

# Hairstreak

No 104 Spring 2018



Butterfly  
Conservation



Upper Thames  
Branch





Purple Hairstreak

1st in UK Butterflies category

Jonathan Jones



Bath White  
(*Pontia daplidice*)

Bath White

1st in Overseas Butterflies category

Tony Gillie



Articles and photographs for inclusion in this newsletter are welcome.  
Photographs should be sent as jpg (or similar) files and not embedded in a document or album.

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

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Cover photo: Oak Beauty by David Ferguson

Opposite page: photo competition winners

Background: Bernwood Meadows, Oxon

### BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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

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

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Members' Day in Benson (which was a wonderful day, so thanks again to all that played their part in organising and presenting that) bought forward new offers of help with various activities. None-the-less, I'm repeating that call for extra hands to share our load. Despite more people coming forward, some volunteers had to reduce their input, plus we need to increase our work in many areas so we are constantly in need of even more helpers.

I'm surprised that no-one has offered to attend events and take photos for our archives. We have some excellent photographers in the branch (just look at the images on our Facebook page from the Members' Day competition

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

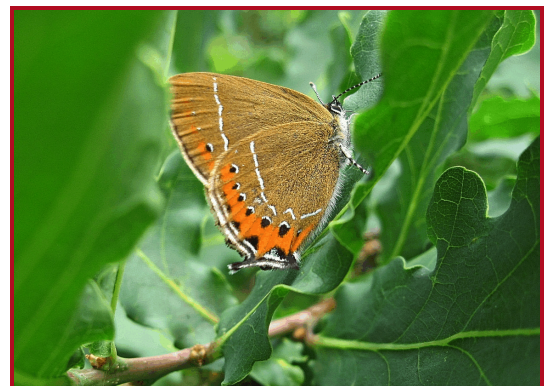
I would have thought that this task would appeal to someone who finds conservation work too taxing.

Whatever you can offer, we always hope more people will get involved. A list of potential ways to help is on page 25. Please get in touch and tell us how you might help butterflies and moths.

2019's achievements are too numerous to list but I will pick out three: approx. 12,500 Big Butterfly Count flyers distributed by our volunteers at various summer events, a record number of members returning survey results to 'official' schemes (plus all those submitting garden records to Emma) and the very generous donations given to our Big Give 5 Hairstreaks project.

Despite a rather ambitious target for our 5 Hairstreaks project you delighted us when, in just one week, we amassed more than £30,000. In 2019 Butterfly Conservation will appoint a part time project leader to start securing a more certain future for the rather beleaguered Hairstreak species. As the only branch with 'natural' colonies of all five Hairstreak species and more colonies of the Black Hairstreak than any other, we are uniquely positioned to conserve these beautiful insects. As the scarcest three of these (Black, Brown and White-letter) are primarily species of hedgerows and thickets, they tend to get overlooked by woodland and grassland conservation projects. And very worryingly, the National Infrastructure Commission have decided to make the very strip of England where all five are found and the only place where the Black Hairstreak lives, between Cambridge and Oxford, into an economic growth corridor. This means new rail and motorway links, plus up to a million new homes and businesses. Additionally HS2 will carve its way through the same pastoral landscape.

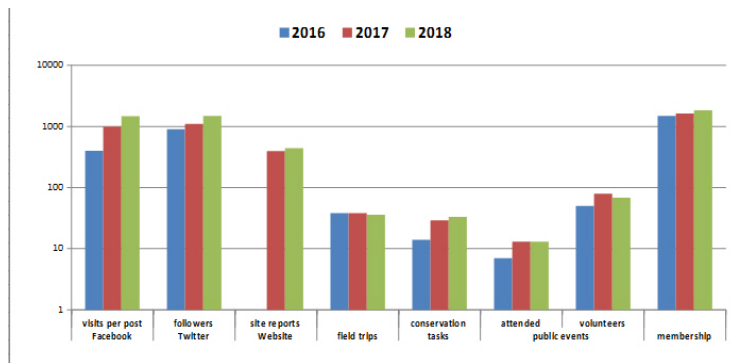
I'm really expecting great things in 2019. We have opportunities to positively influence several truly major infrastructure projects and I am determined to continue to increase our conservation efforts (if you missed Members' Day you might not have



*Black Hairstreak*  
*Stuart Hodges*



seen this graphic showing how the branch members continually step up and beat the previous year's effort). *Note the log scale.*



2019 is also the last year of the current recording cycle. We will rerun the free training courses for those wishing to increase butterfly or moth identification and survey technique, skills (providing you can tell us where these skills will be used). Details can be found on page 27. Previous trainees have augmented existing transect teams and some have even established new transects, whilst others have reported on smaller scale targeted surveys for single species.

By the time that this edition reaches you there will be an electronic version of the previous one on the website (along with masses of other information of course). Please look at that and if you still take the paper copy, please consider if an electronic version could replace it. The Branch can use the postage saved (by not sending you a paper copy), on conservation.

Finally, it is tempting to think that the reason I rarely hear of things we should be doing better is because we are delivering what you want. But, if you think we could be doing even more, please get in touch.

## **UTB Winter Social - Sunday 10th March 2019, 2pm – 5pm**

To be held in the Canons' Room, Benson Parish Church,  
Church Road, Benson, Oxon OX10 6SF  
OS 164, SU615916

A relaxed get-together to exchange butterfly and moth experiences, bring your photos to display (not a competition), and see some absorbing slideshows over tea and cakes with your fellow members. All welcome!

If you can offer a 15-minute slideshow, please contact  
[richardsoulsby@gmail.com](mailto:richardsoulsby@gmail.com) or phone 07747 313203.

The Canons' Room\* is a warm, modern room located behind the church.  
Roadside parking is on Church Road or on adjacent St Helen's Avenue.

\* Apostrophe-hunters: it is named after *two* canons



## New Website for Upper Thames Branch

### David Hastings

When I took over as Webmaster, I found the UTB website difficult to maintain and update (as data was all mixed up with page layout), and difficult to navigate. Having spent a good portion of my career designing websites, I decided to come up with something better.

During the winter of 2017/18 I developed a new design, which (as far as possible) separated data out into a database. Navigation was made easier by having a consistent horizontal menu bar at the top of each page.

I kept working on the new website during 2018, and, with the help of a few testers, ironed out some issues with it (thanks to the volunteers that helped with this). I made the switch to the new version on 22nd December, in time for the new season. There were a few glitches that needed sorting out, but these were relatively minor.

New features include:

- A summary of first sightings, events and news on the home page
- The ability to filter events by type
- A revised 'recent sightings' page - only one month's data at a time is displayed
- A new form for submitting sightings and photos (although you can continue to send email to [sightings@upperthames-butterflies](mailto:sightings@upperthames-butterflies) if you prefer)
- First sightings can be shown by species or by year
- Each first sighting for a species is compared with the mean emergence date for that species (a negative value means that the sighting is earlier than the mean, and a positive one is later than the mean)
- A list of sites is included with the description of each species of butterfly
- An updated list of sites, with photos where available

Planned features include searching recent sightings for a species, adding a distribution map for each species, adding maps of each county showing butterfly sites, adding more site photographs, populating the 10K Square champions map and adding transect information.

The new design isn't static. If you have suggestions for improvements or new features, please get in touch.



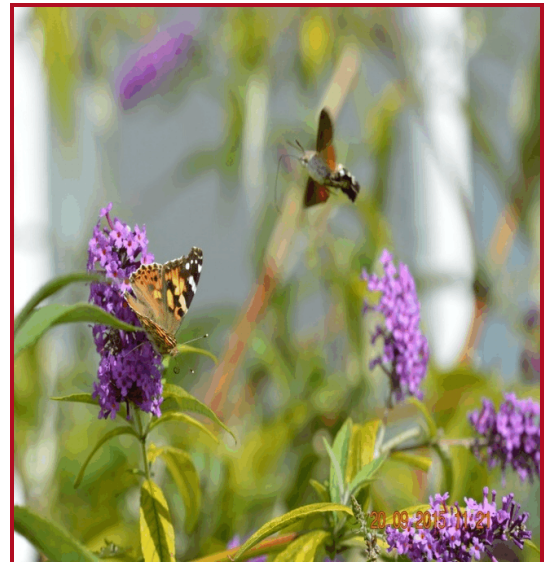
When the UTB attend a public event it isn't long until someone asks, "I hardly ever see any butterflies on my buddleia. Can you explain why?"

