

# Hairstreak

No 103

Autumn 2018



Butterfly  
Conservation



Upper Thames  
Branch



## Working for the Duke

Working with volunteers from Network Rail, Atkins and Chiltern Rangers CIC to remove Dogwood scrub from a potential Duke of Burgundy site.



Photos by Nick Bowles



*Copy dates are: 1st January for Spring Issue  
1st April for Summer Issue  
1st August for Autumn Issue*

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Cover photo: Purple Hairstreak by Wendy Wilson

Background: Drunkard's Corner, Waterperry Wood, Oxon

### **BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION**

**COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE, registered in England & Wales (2206468)**

**Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP**

**Charity registered in England (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)**

Surely, you've all had some exciting encounters with butterflies this summer? For the first time in ages we have had the most glorious opportunity to see more of the commoner, more widespread species and maybe some new-to-you scarcer species too, with unbroken periods of sun from June until August. Very likely you will have seen new species in the garden, as the sunny, settled weather encourages butterflies (and moths) to go searching for new sites where they can breed. So, I hope you have been planning what you can plant to act as food for the caterpillars of the butterflies you have been seeing in the garden, to assist them in founding new colonies.

You will know that the branch has an arrangement with the lovely people at Lindengate (Wendover) who grow various plants for us to strengthen populations of caterpillar food plants, at reserves and on private land, across the three counties. These include Elm (larval foodplant of White-letter Hairstreaks), Cowslip (larval foodplant of Duke of Burgundy), Dark Mullein (larval foodplant of Striped Lychnis) and Horseshoe Vetch (larval foodplant of Chalkhill and Adonis Blue). Many of our green fingered members grow these and some other plants, too. If you would like to help, please get in touch and we will explain what we want growing and help you get the seeds. Of course, you can grow and plant the caterpillar food plants of any species you favour in your own land; and there is unequivocal evidence that once a food plant is established, assuming that the butterfly or moth that has caterpillars that feed upon it lives within a mile or so, it will (eventually) turn up. If the plant is growing in the right conditions it will stay and breed.

Yesterday I was at a scrub clearance event with Network Rail volunteers. They are working with us to design and maintain new habitats as mitigation for damage done by the East West Rail project linking Oxford to Cambridge. Hopefully some of the new creations will prove to be as good as the M40 Compensation Area (Bernwood Forest) – where the Highways authority are spending large sums to help us maintain optimal habitat for our rarest hairstreaks. Various private land owners are helping us with our work for Duke of Burgundy and it is true to say that not only are our partnerships spinning off plenty of positive impacts, as we get into partnership with each organisation or new individual, we are soon asked if we can help others that they know; very productive times for UTB.

Mentioning the M40 Compensation Area reminds me that I ought to mention **responsible** butterfly watching. The owners (Highways) consider the area to be part of the M40 and even though it is very good hairstreak habitat there is no access for UTB members without prior arrangement and the requisite training in H&S. Unfortunately, some persons have climbed fences to gain access. It strains our currently good relationship with Highways when they report trespassers looking for butterflies to us. Similarly, even on land where we have access rights, such as Nature Reserves, please think about the impact of your visit. Considerable damage was done by people so keen to take photographs of rare hairstreaks that they trampled wild flowers to get near the butterflies. This is bad for our reputation and was unnecessary, as, this year, the same butterflies were plentiful and easily viewed in



large numbers in other less sensitive spots close by.

Thank you to everyone who has helped in any of the myriad ways that members find to help (maybe taking the option to receive this newsletter in an electronic form). I hope you share my thrill in knowing that we are making a real difference.

Speaking of making a difference, there are always several tasks that we could use a hand with. Here are a few of them: using your computer skills with spreadsheets or social media, volunteering to chat with members at social events and with non-members at public events, taking images for use on our social media pages, and we can never supply enough surveyors to meet the demand of landowners, keen to learn what lives on their patches. Remember that we run free training sessions each winter in identification and survey techniques.

And, though it seems a distant future as I sit here at 29°C in the shade, please consider joining the groups going out to do winter conservation work at more and more sites all over the three counties – see

<http://upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/events.html> for details.

May I thank all of you once again for your fantastic support? Without your literally tens of thousands of records and thousands of hours of volunteer effort hundreds of our rarest butterflies and moths would, quite simply, not exist. You may know that I email small groups of members and ask for help with events local to their homes (most people never hear about things further than five miles away – so apologies if I never contacted you) and it never ceases to warm my heart that every single time I get the most wonderful response. If I want five volunteers for something, I might ask the 30 members (with known email addresses) closest to the event and, very likely, I will get ten positive replies. What a great bunch of people you are!

