Hairstreak

No 108 Summer 2020

Butterfly Conservation

Upper Thames Branch

Aston Upthorpe volunteers at work and rest

Photos by Jim Asher

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
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Cover photo: Scarce Silver-lines by David Ferguson

Background: Longwick Bog, Bucks

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION
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Chairman's notes — Nick Bowles

I'm writing this on a beautifully sunny day which seems especially welcome after such a wet period in late winter. Having come in to the computer from a garden that is literally buzzing with insect life I am aware how it's possible to get absorbed in watching these little creatures and forget that coronavirus is making life harder for all of us. I would certainly offer the advice that you should get out if and when you can (without endangering anyone) to immerse yourself in the flowers and butterflies, moths and other insects that are carrying on as normal all around us. It is both very therapeutic to you to be enjoying all that life around you and if you record what you see, helpful to conservation too. The branch has put advice about various other garden surveys you might undertake in this edition of *Hairstreak*; various people have made an effort to suggest ways that you can busy yourself and your children during lockdown. Some of these describe surveys for other groups of insect because it seems likely that we will all have more time in our gardens soon. I'm rather looking forward to trying to see (and identify) more wildlife in the garden this spring than ever before.

I certainly intend to try to record more of the smaller insects that visit my garden this spring, as well as the butterflies and moths. This year I imagine that I will spend a lot more time in the garden and have time to do that and make an even bigger effort to make the garden more wildlife friendly. Elsewhere in this edition you will see mention of the garden survey schemes that we (UTB) and nationally BC run. Please join in with one.

Before all the restrictions we had just ended one of our best ever seasons of practical conservation effort. In truth, although we did visit more sites and we visited some more frequently than ever before, we didn't see many new volunteers. However, as those that do turn out know, we make an amazing difference at every wildlife site we work on and if you visit any of them in the summer please try to give a thought to those of us that were out working in the winter; so that you could better enjoy your summer walk with all its riches. Without their efforts, paths would be blocked with scrub and bramble and fewer flowers with fewer insects upon them would grace the slopes. It is at least in part down to their efforts that the UKBMS reported **2019 being the eighth best year on record (since 1976)**.

I normally make a comment in this edition about the need for volunteers to conduct surveys, hand out leaflets and share their enthusiasm for butterflies and moths at our summer public events (as ever I'll repeat that enthusiasm is a more potent tool in our campaign to persuade the public to our cause than knowledge). Currently no summer public events look likely but when we emerge from the restrictions on travel and meetings we will be looking to attend various shows and hope to garner some assistance. Similarly we run many different types of survey for groups of recorders (some experienced and some learning the ropes) but they cannot proceed at present. They will resume once they are allowed. Please visit our website to check our position if the government relaxes its restrictions.

Equally, I also comment that by taking *Hairstreak* electronically you reduce the use of paper and fuel needed to produce and transport the newsletter; and of course

you save us a large sum that we would otherwise pay to printers and the Post Office. This edition shows another reason to embrace the electronic version of such materials - no paper copies can be packed and delivered at present. If you didn't previously see *Hairstreak* in this form please consider moving to it permanently.

Meanwhile the beauty of a basking Peacock, the iridescent gleam of a fresh Mint Moth, or the sublime vision of an Orange-tip roosting on a Cow Parsley head will be as moving and captivating as ever they were. We are so much luckier than those whose main passion is sport or foreign travel. The wildlife we love is still around us and we can be strengthened by it.

Please immerse yourself in the health-giving benefits of the wildlife around your home and collect some useful data too. I hope you will try out some of the recording ideas suggested and whatever you do, enjoy those moments when the wildlife in your garden repays your effort to make it more appealing to them.

COVID-19 and an antidote to boredom — Nick Bowles

Butterfly Conservation has ruled that all meetings are cancelled. But many of you will have a garden and our strongest recommendation is that you spend time recording what you see there.

Previously, many of you very kindly undertook survey work but, except for garden recordings, **all must cease. No survey work is as important as your health.** So, even garden records only continue where they can be conducted with no risk of infection; but even if conducted through a window, will make welcome break from endless news of COVID-19.