The answer often surprises people.

Any adult butterfly that you ever see was formerly a caterpillar. If your garden only has food for adult butterflies there will be nowhere for caterpillars to live. Without the caterpillar's food there will be no adult butterflies.



Buddleia in a caterpillar-free garden



Buddleia in a caterpillar-friendly garden

**As supporters of the cause of conserving butterflies and moths it really is down to us to make our gardens caterpillar friendly.**

After all, most people will follow the current gardening trends. They will continue to pave areas and plant non-native species in overly tidy gardens. Gardens in which lawn mowers, strimmers and leaf blowers are more often seen than any butterfly.

Which do you want to see in your garden?

As you plan your garden this spring please consider these simple steps to help restore the butterflies in and around your garden:

- Leave strips of grass alongside hedges and fences uncut until autumn
- Plant low growing caterpillar food plants into lawns (e.g. birds-foot trefoil)
- Plant native plants rather than oversea exotics
- Leave plants in place after flowering, as something might be feeding on the leaves, until autumn
- Learn to tolerate the odd weed – most will do no harm.



A number of our members have adopted a 10K square, coordinating the recording for the current butterfly atlas, which runs from 2015 – 2019. The report below describes how some of them have been getting on in 2018.

Steve Holliday looks after SP34, which lies to the west of Banbury in north-west Oxfordshire. He reports that a total of 23 species were recorded in 2018, compared to 24 in the 2005 – 2014 Atlas. Missing were Clouded Yellow and Small Heath, while a female Purple Hairstreak in their Shutford garden on 19th July was his first in the square and an addition to the Atlas. With few wildflower meadows and limited unimproved grassland, Small Copper, Common Blue and Brown Argus are among the scarcer species. Where this habitat does occur, such as at Banbury Ornithological Society's Balscote Quarry reserve, you can see almost all of the species in the square. Twenty-two species were seen there this year and grassland and scrub management on site appears to be benefitting species such as Marbled White with a peak count of 77 on 24 June. Elsewhere small numbers of Painted Lady were seen at scattered locations and Holly Blue was scarce and looks to be under-recorded in the square. Encouraged by the sighting this summer, next season Steve will be visiting areas of oak/ash woodland in the square and SP44 to look again for Purple Hairstreaks.



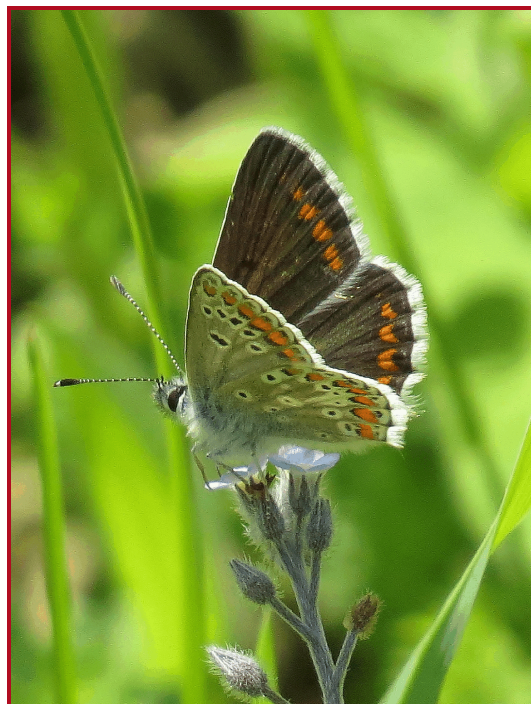
Small Copper  
*David Dennis*

Jan Haseler looks after SU66, which lies to the south-west of Reading in Berkshire. Purple Hairstreak is a butterfly which has been seriously under-recorded in the 10K square. A good time to look for it is on warm, sunny evenings and the weather in July 2018 was ideal. The first Purple Hairstreak hunt was on the evening of 10th July in the north-west corner of the 10K square. Setting out westwards along the A4, first stop was the car park of the Spring Inn at Sulhampstead. Two silvery shapes flitting through the foliage of a big oak were soon confirmed as Purple Hairstreaks. Next stop was Lamden's Wood on the steep north side of the Kennet Valley, where the target was spotted in another big oak. Third stop was the waste recycling depot next to the Kennet and Avon canal at Padworth, where Purple Hairstreaks were seen in the row of roadside oaks. The final stop was the oil storage depot on the south side of the Kennet valley, but the sun had set and the butterflies had vanished. The next outing, on the evening of 24th July, was harder work. There were no signs of the butterflies in the roadside oaks by Ufton Nerve Church. The footpath across the field next to Ufton Court had a row of oaks in full sun along the



hedge line. But it was windy and again, there were no butterflies to be seen. But just back from the exposed edge of nearby woodland, near the top of a more sheltered oak, the Purple Hairstreaks appeared. Next stop was the car park of BBOWT's Decoy Heath reserve, where a sunny and sheltered oak quickly yielded its Purple Hairstreaks. The final stop was the clearing next to the road at Hundred Acre Piece near Mortimer. The third outing, with the temperature still at a sultry 26°C, was in the south-east of the 10K square on 25th July. The Devil's Highway is a Roman road which forms part of the county boundary with Hampshire. A big oak next to the bridleway quickly yielded several Purple Hairstreaks, then it was on to the row of oaks in the field margin below the Elm Tree Inn at Beech Hill. Finally, the big oak by the footpath next to Stratfield Mortimer church had another two butterflies. Given a couple of warm July evenings in 2019, every tetrad should have its Purple Hairstreak records.

Stephanie Brown looks after SU77, which includes Reading and the area to the north-east. It is a mainly urban or suburban area, but also contains a variety of habitats, including patches of mixed woodland, open farmland, wetland and managed parks and nature reserves. This year, Stephanie concentrated in particular in some of the open arable areas north east of Reading, and in parts of Woodley and Earley, where few butterflies had been recorded during the life of this Atlas. Like last year, this summer seems to have been one of mixed fortunes for our Berkshire butterflies. Large and Small Whites were much more plentiful than last year. However, it was disappointing to see even fewer blues, skippers, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell than in the past three years. There were a couple of highlights. While exploring the open arable areas, she found relatively large numbers of Large Whites, Small Whites and Meadow Browns as well as Speckled Woods. Secondly the Small Heath butterflies also appeared again on the unexpected sites where she saw them last year. During 2014 and 2015, Stephanie conducted a number of surveys on behalf of the RSPB and Butterfly Conservation on a farm north of Twyford. During those years, she recorded a wide variety of species (up to 20) many in significant numbers. Amongst those on the list were Purple Hairstreak and Brown Argus. Unfortunately, since then she has recorded fewer species, albeit the more common species such as Whites and Meadow Browns still appear in respectable numbers. Although this could be due to the unfavourable weather we have experienced over the last few years, the increased industrialisation of the site may also have had an effect. Stephanie will be leaving the area in 2020. She hopes that someone will come forward to take over SU77, and has kindly offered to help her successor to get to know the 10K square in 2019.



Brown Argus

*John Ford*



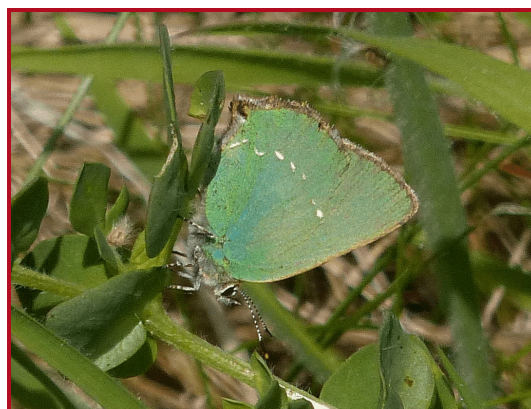
John Chapman looks after SU78, which includes Henley-on-Thames and parts of the Chilterns to the north. John reports that the counts on his 10K patch were well down on last year, particularly Silver-washed Fritillaries, Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks and Orange-tips. Gatekeepers were down a bit, as were Brimstones, but he did report an extremely healthy population of Common Emerald Damselflies on a day out walking by the Thames in April, when their colours catching in the sun made a splendid sight.