Hopefully the sight of the many butterflies in your garden this summer (and hopefully autumn) will be reward enough for your help in making us probably the most effective small conservation body around. If that doesn't quite do it, come along to our Members' Day in October (Benson, Oxon.) where the day's programme certainly will.

You have probably noticed that the number of pages in this issue has been reduced from 32 to 24. This is not due to any cost cutting but has been prompted by a lack of articles. Interesting articles on any aspect of lepidoptera and lepidoptera watching are always welcome. My contact details are on the contents page.

David Ferguson, Editor

**Butterfly Conservation - Upper Thames Branch  
Members' Day & Annual General Meeting  
Saturday 27th October 2018  
Parish Hall, Benson, Oxfordshire, OX10 6LZ**

**PROGRAMME**

09:45	<b>Doors Open - Registration and Coffee</b>	
10:15	<b>Introduction and Welcome</b>	Nick Bowles
10:25	<b>Review of Upper Thames Moths in 2017</b>	Jan Haseler
10.50	<b>Review of Upper Thames Butterflies in 2017</b>	Nick Bowles
11:15	<b>Holtspur Bottom Reserve – latest news</b>	Tony Gillie
11.30	<b>Break</b>	
11:50	<b>The new National Conservation Plan and the way that it fits with the SE regional RAP</b>	Steve Wheatley
12.30	<b>The background and progress of the Otmoor RSPB Marsh Fritillary reintroduction</b>	David Wilding
	<b>Lunch</b>	
1.10	Vote in our annual photographic competition, have a go at the quiz, buy raffle tickets, and view the displays. Richard Lewington will be selling his artwork, and Aurelian Books will have a bookstall.	
2.10	<b>BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b>	
	<b>Agenda:</b>	
	1. Apologies for absence	
	2. Minutes of last AGM and matters arising	
	3. Chairman's Report	
	4. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts	
	5. Election of Officers	
	6. Any Other Business (previously notified)	
2.40	<b>White Admiral – a local perspective</b>	Julia Huggins & Peter Eeles
3.20	<b>Wing colour and patterning in butterflies and moths – the importance of predation</b>	John Thacker
4.00	<b>Tea and raffle</b>	
4.30	<b>Butterfly Dance Performance</b>	Catherine
4.40	<b>Photographic Competition Results, Quiz results</b>	Pete Thompson
5.05	<b>Round Up of the Day and Closing Remarks</b>	Nick Bowles



## Map & Directions to Benson Parish Hall, our venue for Members' Day

(O.S. maps 164 & 175, grid reference SU618920, postcode OX10 6LZ)

### By road:

From **Oxford** direction take A4074 and on outskirts of Benson, turn left at roundabout by BP petrol station. In 200 yards, at new mini roundabout continue straight on, past the school on the left, then bearing left past the War Memorial on your right, and take the left turn signposted Watlington (B4009 and Parish hall). After approx 200 yards the main road curves right and you must turn sharp left at new modified junction into Sunnyside and then immediately right into Parish Hall carpark

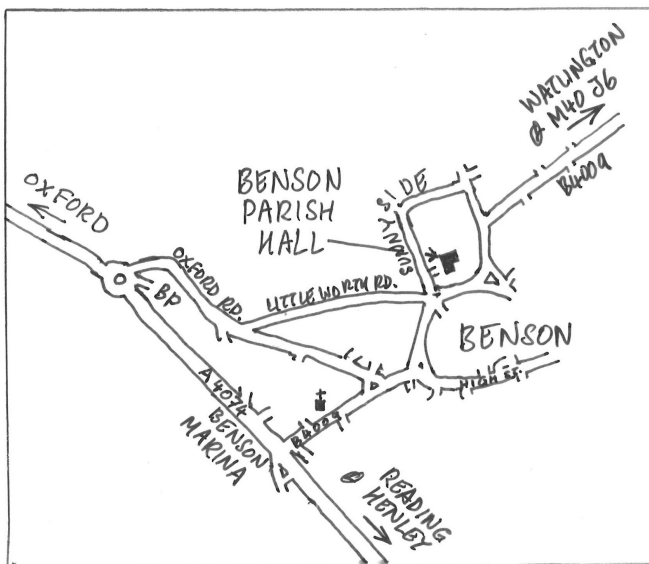
From **Reading** (A4074) or **Henley** (A4130) direction, at the roundabout near Crowmarsh Gifford, take the Oxford road (A4074) for 1.5 miles and turn right to Benson on the B4009 towards Watlington. Pass the church on left and at war memorial triangle, bear right then shortly bear left towards Watlington (B4009, signed to Parish Hall). After about 200m turn left into Sunnyside, crossing Littleworth Road, then immediately right into the Parish Hall car park.