We are convinced that the pleasure you derive from seeing butterflies and moths will be really helpful in the coming weeks. Counting what you can see in the garden will be far more fun than being indoors. It will give a purpose to the time you spend in the garden and all the results can be recorded with the schemes listed **at https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording** (where you will find new forms especially ready for an anticipated extra demand), or use the free smartphone app iRecordButterflies **https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/recording-and-monitoring/irecord-butterflies.**

And, of course, while you are in the garden there are all manner of things you can do there to make it wildlife friendly. Please spend extra time in the garden being extra effective at providing homes and food for our wildlife. Again our website has suggestions: **https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/gardening.** The national society has a project especially for us and our gardens: #InsectAandE and that includes planting suggestions **https://butrfli.es/GardenDoctor**

Please do not put yourself at any risk in any of this and enjoy the unexpected bonus of the quietness. Bird song and the buzzing of insects haven't been audible over such long distances for many years.

2019 - a great year for butterflies — Nick Bowles

I imagine that our Black Hairstreak Champion would not entirely agree with the title of this piece (given that dreadful weather in early June severely affected the numbers of Black Hairstreak), but for many butterflies 2019 was a very beneficial period.

Records analysed by the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) led by Butterfly Conservation, the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC); showed 2019 to be the eighth best year, in terms of butterfly numbers, since 1997. And, for those wondering, "Is that because more people record now than previously?" no, the data is analysed to remove that skewing.

Species doing especially well (in the UK) included Brimstone, up 32%, Orange-tip, up 63%, and Marbled White up by 66% all of which had their best year on record; Ringlet (second-best year in the series, up by 23%), Dark Green Fritillary (third-best year, up 51%), and Meadow Brown (fifth-best, up 38%). Even the threatened Duke of Burgundy did well, logging its 8th best year in the series. However, the poor old Duke didn't do quite so well in the UTB area. Numbers held up but did not noticeably exceed those of recent years.

Orange-tips
David Ferguson

Read the full details at https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/butterflies-bounce-back-to-their-best-year-in-over-20-years

In 2019 Marbled White had its best year since records began in 1997

Image:
Butterfly Conservation

Keeping busy — Sue Taylor

With my planned activities curtails somewhat, I have been looking at what I can do instead that will be interesting for me and positive for the natural environment.

Investigate your garden

I will be spending a lot more time in my garden; it is amazing what you can find in even a small garden. Last year I found a nationally scarce bug, some unusual bees and of course some beautiful butterflies and moths.
What an opportunity to see what you have and plan how to encourage more. It is a wonderful feeling when you find a species in your garden that is only there because you decided to put in its foodplant or give it somewhere to nest.

Record what you see

Most of my records go straight on iRecord be they invertebrates, plants or birds. But there are other recording schemes out there which you can get involved in.

- **Plantlife** run a garden lawn survey, www.plantlife.org.uk/everyflowercounts, last year an area the size of 92 football pitches was surveyed by the public, 200 species of plants were recorded from daisies to orchids, important data both from the plant perspective and the invertebrates they support.
- **PoMS** the pollinating monitoring scheme run by CEH. The perfect companion to the plant survey, it asks you to count what insects land on a 50x50cm patch of flowers in 10 minutes (called a FIT count). The beauty of the scheme is you don't have to be able to recognise the species, only if it is a fly or beetle or bug or bee. There is more on this on p11.
- **Big Butterfly Count** in high summer, but why not record them all year this year on iRecord Butterflies or put them into Butterfly Conservations 'Garden Butterfly Survey Scheme'.

Challenge yourself

I will be challenging myself to try and learn a new species of invertebrate at least once a week; it's a great intellectual challenge. Your records will help give an understanding of what lives where and how things are changing due to climate change. Taking the time to concentrate and look for things can be very engrossing, I call it looking at things, apparently other people call it mindfulness.

Once you start looking you are bound to find lots of interesting invertebrates you can't identify. There are some brilliant on-line resources to help you, if you can get photos these help a lot and will allow verifiers on iRecord or other recording schemes to confirm your identification. (Not all species can be identified from photographs, some need to be closely examined).