Chris Tyler-Smith looks after four squares in the north-east of the Upper Thames area (north of Milton Keynes), SP84, SP85, SP94 and SP95. Chris and Yari visited on 4th and 5th August, covering 30 tetrads over the two days. Two species did spectacularly well: Brown Argus and Common Blue. Brown Argus was recorded in 23 out of the 30 tetrads, and Common Blue in 21. These were overall low-quality tetrads and neither species had been much in evidence in previous years.

Paul Bowyer looks after SU98, which lies to the north of Slough in Buckinghamshire. For the last three years he has been walking his dog in the area of Farnham Park southwards towards Farnham Royal church. He had noticed a lot of scrubby elm trees. This year during the first week of July he made a concerted effort to find the White-letter Hairstreak. With the help of a friend they found one at about 9am low down posing for photographs and two more along the main footpath flitting above the elms. This was his first ever multiple sighting of White-letter Hairstreak in SU98.

TQ07/8/9 are on the far south-eastern fringe of the Upper Thames region. In 2018, Wendy Wilson and Derek Haynes shared the Buckinghamshire parts of these 3 squares, but this was the last year of their partnership, since Wendy will be moving north to the Milton Keynes area. Derek reports that it has been a mixed year on the whole: 'winners' including increased numbers of Brown Argus (for the first time ever in TQ0900 and for the first time during the current atlas period in TQ0290, 0084 and 0296), Purple Hairstreak (with 'new' sightings this period in a TQ0090, 0092 and 0296, and present in larger numbers at lower levels) and Small Copper; and 'losers' including the three more common skippers (and with a seemingly shorter time on the wing), the more common vanessids, and just one sighting of Purple Emperor in Black Park. White Admiral, whilst not in abundance, were back again for the first time this period in TQ0088 and 0288, Denham Marsh Wood. Highlight of the season for Wendy was recording Green Hairstreak at Higher Denham for the first time since 2012. Derek writes that he would welcome help in 2019 in the northern part of TQ07/08/09.

We have a number of 10K squares across the three counties, particularly in the north and west of the region, where we are looking for one or more volunteers to help coordinate recording. The map below shows whether squares are already adopted, need additional help or are unassigned. If you think you could help, please contact Jan Haseler. (Tel: 0118 9414750, email [jan.haseler@btinternet.com](mailto:jan.haseler@btinternet.com)).



Green Hairstreak  
David Ferguson

			<b>SP45</b>				SP85 C	SP95 C	
		SP34 C	SP44 C	<b>SP54</b>	<b>SP64</b>	<b>SP74</b>	SP84 C	SP94 C	
<b>SP23</b>	SP33 C	<b>SP43</b>	<b>SP53</b>	<b>SP63</b>	<b>SP73</b>	<b>SP83</b>	<b>SP93</b>		
<b>SP22</b>	<b>SP32</b>	<b>SP42</b>	SP52 C	SP62 ?	SP72 ?	SP82 ?	SP92 ?		
<b>SP21</b>	SP31 C	SP41 C	SP51 ?	SP61 C	<b>SP71</b>	SP81 C	SP91 ?	TL01	
SP20 C	<b>SP30</b>	SP40 C	SP50 C	SP60 C	<b>SP70</b>	SP80 C	SP90 C	TL00 ?	
SU29 C	SU39 C	SU49 C	SU59 C	SU69 C	<b>SU79</b>	SU89 C	SU99 C	TQ09 ?	
SU28 C	SU38 C	SU48 C	SU58 C	SU68 C	SU78 C	SU88 C	SU98 C	TQ08 ?	
<b>SU27</b>	SU37 C	SU47 C	SU57 C	SU67 C	SU77 ?	SU87 C	SU97 ?	TQ07 C	
	<b>SU36</b>	<b>SU46</b> ?	SU56 C	SU66 C	<b>SU76</b>	SU86 C	<b>SU96</b>		
	<b>SU35</b>								

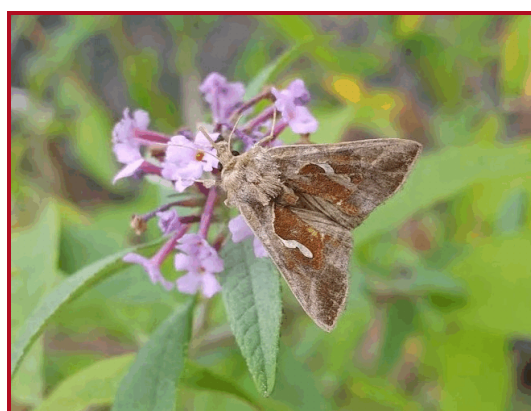
Key					
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; background-color: #FFDAB9; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span style="font-size: 8px;">SP20 C</span> </div>	10K Champion In place	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; background-color: #FFFFE0; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span style="font-size: 8px;">SP62 ?</span> </div>	More help wanted	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; background-color: #ADD8E6; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span style="font-size: 8px;">SP30</span> </div>	Vacant square



## Members' Day, 27 October 2018, Benson. Oxon Jan Haseler

Our annual Members' Day and AGM were held at Benson Village Hall. Just over 100 members attended, and as well as the programme of talks, we had stalls from Richard Lewington, Pemberley Books and Sue Taylor, our annual photographic competition, a quiz set by Sue Taylor and the usual wonderful display of food.

**Nick Bowles** welcomed members to the day's proceedings. The first talk was by **Jan Haseler**, who gave a summary of the weather in the last year and a review of moths in the Upper Thames area in 2018. Record-breaking sunshine totals in the cold anticyclonic weather of February were followed by the 'Beast from the East' and the 'Mini-Beast' in March. After a cold, wet start, the second half of April was very warm, with a maximum temperature of 26.7C making the 19th the warmest ever April day. This was followed by a very sunny May and the sunniest ever July. March, June and July were all very dry. There had been a number of new county moth records, including the first sightings of Dewick's Plusia in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire; the first Marbled Clover, Golden Pearl (*Anania verbascalis*) and Maize Moth (*Spoladea recurvalis*) in Buckinghamshire and the first Feathered Ranunculus and Southern Chestnut in Berkshire. Dark Crimson Underwing was seen in Buckinghamshire for the first time since 1844; the third ever Oak Rustic was recorded in Oxfordshire and the second L-Album Wainscot and Golden Twin-spot were recorded in Berkshire.



Dewick's Plusia  
Marc Botham

**Nick Bowles**, helped by feedback from the audience, gave a review of butterflies in the Upper Thames area in 2018. Black Hairstreak had a very good year, with significantly more reports and higher numbers than usual. As Species Champion, Nick was particularly excited by the report of a fresh mating pair of Chalkhill Blues at Grangelands on 19 October, the first ever record of second generation Chalkhill Blues in Buckinghamshire. Another sighting two days later was the latest ever record for the Upper Thames region. Adonis Blue too had a good year, extending its range eastwards through the Chilterns. There were more reports of Purple Hairstreak than usual. It was suggested that in the hot weather, they had been coming down from the trees more frequently. New colonies of White-letter Hairstreak were reported from Whitecross Green Wood and our Holtspur Bottom Reserve. Wood White was reported more widely than expected. In the autumn, there were high numbers of third brood Small Coppers and



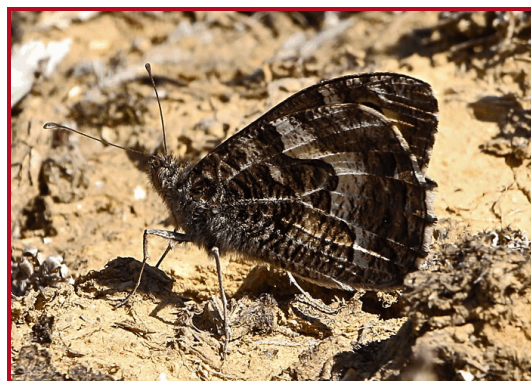
Michael Pitt-Payne



exceptional numbers of Clouded Yellows at BBOWT's Chimney Meadows reserve. Other species which had done well this year included Large and Small White, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Duke of Burgundy. However, it was not all good news. Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma and Dingy Skipper in particular had a poor year.