From **Watlington** or **M40 J6**, take B4009 towards Benson. At outskirts of Benson, go through speed chicane, follow road round left and right hand bends, and be aware of new pedestrian crossing after right hand bend, then almost immediately turn right at modified junction into Sunnyside, and immediately right into Parish hall car park.

### By public transport:

Buses from **Oxford** leave St. Aldates stop H3 the River Rapids service, X38, X39, & X40 at 9.05, 9.25 & 9.45 and so on every hour. Alight opposite Benson Marina and it's an eight-minute walk to the Parish Hall. Walk in Reading direction a few yards, turn left onto B4009 towards Watlington, then follow instructions by road from Reading direction.

From **Reading Rail Station** buses X39 & X40 leave station road at 9.20, then 9.50 & 10.20. X39 is the faster service. Alight at Benson Marina, cross the road, and see instructions above.



This summer has seen a big improvement in numbers of butterflies compared to the last couple of years, so there should have been plenty of opportunities to photograph our glorious butterflies and moths. I expect and hope that many of you will have plenty of images to delight the audience at Members' Day.

We will again run the '**Newer Entrants**' category this year, reserved entirely for members who have never previously entered, or who have done so no more than twice before. You might be a younger member just getting into butterfly photography, or a more experienced person who just needs a bit of extra encouragement! Entries in this category can be of either butterflies or moths, taken, in the wild, in the UK or overseas and at any stage of life from egg onwards.

As usual, there will be two parallel competitions, and the winners in each will be selected by popular vote:

**Members' competition – open to members** (apart from recent winners of the overall 'best in show' prize, who have been individually notified.)

You can enter a maximum of ten images across all categories, but in the case of UK Butterflies, it's now a maximum of just six (so look out your very best!).

There will be **six** categories, as shown below.

1. **UK butterflies**
2. **Overseas butterflies**
3. **Moths (including micro moths and overseas moths)**
4. **Immature stages**
5. **Newer Entrants**

All photos entered for these first five categories should be **without digital alteration**. For this purpose, 'digital alteration' means making changes to the subject matter by digital means – such as removing or replacing parts of the image, deleting grass stems or blemishes. It does **not** preclude the use of cropping, brightness and contrast adjustments, or some degree of sharpening that happens anyway in most cameras and printers. All these are allowed.

#### 6. **Digital creativity**

This is your opportunity to be really adventurous and show the beauty of our insects in a very different way. Alterations to lighting, colour and background – or the use of distortion, collage, superimposed images or anything else you can think of – are all specifically encouraged in this category.



**All Members' Competition prints should be a maximum of 19x13cm including mount.**

There will be prizes for the most popular photos in each category, though only one prize per photographer, and an additional prize for 'best in show'. All photos entered should be prints, taken in the wild since last year's Members' Day. Please write the photographer's name and telephone number on the back, plus the category being entered. Mounting on card, and adding a title, can enhance any photo, but this is optional.

**Recent Winners' Competition – open to recent winners of the overall 'best in show' prize.**

Recent winners of the members' competition have put on an inspiring display in recent years, and we are asking each of them to contribute any 6 prints, preferably mounted on grey card, with an overall maximum size, including mount, of 30x25cm.

**We would be very grateful for some help with the photographic competition on the day. This involves collating entries at the beginning, and counting the votes after lunch. If you'd like to help please contact me on [plthompson127@gmail.com](mailto:plthompson127@gmail.com), prior to the event. Many thanks in anticipation.**

Finally, I would like to confirm that by entering our competitions, you are giving UTB permission to use (with acknowledgement) any of your images in our newsletters or electronic media.

So make the most of the weather, get your creative and technological juices flowing and help us to create an even better display than last year.

**Members' Day lunch and tea**

**Your food offerings are welcome!**

In the hope that we can continue to feed everyone at lunchtime and teatime on Members' Day, I am again asking ALL members who are attending the day to bring along a contribution. It can either be savoury or sweet. If possible, it would be helpful if you could let me know what you might bring at least a week before the meeting. Also if you could help behind the scenes, please do come and see us in the kitchen. I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you on the day.