Here are a few of my favourite resources

- **iRecord apps**; as well as our own iRecord Butterflies there are apps with help on identification for ladybirds, grasshoppers and dragonflies.
- **iSpot** is really helpful to get you going with your identifications. It is available as an app or online.
- **Bugs:** Britishbugs.org.uk an excellent gallery with helpful ID tips
- **Sawflies:** Sawflies.org.uk, still under construction but very good
- **Spiders:** British arachnological society at www.britishspiders.org.uk, they also cover harvestmen. Ideally send spider records (with photos) direct to BAS but harvestmen can go on iRecord.
- **Beetles:** www.coleoptera.org.uk a very useful and accessible site
- **Steven Falk's flickr site**: easy to use, lots of excellent information and covers a wide range of species from slugs and beetles to wasps and flies, especially good for bees, his specialist group.
- **Biological records Centre**: Brc.ac.uk, scroll down to 'Key themes' and the first item is recording schemes, which lists a huge range of schemes out there. It's a real eye opener. Many of the schemes also signpost resources for their own field of interest.

Improve your habitats

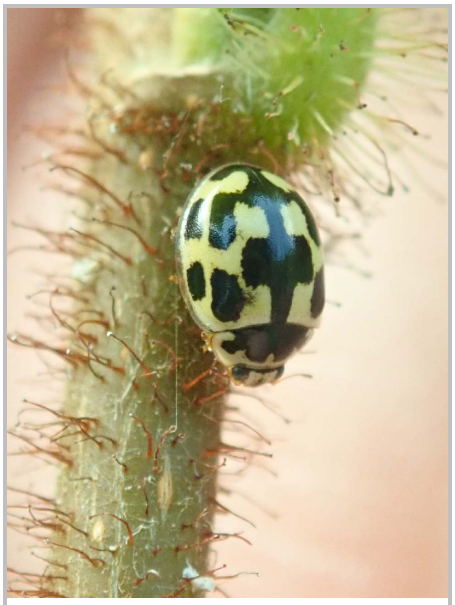
If you are not recording there are still positive things you can do for wildlife in your garden.

- Build a bird nesting box.
- Make a bee hotel (put in full sun at least 1.5m above ground and a mix of hole sizes from 2 to 8mm diameter to get a wide range of species, old hollow stems or holes drilled in bits of old wood are ideal)
- Construct a bug habitat from logs, sticks and stones, moss leaves etc. Predatory beetles will love this and may help control your garden pests too.
- Dig a pond or at least put out fresh water. Water adds another dimension to a garden.
- Make a hoverfly pond, many of our hoverflies need damp conditions for their larvae, A small container filled with water, woodchips and leaves and then allowed to brew will be perfect.
- Love your garden, but don't make it too neat and tidy, if only because the habitat you leave will support species that will control greenfly and other pests.

Be a good neighbour

If you have a veg plot I hope it will be full this year, but can you grow a few extra seeds and encourage your neighbours to grow a few tomatoes, cucumbers or beans? I have a feeling I will be busy this summer!

Hairy-footed Flower Bee



14-spot Ladybird

Tachina fera

Hawthorn Shieldbug

Bee recording and identification — Margery Slatter

If you can't get out and about and/or are maintaining social distancing with all the restrictions that this brings, how about using or extending your skills by recording other insect life in your patch?

Bumblebees have the delightful advantage over butterflies in that they fly in colder and windier weather conditions and from earlier in the year. Buff-tailed Bumblebees were flying in my garden on the Berkshire Downs as early as 29th January this year. Numbers and variety of species have been growing daily since then and I have now counted more than five species of bee in the garden as opposed to only two butterflies – Brimstone and Peacock.

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust has an excellent website full of identification information and the instructions for making more formal surveys. You can even set up your own BeeWalk online to make a contribution to the data helping to understand the status and needs of these vital pollinators.

