10 % of these are moths. There are many more not yet named or discovered – maybe 8 million in total. Each species includes many individuals – for example the global population of birds maybe 83 billion. But the estimated global number of insects is 100 million times more than the number of birds.

So how to begin to understand it all? Tim explained the rules of ecology through examples of the behaviour of individual species. The amazing Gypsy Moth introduced into north America spread rapidly and in one year alone ate the leaves of 2.8 million hectares of trees.



**Above:** *A male Gypsy moth, photo by Ryszard Szczygiel*

Many species can go through periods of exponential growth – but in the end the death rate catches up

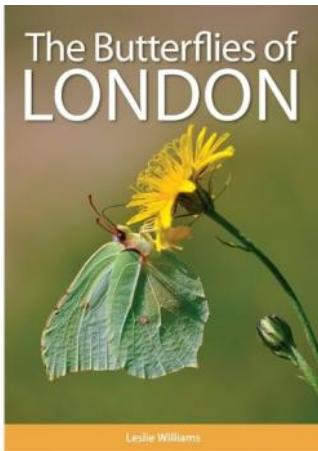
Other key factors are competition for resources, predation by other animals, how species work together as communities and of course migration. Tim explained that moths can cruise at a speed of 40-50 km/h and cover over 600 km in a night. There could be

700 million crossing the Channel.

Tim concluded by pointing out the importance of studying these tiny creatures and the rules governing their behaviours develops our knowledge of the wider web of life. The context of the moth trap can only be understood in the context of the full environmental narrative. Developing that understanding can illuminate the wider workings of nature

To find out more ... read the book. Tim's message got through and sales of his book were excellent!

After tea Leslie Williams spoke on "The Butterflies of London". Leslie has been the London Butterfly Recorder for the London Natural History Society, as well as a supportive member of HMBC for many years. Leslie drew comparisons between butterfly distributions in Greater London during two distinct periods. The first period was 1980-6, the first major survey of butterflies across the capital. The second was 2015-19, the period covered in Leslie's recent book, "The Butterflies of London".



**Above:** *The Butterflies of London* by Leslie Williams

The comparison clearly showed how Wall Brown has been completely lost, although intriguingly Leslie hinted at the possibility of re-establishment in the far east along the Thames. Small Tortoiseshell distribution has also shrunk massively. It has gone from being our most widespread and common species to now seldom being seen in London. But the overall pattern is very positive, with the distribution of most species either stable or increasing.



**Above:** Male and female of the Wall or Wall Brown (top), and the Small Tortoiseshell (bottom), photos by Iain Leach

Leslie emphasized the importance of scrublands, grasslands and gardens as habitats. Greater awareness of butterflies needs, promoting the message to reduce and vary mowing regimes, provide larval foodplants and year round supply of nectar are all valuable contributions.



**Left:** *Male Gatekeeper,*  
*photo by Andrew Cooper*

# Brown Hairstreak Winter Egg Surveys 2025

By Liz Goodyear

**In this article, committee member Liz Goodyear summarises the results of the most recent Winter egg surveys for the Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*), highlighting a first successful survey for Hertfordshire and the enthusiasm of volunteers despite cold weather conditions.**



**Above:** *Brown Hairstreak female, photo by Iain Leach*

For the first time we arranged three events, two in Greater London and one in Hertfordshire. The purpose of the surveys is twofold – one to help those new to egg searching to gain experience and guidance from experienced surveyors and two to get a feel for the numbers of eggs present at a known site.

The first survey was held at Stafford Road Open Space near

Ruislip Gardens in the London Borough of Hounslow on the 12th January and was led by Nick Furtek. The forecast was cold but sunny but no one was expecting a thick hoar frost that morning and ice on the ground! Nick wrote: “Ten of us assembled in sub-zero frosty conditions, including six rookies for training in the delicate art of Brown Hairstreak egg hunting. The forecasted sun that we had banked on failed to appear but thankfully the temperature rose sufficiently to thaw the frosty foliage to make the task in hand possible with a total number of 28 eggs found with all the newcomers finding at least 1 egg so mission accomplished on that front. The event included a walk about the area highlighting the various 'hot spot' clearings and



the location of master ash trees where adults roost and assemble enabling folk to return on their own come the flight season. It turned in to quite a social event as there were people from different local groups exchanging plenty of useful local butterfly and conservation chit chat. No one left early despite the gloomy cold weather and everyone said they had an enjoyable time. See you same place in August for the flight season walk.”

Our second survey a week later was at Horsenden Hill in the London Borough of Ealing and we were joined by members of the Ealing Wildlife Group, keen also to get experience in finding eggs. This was the first time the branch has organised an event at Horsenden Hill, and the number of eggs we found that morning exceeded all expectations. The event was led by Liz Goodyear “A brilliant recording effort this morning at Horsenden Hill despite the cold, dull weather! Weather conditions were however perfect for seeing eggs though! Ten people joined us and over a two hour period we found 74 eggs,

with 3 eggs being found within a short distance of the carpark - a great start! The site is vast and there is plenty more blackthorn to be searched!”