Gillian Oldfield – 01993 891565 (all messages left on the answerphone will be listened to).

## Munching Caterpillars

### An update on Butterfly Conservation's flagship education project



The Munching Caterpillars Project was launched in 2012 and ran until the end of 2015. Covering Dorset and Somerset, the Heritage Lottery funded Project was a fantastic opportunity for Butterfly Conservation to stretch its wings in the field of environmental education. More than two years on from the project's close, **Senior Education officer Kate Merry** gives an update on what has happened to Munching Caterpillars since,

and what the future might hold.

Munching Caterpillars was a fantastic project to work on – fun, varied, often frantically busy, demanding but very, very satisfying. The immediate months following the project's close felt very quiet by comparison as I sat, desk bound, completing the end of project review and report for the Heritage Lottery Fund.

I felt proud of the finished report and it was good to reflect on all that the project had achieved; 233 primary school workshops delivered, 99 community events, 16 training workshops – 14,000 children reached in total. The feedback from those taking part in the project gave us confidence that the simple, engaging activities and workshops we devised had certainly enabled us to meet our main aim of enthusing young people in the fascinating world of butterflies, moths and their caterpillars – and importantly, of inspiring them to take action to help them.

Fast forward to 2018 and there are two new Munching Caterpillars projects underway. The first to get started put an urban spin on the original project. 'Munching Caterpillars Goes to Town' is being delivered in Bristol by Project Officer Matt Brierley. Working on behalf of the Somerset and Bristol Branch, who have part-funded and instigated the project, Matt has been visiting schools in the most urban parts of the city where his work to connect children with nature has had a huge impact. Part of Matt's workshops with the children involve planting nectar and food plants in the school grounds and for many of them it is their first experience of holding a trowel and digging the soil. Not surprising then, that their reactions to coming face to face with a hairy Garden Tiger caterpillar are of extreme excitement! This project has benefitted from a fantastic partnership with the University of West England. Student volunteers have worked with Matt in the classrooms and out at events, and in return for their help have enjoyed their time with us and gained some useful





experience.

Over in Hampshire, Project Officer Kate Barrett has begun work on Munching Caterpillars – Wild in Winchester. This project shifts the focus away from the classroom and instead aims to encourage schools from Winchester and beyond to visit our reserve at Magdalen Hill Down. We are thinking of it as a giant, outdoor classroom! Kate will be using this wonderful natural resource as a living illustration of many elements of

the national curriculum. An important part of Kate's work is to establish a partnership with the Winchester Science Centre, which sits right on the edge of the reserve. Kate will be training staff to use the reserve as an opportunity to cover more ecological topics with the hundreds of thousands of school children that visit each year.

The great challenge has been funding these projects. We have had fantastic support from our Branches but fundraising to cover the full costs of these projects has been tough. We will continue to work hard to ensure that our Munching Caterpillars campaign marches steadily on, and we have some new projects in the pipeline that we hope to be able to share soon. We will keep striving to ensure that there is a new generation of butterfly and moth enthusiasts and that we continue to offer opportunities for them to become captivated by these beautiful insects – just as we have.



Have you ever raised a caterpillar only to be amazed, saddened, excited and disappointed to discover that it has transformed not into a beautiful moth or butterfly but into a mass of cocoons?

Have you ever wondered what they are, or why nature will give a caterpillar such a cruel death?

Well, read on and you will also learn how you can contribute to research.

### **What are these cocoons?**

If there are many of them they are almost certainly the cocoons of a small wasp, an ichneumon wasp that has laid its eggs in the egg or caterpillar of your caterpillar. Most Ichneumon wasps are parasitoids that live on and eventually kill their hosts. They are not parasites that live on a host but don't kill it, or predators who always kill their prey.

The larvae of the wasp live and grow within the caterpillar. They feed carefully as they need the caterpillar to live and grow until the point when it would normally pupate, so they absorb nutrients and munch on non essential organs until they are almost mature. There are often over 20 cocoons per caterpillar.

It is not risk free for the wasp. The caterpillar does have an immune system and some wasps will be killed, which is one reason why many of the wasps are host specific, they need the right chemistry to fool the caterpillar's immune system so they are not rejected.

Eventually the caterpillar prepares to pupate as do the wasps. Some will emerge and spin cocoons just before the caterpillar tries to pupate, but most emerge from the host's new pupa. All that will be left of the host's body is an empty shell.