The next speaker was **Tony Gillie**, who gave a report on the Upper Thames Branch's Holtspur Bottom Reserve. White-letter Hairstreak has been seen for the first time, 15 years after disease-resistant elms were planted on the reserve. Numbers of butterflies on the transect were 7% down on last year, with Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Green Hairstreak and Silver-washed Fritillary doing better, while Small Blue, Meadow Brown, Marbled White and Dingy Skipper declined. Although there were many more Dark Mullein plants on the reserve, only a few more Striped Lychnis larvae were seen. Close examination of photographs of the larvae revealed the tiny eggs of a parasitoid tachinid fly (ie one that kills its host). This year, there was no hay cut on the reserve, just sheep grazing. This was considerably cheaper and the results appeared to be just as good. We were very grateful to Chiltern Rangers, who supplied replacement fence posts for the sheep fencing, after our own road pins were stolen. Violet seeds have been planted on the Triangle Bank. Lindengate are propagating seeds and cuttings from our disease-resistant elms.

After a short coffee break, **Steve Wheatley**, Butterfly Conservation's Senior Regional Officer for the South-East, told members about the SE Regional Action Plan, and how it fits into Butterfly Conservation's UK Conservation Strategy. He showed a map of the Priority Landscapes which lie within the Upper Thames area: the Chilterns, the Northern Clay Vales, the Thames Basin Heaths, the North Wessex Downs and the Yardley Chase area. The highest priority butterfly species for our area are Wood White, Duke of Burgundy, Marsh Fritillary, Grayling, Silver-spotted Skipper and Adonis Blue, with the first three of these also being at the highest priority nationally. The highest priority moths are Forester, Striped Lychnis, Drab Looper, Shoulder-striped Clover, Barberry Carpet, Pale Shining Brown, Heart Moth, Sloe Carpet, Four-spotted, Silvery Arches, Goat Moth, Chalk Carpet and Scarce Burnished Brass. Steve showed graphs of the rate of decline for habitat specialist butterflies from 1976-2018 and for farmland, woodland and urban species from 1990-2015, showing that the wider countryside species are declining at a faster rate than the habitat specialists. The objective of the Regional Action Plan is to influence land use and agricultural policy that affects our butterflies and moths. To achieve this aim, Butterfly Conservation works with partners including BBOWT, the RSPB, the National Trust, Thames Water, Natural England and Lindengate. Steve then showed a species recovery curve and invited people to place various priority species on it. The curve started with a decline, labelled 'Status assessment', dipped to a minimum, labelled 'Solution testing', climbed back up through a phase labelled 'Recovery management',



Grayling  
David Hastings

and flattened off at a stage labelled 'Sustainable management'. Wall Brown, Wood White and Silver-studded Blue were all assigned to various stages of 'Status assessment', Marsh Fritillary was assigned to 'Solution testing', Black Hairstreak was placed high up on 'Recovery management' and Adonis Blue was assigned to 'Sustainable management'. Steve pointed out that when we have halted the decline and reached the 'Sustainable management' phase, we still have to keep doing the work to maintain the habitat in a favourable state.

The final speaker of the morning was **David Wilding**, the site manager of the RSPB's Otmoor Reserve. He outlined the history of Otmoor, starting from its wild, wet origins. It was partially drained in the 1830s when the new River Ray channel and various drainage ditches were dug. In the 1960s and 1970s, powerful pumps enabled about half of Otmoor to be used for arable farming. The RSPB bought the reserve in 1997. The site management plan for 2003–2008 included a list of species which might be brought back over the next 25 years. Some, such as the Bittern, Marsh Harrier and Otter, are already there. Others, such as the Marsh Fritillary, are still just aspirations. Marsh Fritillary was last recorded on the adjoining MOD land in 1994. The larval foodplant, Devil's-bit Scabious, is still abundant there. Helped by a 5-year grant, green hay from Asham Meads, a nearby BBOWT reserve with species-rich hay meadows, has been spread on RSPB land, but so far this has only resulted in a single new Devil's-bit Scabious flower. In 2011, one of the RSPB fields was dug up and reseeded, with Devil's-bit Scabious included in the mix – but this gave just 30 new plants. Volunteers have been growing plug plants and one place that they are doing well is the reservoir bund, which gets a lot of trampling. A trial has been set up, comparing plug plants in a dry field and a wetter field, and in fenced and unfenced plots. Now in the third year, numbers of plants in most of the trial plots are declining, but new seedlings are beginning to appear inside the fence in the drier field. Tussocks, which are larger in ungrazed fields, are important for the caterpillars, giving vegetation for sunbathing and a refuge from flood waters. Further studies of the ecology of growing Devil's-bit Scabious are ongoing.

After a delicious lunch, members had the opportunity to vote in the photographic competition, try the quiz and visit the stalls, before being summoned back to their seats for the branch AGM. This was followed by an update from **Jim Asher** on the progress of recording for the 2015-2019 butterfly atlas. Over 70,000 records for 2017 were submitted. So far, we have about 10,000 records for 2018. Areas to the west of Banbury and south-west of Hungerford are looking particularly under-recorded at the moment. The maps for Brimstone and Orange-tip are looking incomplete, indicating that we need to do more early-season recording. Gaps in the Meadow Brown maps show where there are gaps in summer records. Jim asked members to submit any outstanding records. He will then produce maps of target areas for 2019. He asked members to submit their 2019 records at the end of each month, so that we can quickly identify the remaining areas with missing data.

The next item was an intriguing modern dance performance by **Catherine Burfield**. After joining us on a number of field trips, Catherine explored a subject which she felt we rarely considered - the re-shaping of the insects in their pupal stage and final emergence. Her idea was conveyed through dance captured on video and a short live performance.



The next talk was a double act by **Julia Huggins**, our White Admiral Species Champion, and **Peter Eeles**, who runs the UK Butterflies website. White Admirals are canopy lovers with a swooping, distinctive flight, found in sunny glades with abundant bramble blossom. They are creatures of habit and generally faithful, year on year, to the same locations. For breeding, the butterflies seek out straggly non-flowering honeysuckle in cool, shady and airy locations. The chemical composition of leaves in the shade is apparently different to that of lush, sunny growth. Egg laying takes place from mid-June through July. The eggs are laid on the tips and edges of the leaves and look like hairy golf balls, starting white and darkening as the larva develops. The early instars eat the egg, then feed on the leaf, starting from the mid-rib. The larva spends September to mid-April in a hibernaculum spun up from a leaf to resemble a twig and Peter showed some different designs of hibernaculum. In April and May, the late instars have a different feeding pattern, curving out from the base of the leaf. The pupae, in May and June, are found on the underside of leaves. Julia then showed a picture, taken at 4pm on a June day, of a newly emerged adult. It was still there at 5pm, but had gone by the next morning. As well as woodland, the adult butterflies have been recorded from heathland, gardens, towns and even motorway embankments.

The final talk of the day was given by member **John Thacker**. He spoke about how predation affects the wing colour and patterning of butterflies and moths. Two main ways to avoid predation are camouflage and deterrence. He used the Peppered Moth, which comes in light and dark forms, to illustrate the camouflage strategy. By day, it rests flat against walls, trees, etc. During the sooty conditions of the industrial revolution, the dark form became more prevalent, but since the clean air acts, its numbers have declined. In 1896, Tutt suggested that bird predation could explain the changes. The original experiments which supported these results were subject to scientific criticism and accusations of fraud. However, in 2001-2006, Majerus ran a large controlled experiment which demonstrated that bird predation was sufficient to explain the rise and fall of the dark form. The results were important because they support Darwinian natural selection on human timescales. John then used eyespots to illustrate the deterrence strategy. They may be used to intimidate the predators of lepidoptera by suggesting the appearance of the predator's own enemies. Experiments have shown that great tits are deterred by pictures of owls with eyes and owl butterflies with eyespots. Peripheral spots may deflect attacks away from the head. Experiments with the Woodland Brown butterfly showed that peripheral spots did protect, but only in the presence of UV light. In the final part of his talk, John showed pictures of a number of species, and invited the audience to see if they could see patterns which might startle a predator. These included comparisons of Red Admiral and Goldfinch, Small Tortoiseshell and bumblebee and Pebble Hook-tip and a hawk's beak.

The raffle, organised by Gillian and Michael Taylor, was drawn during the final tea break. Then Pete Thompson presented the results of the photographic competition and Sue Taylor gave the answers to the quiz, before Nick Bowles wound up the day's proceedings.