**Below:** Typical *Blackthorn* hedgerow where eggs can be found



Our final survey was also a first in that it was in Hertfordshire and successful. With the permission of the Woodland Trust we visited Merry Hill, Bushey on the 2nd February – a site only discovered last winter. The event was led by Pete Fewell and Rick Vickers “It was fantastic to have a good crew to join us for the Brown Hairstreak egg hunt.

Our egg search today started with a mini egg rescue. We took a look at stems of blackthorn that were snipped off and left on

the ground. A single egg was found on these snapped out stems which was returned by Rick to living blackthorn. A few more eggs were found in this area not far from the entrance by the meeting point.

We then had a quick check on the grazed blackthorn where I was fortunate to see a female egg laying last year. We then moved into the area where we had sighted the males last summer and looked for the double egg found and marked on Saturday.

From there we managed to find the majority of the eggs and in total 22 Brown Hairstreak eggs were found.”

We were lucky that we managed to choose three Sundays where the weather was relatively kind despite being cold or very cold – we didn’t have to rearrange any events! Sunday 2nd February was a glorious winter’s day but with one disadvantage – finding eggs in bright sunshine is much harder and the final egg count may have reflected this but this was a newly found site and the

species is still not that numerous on the site in comparison to Stafford Road and Horsenden Hill where the colonies have been known about for a few years now?



**Above:** *Brown Hairstreak egg, shown from afar (top) and close-up (bottom), photos by Gilles San Martin and Gillian Thompson*

All these events were enjoyed by everyone attending with those experienced egg surveyors sharing their knowledge with those new to the art. Even the cold weather didn't deter people! We hope to plan similar events in January/early February 2026 so look out for the details when they get published at the end of 2025.



**Above:** *Brown hairstreak (female, underwing), photo by Bob Eade.*

# Big City Butterflies

By Paul Busby

Big City Butterflies has now been successfully completed and a huge thanks to the four Project Officers, May Webber, Steve Bolton, Ele Johnstone and Emma Bickford and all the volunteers who have been involved with the project.

Butterfly Conservation was successfully awarded funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver the Big City Butterflies project. The project was delivered initially through a development stage in 2019 and over four years from May 2021 to March 2025

Big City Butterflies aimed to inspire Londoners to discover butterflies and moths, and in doing so to connect them with nature and their local greenspaces. The people reached had opportunities to learn about butterflies and moths, how to seek them out, to enjoy them and to help them thrive in their neighbourhoods. The project involved three broad elements:

## **1. Habitat conservation/ management advice and training; to enhance and connect greenspaces to better support butterflies and moths**



*Left: Excerpts from relevant booklets instructing how to look for London's butterflies and how best to manage their urban habitats.*

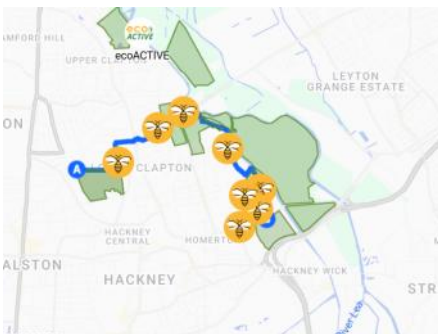
The habitat management strand of the project included the following activities:

- Site advisory visits to project sites to provide advice around habitat improvements and management regimes to support biodiversity to site managers and volunteer groups.
- Habitat management workshops to provide more structured training and support around improving management regimes to site managers, staff and volunteer groups.
- Improvements to existing site management plans by providing written advice. Habitat improvements to sites by provision of trees, plug plants and seeds.

## **2. Citizen Science; supporting people to learn identification skills and contribute to a programme of species recording and monitoring**

The species identification and monitoring strand of the project included:

- Delivery of species identification and recording training workshops for conservation professionals and community volunteers.
- Publicity and campaigns around the Big Butterfly Count and other citizen science schemes.
- Creation of new monitoring (transect) and recording (I-Record) schemes and butterfly transects in project sites. New transects in Middlesex include Gladstone Park, Wormwood Scrubs, White City Parks and Hackney Buzzline transects.
- Creation of learning resources around identification and monitoring.



**Above:** Map of the Hackney Buzzline, credit EcoActive.

### **3. Community engagement; a range of activities and events to engage the public in the project and to connect to greenspaces and nature**

The community engagement strand included:

- A programme of school workshops for primary schools in 6 London boroughs; with an introduction to butterflies, moths and their habitats and lifecycles which combined a classroom session followed by planting butterfly friendly plants at the school and interaction with live specimens.
- A programme of community events at greenspaces in target boroughs; events included family planting days, butterfly walks, moth trapping and creative arts activities.