Follow the links and enjoy!

www.bumblebeeconservation.org

Buff-tailed Bumblebee

Project to help the Striped Lychnis moth

Peter Cuss

The Striped Lychnis is a nationally scarce moth and a BAP priority species, with a very limited range within the UK. Upper Thames Branch will be running a pilot project this year to help the moth by planting its foodplant, Dark Mullein, within its known hotspots to help the population expand. Initially the project will focus on the Hambleden Valley. An article was placed in the local parish magazine about the moth with an appeal for landowners with suitable habitat who might be willing to have Dark Mullein plugs planted. We also offered free packets of seeds for gardeners and allotment holders. We have had several offers of land, ranging from a two acre meadow to gardens, given out a fair few seed packets, and hopefully more offers will follow.

Dark Mullein

Several UTB volunteers and the mental health charity Lindengate are currently very kindly growing Dark Mullein to give us a suitable stock of plants. If the project proves successful we would hope to roll it out to other areas.

Other ways we will be helping the Striped Lychnis is by carrying out larval surveys in July and early August. The brightly coloured caterpillars are easy to spot when present and it is these surveys that allow us to see how the population is doing as the adult moth is rarely seen and seldom comes to light. We plan to have a few work parties this autumn jointly with the National Trust in the Hughenden Valley. We are also hoping there may be opportunities to work with landowners within the Chilterns 'Chalk, Cherries and Chairs' project.

If you are interested in helping the project there are number of ways to volunteer: growing Dark Mullein for the project, planting Dark Mullein on your land if you live in Chilterns, Hughenden or Hambleden Valleys or Henley area, surveying for larvae or helping at work parties from November to March which will be advertised on the website in due course.

Striped Lychnis...not to be confused with...Mullein Moth

If you would like to know more on any aspect of project please email the Priority Moth Species Champion pj.cuss@gmail.com

The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme and how to join in

Martin Harvey, on behalf of PoMS,
UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

Could you sit in the sunshine, in front of a patch of flowers, and spend ten minutes watching and counting all the insects that land on one particular flower species in that patch? If so you could make a valuable contribution to monitoring pollinating insects by carrying out a FIT Count (Flower-Insect Timed Count).

A FIT count in progress

The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) is gathering new data on the status of pollinating insects. PoMS is a partnership led by scientists at the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, working with a wide range of partners including Butterfly Conservation as well as Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Hymettus, British Trust for Ornithology, Natural History Museum, and the universities of Reading and Leeds. It is jointly funded by Defra, the Welsh and Scottish Governments, JNCC and the project partners.

The FIT Count is one of two PoMS surveys that are intended to give us a new insight into the numbers of insects that play a role in pollination. The counts ask you to divide the insects you see on the flowers into broad groups: bumblebees, solitary bees, hoverflies, other flies, butterflies and moths, etc. (we don't ask for insects to be identified to species level), and to provide some information on how many of your target flowers were included in your patch, and what the main habitat is, using a simple recording form. The recording form and full survey information, along with guides to recognising the main insect groups and target flowers, are all available on the PoMS website.

Hoverfly (Epistrophe glossuraliae) visiting a Field Scabious flower

In 2019 over 10,000 individual insects were counted during the ten-minute FIT Counts, with an average of 13.2 insects visiting the target flowers per count. The insect groups making up the majority of flower visitors during counts were the bumblebees, hoverflies, other flies and small insects.

PoMS started in 2017, following extensive trials of the survey methods, and as the monitoring continues we will be able to analyse changes in numbers alongside the changes in distribution that recording schemes already track. This will provide better evidence for what is happening to the pollination services on which we rely, and whether or not this group

of insects is declining.

The more people who can help us collect data for PoMS, the better our evidence will be for what is happening to pollinating insects. The FIT Counts can be done anywhere where there are suitable flowers, in good weather between April and September. Please note that at the time of writing we are requesting that FIT Counts are only carried out on private property to which you have access that is unrestricted by the current and future government guidance, such as gardens, yards, balconies and window boxes.

PoMS also runs a series of more detailed surveys in a set of 75 randomly-chosen one-kilometre squares across Britain, but sadly this survey has been suspended until coronavirus restrictions can be lifted.

More information and video guides to the PoMS surveys are available on our website at www.ceh.ac.uk/pollinator-monitoring, and if you want to know more or to enquire about a 1km square survey please contact PoMS via poms@ceh.ac.uk or see our Twitter account @PoMScheme.