To anyone who has watched the 'Alien' films this will seem horrifyingly familiar. But it's not all horrific. It's a sad end for the infested caterpillar but may actually be good news for its species.

Caterpillars often have a small range of food plants. If the caterpillar population rises too fast then the food plant may disappear locally and all the caterpillars die. It's counter intuitive but if you want to reintroduce a species to a habitat you need its parasitoid too or the reintroduction may well fail.

Remember too that if you have a rare butterfly or moth, its specific parasitoid will be even rarer.

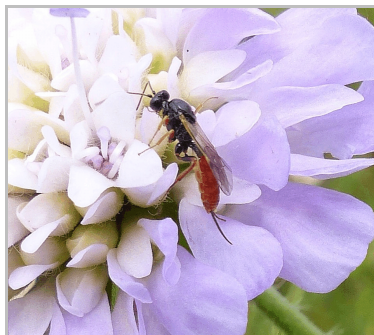
### **Which one is it?**

There are thought to be 2500 species of parasitoid wasps in the UK attacking many types of insect hosts from aphids to lepidoptera.

Many of the smaller wasps are very similar and need examination of the adult under a microscope to identify them. Some are easily identified as adults. If you look closely at scabious flowers on chalk grassland you may be lucky enough to see the wonderful Brassy Longhorn moth (*Nemophora metallica*), look again and you may well see a small wasp almost the same size as the moth. This is *Stilbops ruficornis*,

which is characterised by a red abdomen. Keep watching you may see the male moth trying to guard the flower, or the wasp carefully probing the flower to find the tiny moth egg it will lay its own egg on.

If you want to know more about these fascinating insects or want to try and identify an ichneumonid wasp species then there is a helpful website for the more common ones with a downloadable pdf key with lots of photos.



*Stilbops ruficornis*

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/content/dam/nhmwww/take-part/identify-nature/british-ichneumonid-wasps-id-guide.pdf>

### **Want to help research?**

There are a just a few people in the UK who study these wasps. One of these is Dr Gavin Broad of the Natural History Museum, and he has been kind enough to identify species I have found.

If you find a caterpillar that has been parasitised by a wasp (especially of a less common species) Dr Broad would be interested in receiving the cocoons before they hatch.

You will need make sure the cocoons reach him alive, a specimen pot is ideal, he will also need to know the name of the host species and where and when it was found.

Include a photo of the host caterpillar when it was alive just in case your caterpillar ID was wrong. Remember your return address on the outside so they know it's not a bomb! If you would like an ID then also put your email address in the package.

Then send to;  
Dr Gavin Broad  
Principal Curator in Charge (Insects)  
Department of Life Sciences  
Natural History Museum  
Cromwell Road  
London SW7 5BD





## Silver-spotted Skipper goes to Oxford

Richard Soulsby & Michael Pierce

In the Spring 2017 issue of 'Hairstreak', Nick Bowles and I (RLS) reported on a remarkable sighting by Nick of a Silver-spotted Skipper (SSS for short) in his garden in Tring in August 2016. Remarkable because Tring is 9.5km from the nearest known colony of SSS, and this species is known to be very reluctant to disperse such a distance across inhospitable habitat.

But on 22nd July this year, Michael Pierce chanced upon a SSS nectaring in a field close to the Oxford eastern bypass, and obtained an excellent photo of it (see his report on the UTB website Sightings page). What is more, he saw it again (or another one like it) on the 25th and obtained another clear photo. The field is 19km west of the nearest known SSS colonies at Aston Rowant NNR and Watlington Hill, double the distance of the Tring flight.

Does this mean that SSS are becoming more prone to long-distance (by their standards) migration? If so, what has caused this shift in behaviour – climate change, unusually hot summers? Or are we just becoming more observant of unusual butterfly sightings, and reporting them more openly?

We often think of vagrant butterflies as just an anomaly or curiosity of little importance, but these could be the most vital agents in establishing new colonies, a crucial aspect of long-term survival of habitat-specialist butterfly species. So, if you see a habitat-specialist butterfly a long way from known sites, please do report it either to the UTB website and/or to the relevant Species Champion. You can find a list of Species Champions on our branch website.