*Michael Pitt-Payne*

Thank you very much to everyone who brought food in many and various forms for Members' Day at Benson. It would be impossible to feed the unknown numbers who arrive on the day if these contributions did not appear. Also, very many thanks to all the helpers in the kitchen. With many thanks again to everyone who helped in any way towards the food. Your help will be needed again next year!

Gillian Oldfield

### **Butterfly Conservation Transect Walkers**

Firstly, a massive thank you for your efforts in collecting butterfly-monitoring data in 2018. It really cannot be overstated just how important your contribution is in the overall conservation effort.

Throughout 2018 we made fantastic progress in drawing together a record of all Transect Walkers in our area, including contact details. However, it must be said, we have some way to go before we can call this record, "comprehensive".

To assist in completing our record in this respect, it would be a huge help if you could please send me an email ([m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com](mailto:m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com)) with the following information:

- Your name
- Your transect walk(s)
- Where there is a team covering a particular transect, name of the lead walker
- Your email address
- Your mobile number (optional)

Even if you think we may already hold your details, your response will still be very much appreciated, to check the accuracy of our existing record.

Thank you again and very best wishes for 2019.

Mark Chapman, Transect Co-ordination, BCS UTB



# Minutes of Annual General Meeting

27th October 2018 at 2.10pm  
Parish Hall, Benson, Oxfordshire, OX10 6LZ

**Apologies** were received from Rikki Harrington and Mike Wilkins. The **Previous Minutes** were available to all at the meeting. They were accepted and there were no **Matters Arising**.

**Chairman's Report:** Nick Bowles began by reporting that it had been another great year for the Branch. Particular successes had included our Holtspur Bottom reserve, participation in Countryfile Live, our recording efforts which go from strength to strength, our growing membership and our healthy financial situation. Partnerships had continued or been established with National Grid, the MoD at Arccott and Otmoor, the National Trust at Bradenham, Chiltern Rangers, Lindengate, Keir (with respect to motorway embankments) and those involved with HS2, East-West Rail and the planned Oxford to Cambridge Expressway.

Following a plea at our last Members' Day a number of individuals had stepped up to offer their services and deserved some recognition, including Mark Chapman for help with transect organisation, Sue Taylor for recording at Bradenham and providing new display materials, Steph Rogers of Chiltern Rangers who took on organisation of our field trips and Emma Turnbull who oversaw the churchyard and garden surveys. The unsung heroes of our Committee deserved recognition too for masses of work and many hours devoted to the smooth running of the Branch. This year we said goodbye and thank-you very much to Lloyd Garvey and Richard Soulsby, although Richard was still going to organise a new event for us, a winter social at Benson on 10th March 2019. Particular thanks also went to several non-Committee members, including Margaret Price for Blenheim surveys and help with Countryfile Live, David Hastings who masterminds our website (and needs feedback on the new layout please!), Kiran Sehra who set up our Instagram page which now has more than 80 followers, Peter Ogden for assisting Jim Asher with our records, to Karen Saxl and Jim for running our conservation tasks in Oxon and Peter Cuss and John Lerpinière for leading those in Berks. Nick also gave particular thanks to Paul Huckle who had attended every conservation task that he could possibly get to! Our Conservation and Recording sub-committee (CART) was thanked for working on what our priorities should be. Field-trip leaders and Species Champions were also thanked for their work but Nick reminded everyone that we still have vacancies to cover Purple Emperor, Dark Green Fritillary and Striped Lychnis. More help with social media is also required.

Nick mentioned that we have light-traps available for short-term loan in Berks and Oxon to give members a taste of recording moths. He also reported that we will again be running butterfly identification training courses this winter, one in each of our three counties, giving members the chance to become more confident and involved prior to the start of the 2019 recording season which is the last in the current five-year set.

**Treasurer's Report:** Chris Woodrow began his report by drawing everyone's attention to the accounts on the back of the day's programme. In the financial year to 31st March 2018 Branch finances had continued to show a healthy position. Total income decreased by £977 and total expenditure fell by £549 when compared to the previous year.

Increasing Branch membership had resulted in an increase in the amount we received from Head Office for subscriptions of almost £1,150. Waitrose community donations came to £643 and a corporate donation of £287 all contributed to the substantial increase in donations income for the year. The difference in the amount received in respect of the HLS grant for Holtspur Bottom was due to changed payment arrangements by Natural England. The second payment for 2016/17 (which should have been received in the first quarter of 2017) arrived late, in April 2017, and is thus included in the figures for the year under review. In addition, NE had changed the basis on which payments are made, such that 75% of the grant is now received in the first payment each year. Unfortunately, NE's financial year doesn't seem to coincide in any way with our own financial year!

With regards to expenditure, the cost of the newsletter had continued to fall despite increasing membership, due no doubt to more new members electing to take their copy electronically. As advised previously, Head Office arrange for the printing and dispatch of each issue on behalf of the Branch, thus saving us a considerable amount of money due to economies of scale and use of franked postage rather than stamps. The small expenditure on the Holtspur Reserve at £396 was down to the cost of sheep grazing for the 2016 season. Expenditure on other projects included £505 on disease-resistant elms to benefit the White-letter Hairstreak. Expenditure on donations of £6,000 was made up of payments to Head Office in support of the Silver-studded Blue project (£4,500) and in support of the Hairstreaks project (£1,500). As a result, the net cash position at the end of the financial year was slightly ahead of the previous year at £13,716.98, with income exceeding expenditure by £980.

**Election of Officers:** Under our rotational system Grahame Hawker and Dave Wilton were standing down and seeking re-election, Lloyd Garvey and Richard Soulsby were standing down and not seeking re-election, while Sue Taylor (co-opted onto the Committee in October 2018) was seeking election. Martin Butt proposed that those seeking election should be duly elected. This was seconded by Jim Asher and carried unanimously. The Committee for 2019 thus comprised the following 11 members:

Nick Bowles (Chairman)	Peter Cuss	Tony Gillie
Grahame Hawker (Vice-chairman)	Stuart Hodges	David Roy
Dave Wilton (Secretary)	Brenda Mobbs	Jan Haseler
Chris Woodrow (Treasurer)	Sue Taylor	

*Peter Cuss, Tony Gillie, Brenda Mobbs & David Roy will be due to stand down in rotation at the AGM in October 2019.*

**Any Other Business:** None was raised. The meeting closed at 2.40pm.



## 2018 UTB Photo Competition Report

### Pete Thompson

Hot weather during much of the summer enabled many of our butterfly species to flourish, although different species did not seem to benefit equally: Whites and Blues did well, Reds and Browns less so, I thought. Anyway, we expected and got a good turnout for the Photo Competition again. 21 entrants submitted 123 photos, with a very high overall standard. Again, the overall quality made it difficult to choose winners, and in most categories the voting was close.

Categories remained the same as previous years, and it was encouraging to see six New Entrants. In third place was Lorna Woolhouse, with her Hairstreak, Lorna also came in second with her Merveille du Jour, but the clear overall winner was Tony Gillie's breathtaking Clouded Yellows, with one nectaring and the other captured in flight - proboscis uncoiling, ready to feed.

UK Butterflies received the most entries overall, with a rare appearance in the competition for arguably our least-regarded butterfly the Meadow Brown. In a tight race, we had a three-way tie for second place between Sue Taylor's Common Blue, Colin Mather's Comma, and also his Large White; but the winner was Jonathan Jones's Purple Hairstreak, the pin sharp image and well-displayed purple colour of this tantalisingly elusive butterfly evidently swayed the voters.

The Overseas Butterflies category attracted a good range of photographers, including one who seemingly wished to remain anonymous (Life Pro Tip: put your name on the back of the photo!) Another tie for second place, this time between Sue Taylor's Spotted Fritillary, and Keith Salter's Swallowtails in courtship flight. The winner: Tony Gillie's gorgeous Bath White, perfectly lit and pin sharp. We can only wish to see these in the UK!

Turning to moths, third was Keith Salter with his Hummingbird Hawkmoth, but joint winners were Sue Taylor's 'Mighty Micro' [thought to be a *Micropterix*, possibly *aruncella*], the tiny moth, beautifully lit to show the bronzy forewing, perched on the tip of a narrow leaf, and John Thacker's Buff Tip, at an unusual angle showing the intricately detailed head hairs.