Enjoying moths at home without a light trap

Peter Cuss

Upper Thames Branch runs a scheme that allows members to borrow a moth trap. Currently they are all out on loan (but please do contact the Priority Moth Species Champion if you would like to go on the waiting list at pj.cuss@gmail.com). However, there are other ways to see moths which are fun and also an excellent way to include children.

Sugaring. This basically involves making a sticky sugar solution that is applied by a paint brush to fence posts or tree trunks just before dusk. This attracts the moths to feed on it during the first two hours after dark when you can spot them by torchlight. The following recipe comes from Butterfly Conservation's moths count information sheet.

Ingredients: 454g Tin of Black Treacle, 1Kg Brown Sugar (the darker the better), and 500ml Brown Ale or Bitter (fizzy drink like cola will do as an alternative). Slowly heat the ale (or cola) in a large pan and simmer for five minutes. Stir in and dissolve the sugar followed by the treacle and then simmer for two more minutes. Allow to cool before decanting into a container. A drop of rum stirred in just before use is recommended but not essential. Paint the mixture about eye level.

Wine ropes. This works on the same principle and again is prepared at dusk and checked by torchlight early on in the night. Butterfly Conservation's recommended recipe is as follows

Ingredients: bottle of cheap red wine, 1kg sugar, 1m lengths of thick cord or light rope made from absorbent material. (New rope should be boiled in water before use to remove noxious chemicals).eat the wine and stir in and dissolve the sugar. Allow to cool and soak the lengths of rope. Drape the "wine ropes" over low branches, bushes or fences just before dusk and check for moths by torch-light for the first two

hours of darkness. These recipes could be scaled down for trying on a small scale or stored to use on another night.

Fruit traps. This is just a matter of squashing some overripe fruit such as bananas, peach etc. into a bowl and seeing what comes in. One young Berkshire Moth Group member tried this and managed to get a Dark Crimson Underwing, a RDB species!

Dark Crimson Underwing
Mark Griffiths

Pheromone lures. The clearwing group of moths are very difficult to see normally but using these lures is a great way to both see them and produce valuable recording data. The lures can be placed in a net bag or a special trap that can be purchased along with the lures as a set or single species lure from about £8.50 and come with full instructions for use. If you have an old apple tree it would be well worth trying for Red-belted Clearwing. If you live near an allotment Currant Clearwing would be a good target. This is done during daylight hours. As well as clearwings there are lures available for a few other species, such as the Emperor Moth. See 'Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies' for the full range of lures and prices(www.angleps.com).

Currant Clearwing
Dave Wilton

Nectar sources. A search of flowers by torchlight at dusk and just after dark will also often reveal moths. Plants like buddleia or bramble are always good and ivy blossom is excellent. Many plants are more strongly scented at night and these can work well.

Luring with a sheet. If you have some way to illuminate a white bed sheet (or similar) hung from a tree, or over a fence, even over the back of a garden bench, you will find that moths are drawn to settle on it. To light the sheet a long extension cable that can be safely used outside and a bright light that you can attach to it are all that are required. If you have an enormously powerful torch that might work too. Moth traps use lights that emit different wavelengths than 'normal' light bulbs, so using 'normal' bulbs to attract moths isn't as successful as a moth trap light; but will still draw in a number of species.