Copyright: Michael Pierce

## Butterfly Conservation: Upper Thames Branch

### Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2018

INCOME	2018			2017		
<b>Membership</b>						
Subscriptions	7497.00			6348.00		
Legacies/donations (inc. Gift Aid)	2631.00			793.00		
Events/fundraising	677.35			696.00		
Atlas sales	193.50			927.43		
Other	0.00			1425.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		10998.85			10189.43	
<b>Conservation</b>						
Holtspur Reserve	988.36			1165.50		
Atlas donations	42.50			2565.55		
<i>Sub-total</i>		1030.86			3731.05	
<b>Finance/Admin</b>						
VAT Refund	217.01			42.94		
Holtspur Bank HLS	1234.13			493.69		
<i>Sub-total</i>		1451.14			536.63	
Total income			<b>13480.85</b>			<b>14457.11</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>						
<b>Membership</b>						
Newsletter	3381.39			3593.64		
Events/fundraising	414.03			443.73		
Stock purchases	460.62			81.47		
Other	0.00			1220.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		4256.04			5338.84	
<b>Conservation</b>						
Holtspur Reserve	396.00			1071.99		
Atlas (postage)	0.00			15.40		
Equipment/other	270.00			988.19		

	2018			2017		
HLS re Holtspur Bank	1234.13			493.69		
Other Projects	505.50			748.33		
Subs/donations	6096.00			4096.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		10519.63			9430.60	
<b>Finance/Admin</b>						
Admin/Insurance	75.00			208.42		
VAT	96.24			516.70		
<i>Sub-total</i>		171.24			725.12	
<b>Total expenditure</b>			<b>14946.91</b>			<b>15494.56</b>
Net income/expenditure			-1466 .06			-1037.45
Cash b/f			13165.04			12185.49
Total cash available			<b>11698.98</b>			<b>11148.04</b>
<b>STATEMENT OF NET ASSETS AT 31 MARCH 2018</b>						
<b>NET ASSETS</b>						
Fixed assets (after depr'n)		0.00			0.00	
Stock, debtors & creditors		0.00			0.00	
Cash		13716.98			13165.04	
Total			<b>13716.98</b>			13165.04
<b>ALLOCATION OF NET ASSETS</b>						
Endowment		0.00			0.00	
Restricted		447.50			447.50	
Designated		7287.25			5007.00	
Unallocated		5982.23			7710.54	
<b>Total</b>			<b>13716.98</b>			13165.04

If any member not attending the AGM has any questions on the accounts please email the Treasurer.



## Field Meeting Reports

**Aston Upthorpe, Oxon, 20 May 2018**

**Gerry and Penny Kendall**

There is now a long-standing tradition of Butterfly Conservation Spring Field Meetings at Aston Upthorpe in search of Spring Skippers. Almost as firmly established is the traditional lament about the unkind weather for this event. But not this year. The group which assembled was greeted with warmth, almost unbroken sun and light winds. As a result we had a record breaking day.

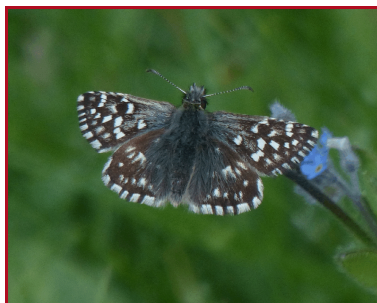
Our targets were the Spring Skippers, Dingy and Grizzled, but also Green Hairstreak and Small Blue. Duke of Burgundy, alas, seems lost to the site. Things began very promisingly since a Dingy Skipper appeared in the parking area while the group was assembling. Fighting off the temptation to stay put and see whether the butterflies would come to us we set off South towards Juniper Valley and the Ridgeway.

Our serious looking began on a chalk bank where bushes offered traditionally favoured perching places for the Green Hairstreak. They kept us waiting a few minutes, but a couple appeared in due course. While we were waiting another Dingy Skipper showed itself. When all (except the photographers of course) were ready to move on it became apparent that Grizzled Skipper, our third target, had been waiting in the wings until a sufficient audience had gathered; two or three were found within twenty metres of the Green Hairstreaks.

Perhaps letting the butterflies come to us was the best strategy after all? But the best Small Blue sites were some distance off and we resolutely set off towards them. We were of course interested in all butterflies, not just the target species, and we were rewarded with a steady stream of sightings. Orange-tips may be reasonably common but their flight season is on the short side and we were able to enjoy several of these wonderfully cheerful insects. A Holly Blue was followed by an early Common Blue; surely Small Blue would follow?

While we walked Small Heath and Small Copper kept us from being bored and large areas of wild strawberry in flower attracted several more Grizzled Skippers. Peacock was the first of the Vannesids to appear, reminding us to look at the sky as well as the turf. Later there were Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral.