Immature Stages. Just a few entrants this year. Extraordinarily, all three top places go to a single photographer. It's Sue Taylor again! Third with the Sallow Kitten caterpillar, second: 'Facing the Enemy', and beating herself, to win with the Comma preparing to pupate with its beautiful lighting on the glistening, branched spines.

Digital Alteration produced just two entrants - the future of this category must be in doubt. Sadly, not enough of us can match the imaginative approaches taken by in second place: Colin Mather, with Swallowtail Moth wings shown as sample cards!, and our winner Michael Pit-Payne with his Inverted Commas.

The Previous Winners, not surprisingly, was closely fought between the contenders: Andrew Cornick, Jim Asher, Paul Lund and David Hastings. So closely fought that we ended up with a three-way tie! David Hastings' Skipper, and also his Silver-studded Blue got the same number of votes as Nigel Kiteley's

Knapweed Fritillary, which edged first place on a casting vote. As we've come to expect from Nigel the image was pin-sharp, and showed the underside of this sumptuous species perfectly.

Finally, to the Members Competition. Third equal were Jonathan Jones and Keith Salter, second was Sue Taylor, and the winner: Sue Taylor again sweeping the board, this time with her superb female Common Blue. She is clearly taking her role raising funds for UTB with butterfly and moth photographs seriously!

Thanks to all the entrants and voters; hoping for even greater things in 2019. Many of us will be chasing down gaps in coverage during the final year of the 5-year survey, so should not lack opportunity to take yet more stunning photographs.

Many thanks to Mark Chapman for joining the team this year, and of course to Tony Rayner, the voice of reason.



Common Blue Sue Taylor  
1st in Members competition

## New Members

## Brenda Mobbs

Since the last newsletter 165 new members have joined and the membership is now over 1845. 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.

61 from Berkshire  
53 from Buckinghamshire  
49 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)





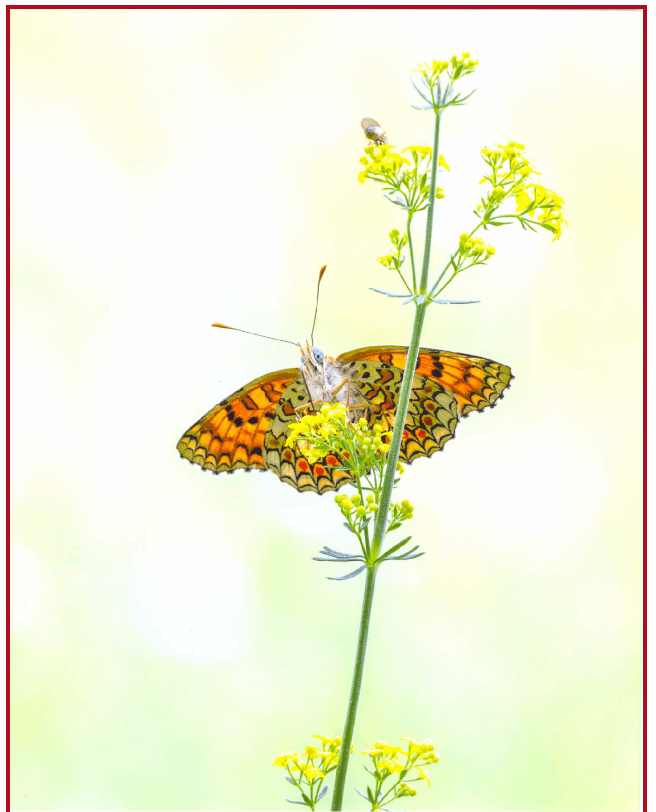
Comma Sue Taylor  
1st in Immature category



Commas Michael Pitt-Payne  
1st in Digital Alteration category



Micropteryx sp Sue Taylor  
Joint 1st in Moths category



Knapweed Fritillary Nigel Kiteley  
1st in Previous Winners category

## Ever thought about garden moth trapping?

Mark Griffiths

It's a wet and grey morning in December. I've seen my last butterfly over a month ago and the summer butterflying season is a distant memory. However, in my garden, a few minutes dash in suitably warm and waterproof clothing and I've just found my first ever Mottled Umber, in a warm brown bicolour form that at first I'd mistaken as a leaf. He was sitting just outside the trap, and there, nestled down in the grey egg boxes, I found two chunky December Moths.

I'll continue running the trap through the winter when the nights are not too cold or wet and I'll get the occasional moth tempted out of hibernation. And then it will be spring again and more and more species will appear. Running a moth trap means the season never really ends and there is always something new or unexpected.

I've been fascinated by moths for more than 50 years. The first book I wanted as a child was the Observer's Book of Larger Moths. I still have it. Over the years I've slowly ticked off a few of the moths, but I'd never seen many until my wife bought me a moth trap in the autumn of 2013. The first night I ran the trap I wondered if there would be any moths to see in the morning. I needn't have worried, there were 33 moths of 12 species waiting for me.

I trap in my tiny village garden. It's semi-rural, surrounded by other village gardens and further out arable farmland with little in the way of native trees on which many moth species breed. My trap is a modest actinic heath trap (rather than a powerful mercury vapour robinson trap). There are appx 2,500 species of moth recorded in the UK, 800 of which are macros. This year alone I've trapped 330 species, the garden list now stands at 483. I've now seen over a third of the UK's macro moth species in my own garden with little effort or expense.

Regular moths include the Elephant Hawkmoths (both large and surprisingly to me, Small), Privet and Poplar Hawks. Puss Moth and Poplar Kitten. Buff Tip, Chocolate Tip, Buff Arches, Peach Blossom, Pale Tussock, Yellow Tail and Red Underwing. Gold Spot, Burnished Brass, White Ermine, Buff Ermine, Scarlet Tiger and Ruby Tiger. Prominents so far are Swallow, Lesser Swallow, Pebble, Iron, Coxcomb and Pale. Merveille du Jour appeared a couple of years ago and has become increasingly common. You won't believe how many Large Yellow Underwings you have in your garden. They will probably be joined by Lesser, Broad Bordered, Lesser Broad Bordered and Least Yellow Underwings. Plus various pugs, sallows, footmen, thorns, rustics, waves, carpets, wainscots and brindles. All these appear several times a year in greater or lesser numbers.





It's a long list, but even if you don't know these moths the names are evocative enough to intrigue and tempt you to consider trapping for yourself.

Migrants are always fun, and apart from the Silver Ys, Diamond-backed Moths and Humming-bird Hawks, there are the Vestals, Gems, Dark Sword-Grass, Bordered Straw, Scarce Bordered Straw (last year only) and Rush Veneers. I remember wondering how on earth something like the small and frail cream and pink Vestal could migrate from continental Europe when it was having difficulty flying the few yards from the trap to the herbaceous border. But then the slow fluttering moth's flight took another direction and went up, and up, and up. I guess they fly up to where the winds are often 60 miles an hour and they are simply blown here. The thing about migrants is that you never know what might turn up. While it is true most are trapped near to the coast, things like Silver-striped Hawkmoth and Oleander Hawkmoths do sometimes turn up in inland gardens. Here's hoping.

So what are the highlights so far? Amongst the macros there have been Eyed Hawks, a Pine Hawk, White Satin, the beautiful green Scarce Silver Lines, Garden Tiger (first one I've seen for 50 years), the white and metallic blue-black Leopard Moth, the sleek and sculptured Chamomile Shark and Wormwood, an Oak Rustic (a UK newcomer), and Scarce Silver Y. The last had no business being here as it is generally a moorland species of the north with some immigrants to south east England. Micro highlights include the odd Alder Signal (*Stathmopoda pedella*), the delicate Sulphur Pearl (*Sitochroa palealis*) and the rare Kent Fruit Piercer (*Grapholita lobarzewskii*).