Common Purple and Gold
Pyrausta purpuralis
Steve Lockley

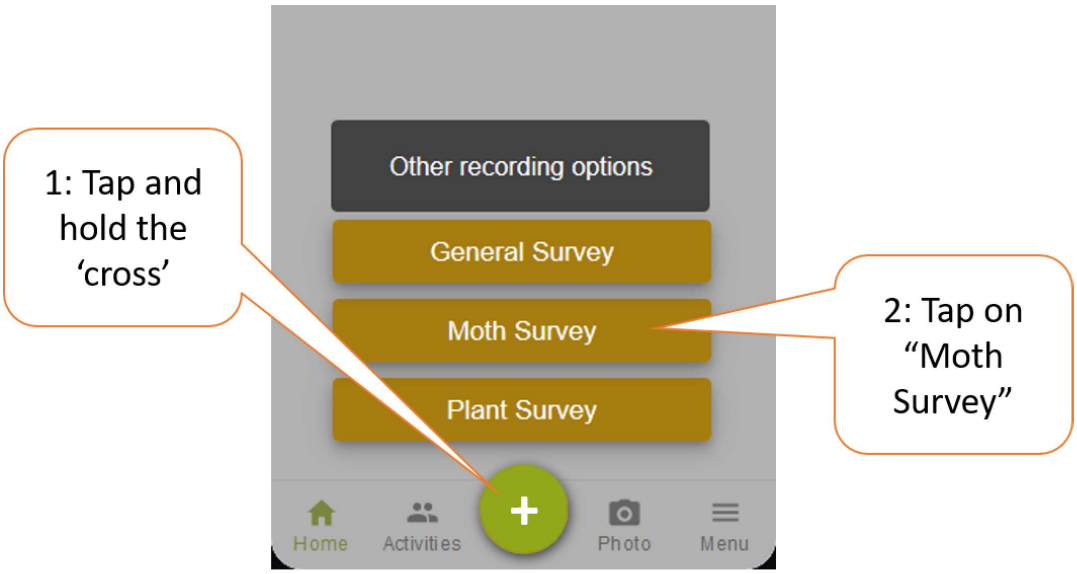
Day flying moths. Don't forget there are also a lot species of moth that fly by day and it is well worth looking out for these. Moths like the impressive Hummingbird hawk moth, Mint moth and various other day flying species all visit gardens.

iRecord app updated for moth recording

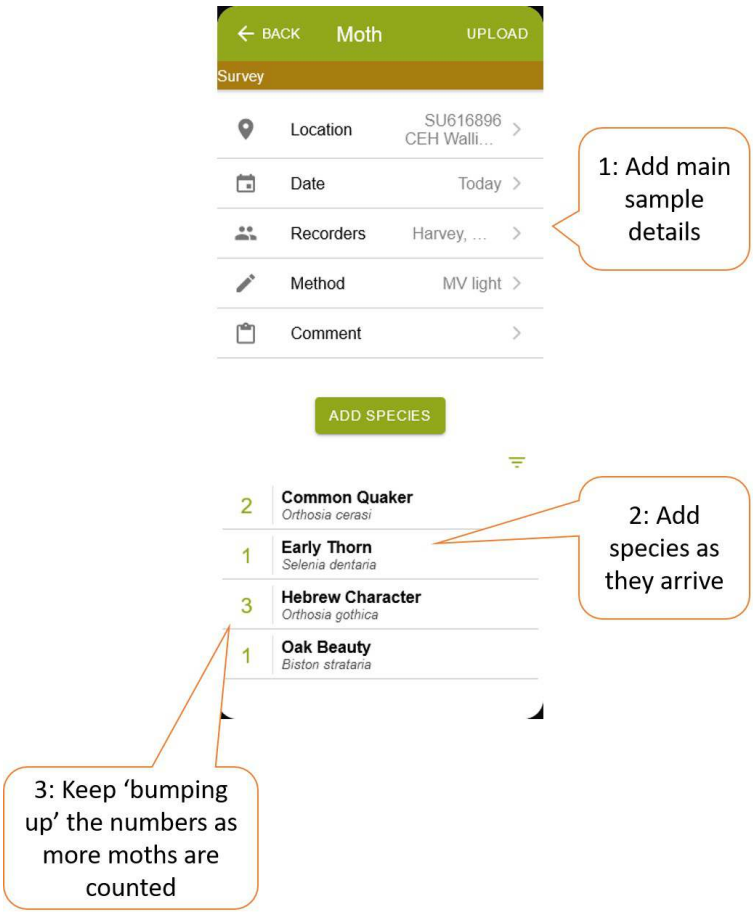
Martin Harvey, Berkshire county moth recorder

The main iRecord app has had some new features added, including an option for moth recording. (This is for the general iRecord 'all species' app – the specific iRecord Butterflies app is still available as well.)