The Nature Connectors course designed and delivered by Wild in the City, a black-led nature organisation providing opportunities for people of colour to deepen their

connection with nature and build a sense of belonging in green spaces. Community art projects; working with London-based artists to provide opportunities for people to learn about butterflies and moths in a creative way through photography, storytelling and other artforms.



**Above:** More common urban butterfly species, including the White Letter Hairstreak (top) and the Small Copper (bottom), photos by Iain Leach and Bob Eade.





**Above:** Photos from the community engagement strand of the Big City Butterflies project.

# White Admiral Sightings 2025: NW London

By Paul Busby

**The White Admiral (*Limenitis camilla*), is widespread in southern England, and is often found nectaring on Bramble flowers in rides and clearings. It had been expanding since the 1920s, but recent monitoring has revealed a drastic population decline in the past 20 years, and many records are lacking in certain areas. In this article, committee member Paul Busby comments on these data gaps, emphasising the importance of our volunteers to maintain and improve the record for this species.**

A part of BC Conservation Strategy is to improve the condition of the most important landscapes for butterflies and moths. More details on the landscapes selected can be found on the main BC website. In Middlesex and South Hertfordshire, the NW London Urban Fringe has been selected to manage, conserve and improve woodland, hedgerow and scrubby grassland habitat. The priority butterfly species within this selected landscape are Brown Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Green Hairstreak and White Admiral.

The Branch has been updating the White Admiral Woods Register to document all sites where White Admiral have been observed since 1995. Some sites have transects or are regularly visited but initial results are showing some gaps in records at perhaps some less visited public accessible woodlands.

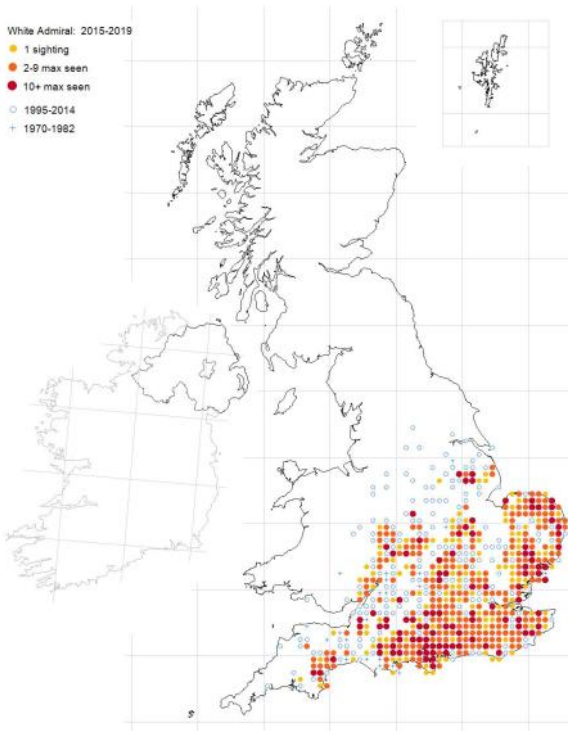


**Above:** *The White Admiral, photo by Pete Withers*

There are gaps in records in many sites including Bayhurst Woods, Ruislip, Gutteridge Wood, Hillingdon, Stanmore Common.. In addition, the 2025 Branch Annual Report has highlighted some worrying developments with some significant declines at Balls Wood and Eastern and Central sites.

It would be great if members could visit as many public

accessible woodlands during the White Admiral flight season from mid-June to early August. The sightings would be extremely useful, along-with any photos and description of the state of the habitat and any Honeysuckle food plant. A list of woodlands that can be allocated will be available to members who are interested in helping with these baseline sightings, please contact Paul Busby for details.



**Left:** Map of White Admiral UK distribution from sightings.

# Hedgerow Heroes

By Abby Coften

CPRE Hertfordshire and Herts and Middlesex Butterfly Conservation Group are currently scoping out a project to deliver together Hertfordshire Hedgerow Heroes in the Autumn, an important initiative which will aim to expand the hedgerow network across the County, rejuvenate unhealthy hedgerows, and enable the local community to take action for nature on their patch. We will be working closely together to ensure that our hedgerows habitats are suitable for local butterfly species and will also be looking for volunteers to help in a number of roles including planting.

If you would be interested in taking part and supporting as a volunteer, please email [abby@cpreherts.org.uk](mailto:abby@cpreherts.org.uk) who will add you to our Expressions of Interest list and we will inform you as soon as the project is live (contingent on a successful funding application).

No previous experience is necessary as full training will be given.

**Below:** *Volunteers at CPRE working on a hedgerow, credit CPRE*



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