The traditional Small Blue Hot Spot was on the Ridgeway, about as far from base as we were going to get. But the day was so good that our last target species met us more than half way – a couple of Small Blues were nectaring in Juniper Valley. However, we continued round the usual route anyway and were rewarded



Grizzled Skipper  
*David Ferguson*

by more good sightings of skippers, Small Blues and even a handful of Green Hairstreaks.

Just as we were reaching the cars we found a Small Blue collecting minerals in a puddle. Had we known we could indeed have “bagged” our targets with minimal walking. But that, of course, wasn’t the aim of the exercise.

As well as the butterflies there were several moths. Cinnabar was there in large numbers and there was an early Silver Y. Together with the usual grass moths they provided quite a distraction from the butterflies. We also saw some interesting birds: curlew, lapwing, corn bunting and yellowhammer stick in the memory.



Many thanks to all who participated

Butterfly list: Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Brimstone, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Speckled Wood, Small Heath.

### **Holtspur Bottom Nature Reserve, Bucks, 23/06/2018**

**Brenda Mobbs**

Twenty-two people came to Holtspur Bottom Reserve for the walk to look for Summer butterflies. It looked its best with the meadows full of flowers and awash with Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Marbled Whites. Also seen were Small and Common Blues, Large, Small and Essex Skippers, Speckled Woods, Brimstones, Large Whites, Purple Hairstreaks, Small Tortoiseshells, Small Coppers, Commas and a Red Admiral. There was even a fleeting glimpse of a Dark Green Fritillary which has not been seen on the reserve for a few years. However, at the end of the walk, when over half of the



participants had left, Nick noticed something fluttering around the elm trees that had been planted several years ago. After 10 – 15 minutes of watching and attempts at taking photos it was confirmed that there were at least four White-letter Hairstreaks flying around the elms. Great excitement as it is a first for Holtspur Bottom Reserve. It is a very positive result for the hard work put in there.



Nick explaining the history of Holtspur Bottom Reserve

*Tony Gillie*



*Tony Gillie*



## Hackpen Hill, Berks, 1st July 2018

Gillian Taylor

With temperatures in the high twenties, four people turned up to accompany us to Hackpen Hill and the Devil's Punchbowl. The open access field had been grazed to the ground by sheep in the early spring, leaving little for the cattle which followed them, but it looks as though the flowers have benefitted although I wonder how much nectar is available in the dry conditions. Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Marbled Whites were abundant, Small Heaths still well represented and a few Chalkhill Blues were also seen as well as Small Whites, Small Tortoiseshells and Large Skippers. However, the stars of the morning were the Dark Green Fritillaries which flew nonstop in the vegetation around us – impossible to count but at least eight – and quite impossible to photograph. Not wishing to be beaten, I went back two days later at 9 o'clock in the morning and got my picture.



Dark Green Fritillary  
*Gillian Taylor*

## Butterfly Walk, Tring Park, Herts, 8th July

Nick Bowles

The same afternoon that England were beating Sweden in the last 16 of the World Cup, five people (perhaps the only five in southern England not watching the game?) were walking around Tring Park in hot sunshine, as part of the weekend of joint events between the Natural History Museum, Herts & Middx BC and UTB BC. These events organised to celebrate the life and work of ex-president of BC, Gordon Beningfield.

After walking through some fairly empty and very dry grassland terrain, we eventually made the welcome shade of the Park's woodland and here, there was a greater density of butterflies, including Silver-washed Fritillary and Purple Hairstreak among most of the commoner species you might expect in July. Strangely every single 'white' we could identify was either Green-veined or Large White. So, no Small Whites were recorded and even stranger we saw no Speckled Wood! Presumably the weeks of drought leading to this point (and continuing afterwards) had reduced this species' numbers. We identified a total of 16 species. There was no sign of Purple Emperor which is seen here occasionally.

Unusually, Tring Park was deserted. The cows were motionless under the deepest shade and many of the butterflies were skulking in the scrub and bushes; but as the walk began its return leg (at about 16.00) there were appreciably more butterflies nectaring in the sun. Top tip for hot days; go out early, or late, to see a larger number of active butterflies. Photography might seem easier in the early afternoon when things are roosting, but they tended to be sitting in shade.

## Conservation Work Parties

You might combine a walk around the site with a brief session of work. Nobody has to work for the entire session but obviously you may. There are a variety of tasks and no great strength is required. Tools and full instructions are provided. **Please bring a drink and a snack.**

All work parties start at **10.00 a.m.** unless otherwise stated. At Holtspur Bottom and Aston Upthorpe they usually finish about 13.00 though in good weather conditions they may continue until about 14.00.