The catch that attracted most envy was the Clifden Nonpareil, the Blue Underwing. Bigger than the Red Underwing it has at times established a foothold in the UK. It seems that this is such a time as I've caught three in two years. Most of the time it has been a great rarity and therefore desirability. The British lepidopterist P.B.M Allan commented "I am sure I will find *C.fraxini* at my sugar one night, and then I will be so scared that I shall bungle him hopelessly, and he will fly away over the tops of the trees, and I shall return home, sell my collection, and take to my bed and die". Probably a bit of an over-reaction I think. I hadn't

read that account when I first caught one but I'll admit that when I opened the trap and saw a very large grey moth I shut up the trap, and got my wife to stand by so she might catch the flash of blue as it took off. As it happened the moth shifted a little so a little of the hindwing could be seen and a photo taken in situ. Like Mr Allan's hypothetical *C.fraxini* it was then off and over the garden hedge across the road and up into a neighbour's trees. Somewhat improbably, another villager who also traps moths caught one the same day – we compared images and concluded



Sulphur Pearl (*Sitochroa palealis*)

it was two different moths rather than one hopping from trap to trap. This year I got two more, a month or so apart.

Things on my “most want to see list” are getting ticked off far more quickly than I thought, many I never thought I would see at all. It seems reasonable that Jersey Tiger and Convolvulus Hawkmoth will make an appearance some time. I remain mystified why in a village full of lime trees (including a large one in my neighbour’s garden) I’ve yet to find a Lime Hawkmoth. It will come.

While we quite rightly mourn the loss of many formerly common moths like the Garden Tiger, there are many other moths becoming more common, like the Jersey Tiger, Clifden Nonpareil, Blair’s Shoulder-knot, White-point, and Oak Rustic. You get a keen sense of how dynamic our moth populations are when you trap.

So what have I learned in these few years?

**One:** It doesn’t cost that much. You don’t need a top of the line MV moth trap to get interesting catches. I have an actinic heath trap which I power from a cable that goes out from the garage window. I bought myself a few plastic pots so I can capture and photograph moths before release. The camera I use is a fairly basic compact. Some books will help with identification but you probably need only a couple.

**Two:** You don’t need a huge garden next to a wood or nature reserve to get exciting and sometimes rare moths. My small garden is surrounded by arable farmland but I get forest, downland, reedbed and moorland species. Town gardens are just as likely to turn up something interesting.

**Three:** You will learn to identify moths fairly quickly.

**Four:** You can trap more or less anytime of the year. Some people trap when it’s frosty and still get catches. Often trapping in the rain produces excellent results (but make sure the trap’s electrics are kept dry).

**Five:** You really don’t know what will turn up. Trust me on that one. And every year is different. Suddenly a common species won’t appear, like the Small Square-Spot this year. But then Merveille du Jour appeared in much larger numbers.



**Six:** Don’t neglect the micros. While some are hard to tell apart, a lot aren’t. Many are just as colourful as the macros. Some have bizarre life histories. Take your time and you’ll soon grow to love them.

**Seven:** You are not on your own. One of the benefits of the internet is that there are many enthusiast groups like the Upper Thames Moth blog where you can get expert help on identification.



**Eight:** Your catches are important so share your data with your County Moth recorder. They contribute to the larger database of sightings which gives us an insight into moth populations as a whole and at a species specific level.

**Nine:** You are not the only one interested in your catch. I've had a robin nip in and steal from my trap as I opened it. Bats are attracted by the concentration of flying insects (*In my case it's frogs: Ed*). Cats can also be curious. Wasps and Hornets will often go into your trap and chew up a few moths, so be careful when you handle the egg boxes. I've only been stung once!

**Ten:** The trap as noted above will attract and catch things other than moths so you may find yourself broadening your interests and knowledge. Caddis flies can be very common, as are various beetles, flies and bugs. There is a facebook group devoted to moth trap intruders who can help you with IDs.

I've only touched on the wonderful world of moth trapping, but I hope I've written enough to whet your appetite and maybe encourage you to give trapping a go.

### **Suggested Websites**

Upper Thames Moth Blog: <http://upperthamesmoths.blogspot.com/>

UK Moth site: <https://ukmoths.org.uk/>

Hants Flying tonight guide: [http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying\\_tonight.php](http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying_tonight.php)

Moth Recording incl. trapping advice:

[http://www.mothscount.org/text/32/how\\_to\\_record\\_moths.html](http://www.mothscount.org/text/32/how_to_record_moths.html)

Moth trapping How to and advice: <https://www.angleps.com/guides.php>

Migrant Moth arrivals: <http://www.atropos.info/flightarrivals/>

### **Suggested Books**

Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland (third edition) Paul Waring, Martin Townsend and Richard Lewington.

Field Guide to the Micro-Moths of Great Britain and Ireland. Phil Sterling, Mark Parsons and Richard Lewington.

British Moths: a photographic guide (2nd edition) Chris Manley.

## **Volunteering opportunities. Upper Thames needs you!**

It's great to see UT Branch now has over 1800 members. Many people join BC because they wish to financially support this fantastic conservation organisation but don't have the time to volunteer due to the pressures of work and family commitments. As a father of four who used to work very long hours I fully understand that! Your financial support is both vital and appreciated as, at the end of the day, conservation costs money. If, however, you can spare just a little time I hope you might consider one of the volunteering opportunities listed below and help to make a difference in the conservation of our butterflies and moths. Volunteers are the life blood of any organisation and are essential in achieving our aims and objectives.

## **Work Parties**

Over the winter we run a range of work parties. Why not consider joining one of these 'green gyms'? The people are friendly and welcoming and you will be helping to maintain vital habitat for our butterflies, moths and other wildlife. You don't need to be especially strong as most of our sessions involve a few people helping with tasks that are far less demanding. One such task is to take photographs of the work in progress. See the website's Events page for details.

## **Public events**

Increasingly we have a presence at shows and events which is a great opportunity to engage with the public about the work we do. Countryfile Live is the largest of these and people show a real interest, especially when we have some 'livestock' in the form of caterpillars. Don't think you need to be an 'expert'. The only qualification for these events is enthusiasm!

## **Species Champions**

Each of the rarer species in the Upper Thames area has a Champion who acts as a contact for information about that particular butterfly or moth. Again, don't think you need to be an expert. Most often Champions are being asked about the records that they have been sent and advice about where the species is still flying. However, many of us still think it's great to study a species in depth and spend time looking at its life cycle and the problems associated with its conservation. I knew very little about my chosen species, the White-letter Hairstreak, when I started but it is a really enjoyable learning curve. Vacancies exist for two very interesting species, the Striped Lychnis moth and Dark Green Fritillary butterfly. Have a chat with Nick Bowles, the Champions coordinator, to find out more. Contact details on the website and in Hairstreak.

## **Recording**

Knowing the state of the populations of our butterfly species is key for their conservation. You can send your records in to the Butterfly Records Officer or use the irecord butterflies app. Or various other schemes. If you have a little more time volunteers are always needed to walk transects or to be 10k square Champions. Help and training is available for this. Again all details on the Events page on the website.

## **Committee**

The Committee is always keen to recruit new members. By its very nature this is more of a time commitment than the other opportunities listed but it is great to be able to help out where you can and to get a close insight into the vast amount of work being done, in many different areas, to conserve our butterflies and moths by some wonderfully committed people, very ably steered by our hard working Chairman. But, as ever, there are more tasks than bodies. Do have a chat with any committee member if you would like to know more and remember that every member is welcome to attend and observe the committee meetings.



## A free introduction to Butterfly and Moth Identification, surveying and recording

Accurate records can make an enormous difference to efforts to conserve wildlife, locally and nationally. It helps land managers to know both which species are breeding on any patch, and how their management affects numbers. Plus, extra knowledge boosts the enjoyment of any observation, even in your own garden.