PLEASE, **ALWAYS** CONTACT THE TASK LEADER IN ADVANCE.

**Details frequently change** according to weather, number of volunteers etc. The planned work and contact detail for each event will be shown on the Events page of the UTB website.

<b>Holtspur Bottom</b> Meeting point: SU918906 HP9 1BT	
Contact: Nick Bowles 01442 382276	All on Sunday
4 Nov 2018	guided walk, planting and hedge laying
2 Dec 2018	‘scrape’ weeding & hedge laying
6 Jan 2019	scrub removal, hedging & bonfire (if dry)
27 Jan 2019	as above (tbc)
17 Feb 2019	to be decided. Please check before attending

<b>Aston Upthorpe</b> Meeting point: at the grain dryer, SU550844				
Contact: Jim Asher 01865 391727 jim.asher@btinternet.com				All on Sunday
28 Oct 18	25 Nov 18	9 Dec 18	20 Jan 19	10 Feb 19

**Brown Hairstreak egg hunts** - full detail on the Events page

Sunday 18 Nov 2018 Slade Camp, Oxfordshire

Sunday 16 Dec 2018 Rushbeds Wood, Buckinghamshire

Tuesday 01 Jan 2019 Otmoor, Oxfordshire

Saturday 02 Mar 2019 Bernwood Meadows, Buckinghamshire

Contact: [Dave Wilton](mailto:dave.wilton@utb.org) 01296 658701

There will be many other conservation events through the winter and sites where we expect to work are listed below. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the dates are not decided as we go to publication. Please check the Events page of the Upper Thames branch website for details as they become clear.

Aston Upthorpe. Private site	
Ancott. MOD land near Bicester	
Bradenham, Bucks. National Trust	proposed Feb half-term 2019
Buttler's Hangings. Private site	Proposed Sat 9th Feb 2019
Caversham Lakes, Reading. Private site	
Deanfield, Bucks. Private site	proposed 29th Jan 2019
Grangelands, Bucks. BBOWT	proposed Tues 5th Feb 2019
Milestone Wood, Reading	
Maidenhead Thicket. National Trust	
Moor Wood, Lane End, Bucks. Private site	proposed Thurs 20th Dec 2018
Saunderton, Bucks. Private site	proposed Tues 23rd Oct 2018
Shotover Park, Oxford. Oxford City Council	
Wardrobes, Bucks. Private site	proposed Mon 8th Oct 2018
Upton, disused rail track, Oxon. Sustrans route	

## New Members

## Brenda Mobbs

Since the last newsletter 62 new members have joined and the membership is now over 1700. The more members we have the more we can achieve as a branch. Please encourage your friends to join Butterfly Conservation either on the website or by leaflet. Please let me know if you would like any membership leaflets to pass on.

A warm welcome to all new members who have joined since the last newsletter was published.

17 from Berkshire  
31 from Buckinghamshire  
12 from Oxfordshire  
2 from Elsewhere

All of you are welcome to join field meetings, work parties and attend Members' Day and New Members' Day. Details of events are found in this newsletter or on our website: [www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)



## Autumn Moths



Pink-barred Sallow  
*Dave Wilton*



Barred Sallow  
*Dave Wilton*



Clifden Nonpareil  
*John Thacker*



Mocha  
*Dave Wilton*



Centre-barred Sallow  
*David Ferguson*



Delicate  
*Richard Ellis*

In Buckinghamshire, the Bucks Invertebrate Group organise a lot of field trips which include studying butterflies and especially moths. Their list of field trips is available on their web site:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bucksinvertebrategroup/Home>

In Berkshire, the Berkshire Moth Group hold regular meetings on the second Thursday of every month. They organise other events as well. Refer to their web site for details. <https://sites.google.com/site/berksmoths/Home>

## Upper Thames Branch Website

[www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

<http://butterfly-conservation.org/288/upper-thames-branch.html>

Have your butterfly sightings and photos posted on the website by sending them to: [sightings@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:sightings@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)

Upper Thames Branch Moth Sightings Blog

<http://upperthamesmoths.blogspot.co.uk>

Follow us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Butterflies.Berkshire.Buckinghamshire.Oxfordshire>

and Twitter - @UpperThamesBC

and Instagram - [utb\\_butterfly\\_conservation](https://www.instagram.com/utb_butterfly_conservation)

Holtspur Bottom Reserve

<http://www.holtspurbottom.info>

## Upper Thames Branch Officers

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