### Dates

Saturday 02.03.19 10.00 - 16.00

Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve, Lakeside, Earley, Reading, **Berks.** RG6 5QE

Saturday 16.03.19 10.00 - 16.00

SCEEC, Milton Park estate, off the A34, 3 miles north of Didcot, between Sutton Courtenay & Didcot, **Oxon.** OX14 4TE

Saturday 30.03.19 10.00 - 16.00

Howe Park Wood Education & Visitor centre, H7, Chaffron Way, **Milton Keynes,** MK4 3GG

**Programme** (for each day) *subject to minor change to reflect weather*

09.45	doors open; tea and coffee available
10.00 – 10.10	Welcome and details of the day
10.10 – 11.15	<b>Identification of the butterflies of Berks., Bucks. &amp; Oxon.</b>
11.15 – 11.35	<b>butterfly i.d. quiz</b> during tea/coffee and biscuits
11.35 – 12.30	<b>Separating moths into their families – a start to moth identification and recording.</b>
12.30 – 13.00	<b>Transect recording methodology– why and how</b>
13.00 – 13.30	lunch (please bring a packed lunch) tea/coffee and biscuits are provided and including <b>a quick moth family quiz</b>
13.30 – 14.30	<b>Practice transect walk</b> (outdoor)
14.30 – 15.10	<b>Conducting timed count and standardised surveys</b>
15.10 – 15.25	tea/coffee and biscuits
15.25 – 15.45	<b>Record submission - and how it helps conservation</b>
15.45	<b>Closing remarks and departure</b>

If you wish to attend either day please email [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com)

**Please do not attend without pre-booking.** Places are free\* to members and non-members of UTB/BC, subject to availability. **Applicants must be able to explain how they will increase their recording after the course.** All presentations can be provided to attendees' memory sticks but are too large to send by email. \*donations welcome

## Field Meeting Report

Yoesden 1st June

Sue Taylor

The weather report promised rain and thunderstorms, but six hardy souls decided not to believe the forecast and wound down the narrow lanes to Radnage to meet Ched who was leading the walk starting from the official access field. Ched knows the site really well and was able to tell us about the history and management of this lovely site and introduce us to the flora and fauna. The bank was sprinkled with Ox-eye Daisy and yellow with Kidney Vetch, Horseshoe Vetch and of course Bird's-foot Trefoil. Four orchids were in flower: Bee, Common Spotted, Pyramidal and Twayblade while Fragrant Orchids were just starting to reveal themselves.

The weather turned out to be fantastic for invertebrates and for butterflies in particular and we were soon rewarded by good views of Adonis Blue, our target species, by far the most numerous and most beautiful species seen. In all we saw 15 species and my first sightings of the year of Meadow Brown and Painted Lady also stand out as memorable.

I noted as seeing Adonis Blue 106 plus 8 mating pairs, Common Blue 11, Small Blue 30, Green Hairstreak 1, Orange-tip 1, Large White 2, Green-veined White 1, Peacock 3, Painted Lady 1, Comma 1, Small Heath 9, Meadow Brown 2, Dingy Skipper 6 and a stray Duke of Burgundy.

In addition to butterflies there was a good range of day flying moths and interesting invertebrates including *Microdon devius*, a bee mimic hoverfly which is scarce nationally but known previously from this site.

Moths seen included Cinnabar, *Pyrausta aurata*, Yellow Shell, Mother Shipton, Common Carpet, Burnet Companion, Silver Y, Treble Bar, Straw Dot, as well as the larval feeding cases of two species of *Coleophora* moth.

Other invertebrates included, *Microdon devius* (5 including a mating pair), Swollen Thigh Beetles, *Empis tessellata*, Dark Bush Cricket nymph, 22 and 24 spot Ladybird and the scarce chalk specialist snail *Helicoides italica*. Now I know what to look for I saw the jumping spider *Heliophanus* with its vivid yellow palps that look like fangs beneath its huge eyes. I'm glad it's only tiny!

If all that wasn't enough we were treated to a fine view of a female Roe deer in an adjacent field as we looked over the valley with its fine views.

My thanks to Ched for a superb walk.

Note; if you want to visit the Radnage entrance is locked except for events, I suggest you use the footpath from Bledlow Ridge just north of the pub.





## Field Meetings

***For all field trips, even though it is early in the season, it is recommended that arms and legs are covered to protect from insect bites.***

**Sunday 5th May at 11.00am**                      **Homefield Wood, Bockmer End, Bucks**

Start of season meeting for early Spring butterflies. Meet at the main entrance to the wood (OS Landranger Map 175; Grid Ref: SU814866).

Leader and contact: Paul Bowyer 01628 526225

**Saturday 11th May at 10.30am**                      **Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks**

Target species: Duke of Burgundy and other spring species. The site is very steep with rabbit holes to negotiate! Meet at the National Trust car park for Ivinghoe Beacon (OS Map 165; Grid Ref: SP963159).

Leader and Contact: Steph Rodgers 07734 389301

**Saturday 18th May at 10.30am**                      **Pitstone Quarry, Bucks**

A large, shallow, disused chalk quarry. Mostly easy flat walking, but there is one stile to climb over with a short steep slope after; some scrub and slopes with rabbit holes. Spring butterflies, especially Small Blue and Dingy Skipper and day-flying moths such Burnet Companion.

Meet at Pitstone Church (Explorer Map 181; Grid Ref: SP941149).

Leader and contact: Nick Bowles 01442 382276

**Sunday 19th May at 11.00am**                      **Aston Upthorpe Downs, Oxon**

Target species: Spring butterflies including Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreak. Steep slopes. From the A417, a mile east of Blewbury, turn south along the narrow lane opposite the turning to Aston Upthorpe village. Park by the grain dryer half a mile along the lane.

(OS Map 174; Grid Ref: SU550844)

Leader and contact: Gerry Kendall 01865 245029

**Sunday 19th May at 10.30am**                      **Aldbury Nowers, Bucks**

A chance to explore the chalk scrape to see how the regenerating flora is providing food for butterflies! Steep slopes.

Meet at the National Trust car park: (OS Map 181; Grid Ref: SP955149)

Leader and Contact: Steph Rodgers 07734 389301

**Saturday 25th May at 10.30am**                      **Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks**

Targeting: Adonis Blue and other spring species. Very steep grass slopes.

Meet in the main National Trust car park off the A4009 at the top of the hill out of Streatley (OS Map 174, Grid Ref: SU583806).

Leader and contact: Maureen Cross 01491 871239

**Sunday 26th May at 10.30am**

**Buttler's Hangings SSSI, Bucks**

An early visit, led by Chiltern Rangers' MD John Shaw, to see the impact of recent winter and summer habitat work by Butterfly Conservation in partnership with Chiltern Rangers. Ahead of the high summer trip, we hope to see a variety of spring species, including first broods of Adonis Blue.

After meeting at the south end of the National Trust car park on the top of West Wycombe Hill (Grid Ref: SU827950), we will walk through the woods, along the top of the ridge, until we arrive at Buttler's Hangings. A walk of about 4 kilometres in total with very steep slopes, so please wear suitable footwear. Please note that it is not possible to park on the road directly below Buttler's Hangings. **Leader and contact:** [John Shaw 07931 575374](tel:07931575374)

**Tuesday 28th May 2018 at 2.00pm**

**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

A field trip to try and find Black Hairstreak pupae.

Entrance at Landranger Map 165; Grid Ref: SP720209

**Leader and contact:** [Stuart Hodges 01296 730217](tel:01296730217)

**Saturday 1st June at 11.00am**

**Bradenham, Bucks**

Target species: Small Blue, along with other early Summer butterflies. Turn east off the A4010 into Bradenham Wood Lane at the Red Lion pub. After 500 metres, turn left into the small car park (OS Map 165, Grid Ref: SU827972).

**Leader and contact:** [Sue Taylor taylor57sc@gmail.com](mailto:taylor57sc@gmail.com)

**Saturday 15th June at 10.30am**

**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

Our Black Hairstreak Champion leads a walk to see his butterfly!

Meet at the reserve entrance on the Edgcott to Quainton Road. Landranger Map 165; Grid Ref: SP720209

**Leader and contact:** [Stuart Hodges 01296 730217](tel:01296730217) and [07941 763850](tel:07941763850)

### **MORE FIELD TRIP LEADERS NEEDED, PLEASE!**

Thank you to everybody who has agreed to lead a field trip for members already this year - the next edition of Hairstreak will include the walks for July and August. The field trips provide a wonderful opportunity to see our beautiful species of butterfly in the Upper Thames area and without the help of volunteers they simply would not happen. We need MORE leaders, especially in Oxfordshire and Berkshire, to make sure we provide opportunities for as many of our members as possible.

Leading a walk can be a great way to share our knowledge and passion for butterflies and day-flying moths. You don't need to be a world expert! If you would like to lead a walk, please get in touch with me

[steph@chilternrangers.co.uk](mailto:steph@chilternrangers.co.uk)





Buff-tip

John Thacker

1st in Moths category



Clouded Yellow  
(*Colias croceus*)

Clouded Yellows

Tony Gillie

1st in New Entrants category

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](https://twitter.com/UpperThamesBC)

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

Holtspur Bottom Reserve

<http://www.holtspurbottom.info>

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