On the main app, you can add single records as before, by tapping on the plus button at the bottom of the screen. But if you tap and hold the plus for a few seconds you will see some other options, including one for "Moth survey":



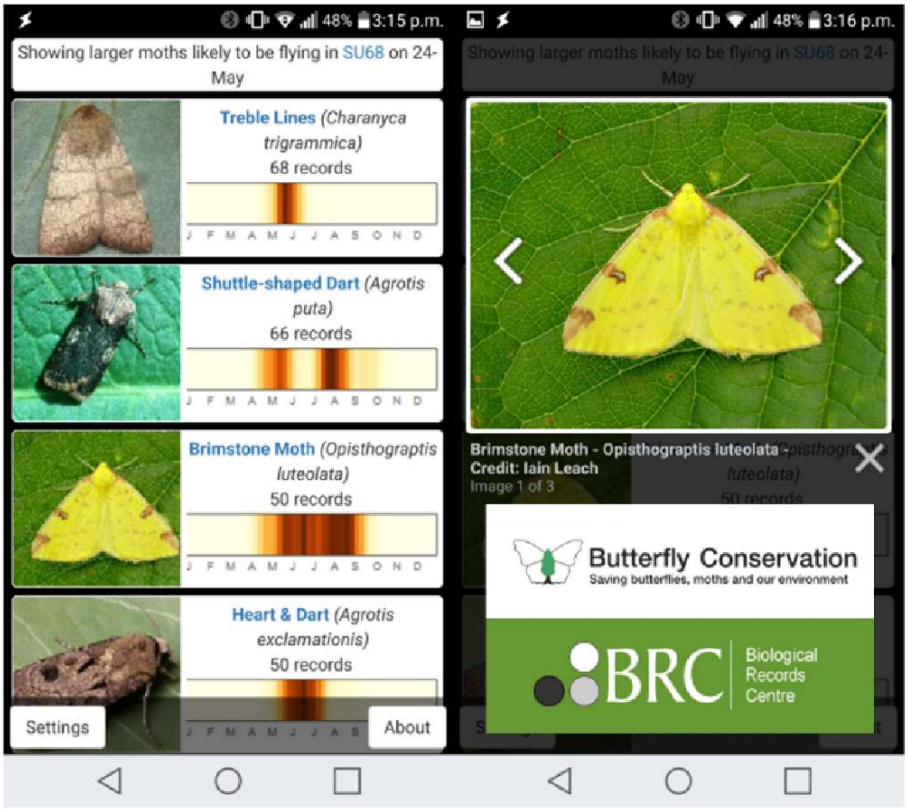
Next, add all the main sample details: location, date, recorder, method. You can then add each new species as it arrives (or as you find it in the trap), initially with a count of "1". As you count further individuals of the same species you can simply tap on the number to 'bump it up' to 2, 3, 4 etc.:



You can find the free iRecord app in the Apple and Android app stores, or go to https://irecord.org.uk/app/

iRecord and the linked apps are

developed and maintained by the Biological Records Centre, within the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. Don't forget that UKCEH also provide a "What's flying tonight" app that can help you narrow down the species you are likely to find at any particular location and date, in partnership with Butterfly Conservation and based on data from the National Moth Recording Scheme. Find out more at: www.ceh.ac.uk/news-and-media/blogs/new-app-makes-identifying-moths-easier



Two moths to look out for:

Tree-lichen Beauty
Martin Harvey

Jersey Tigers
John Clough

What makes a good record? Neil Fletcher

This short note is a request to all recorders to consider carefully what data you include in your records as it can make a huge difference to the amount of time and effort required to process them.

The records you create and send to Butterfly Conservation are vitally important and make a huge contribution to BC's understanding of populations and inform decision making about management and conservation of our butterflies and moths. But did you know that your records are shared, under strict licence terms, with the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environment Records Centre (BMERC) who collect wildlife records from across the county? That data is then used for wildlife conservation and management and to provide data to inform planning and development decisions.

As well as being a member of BC-UTB I also work for BMERC. It is so important that we have up-to-date information what species are present. Thank you so much for all the records you provide.

I have loaded over 80,000 Butterfly Conservation records into the BMERC database in the last few years. Unfortunately, this is a very slow and time-consuming process because of the amount of data cleaning I need to do to load the records.

So what makes a good record? The elements of data you need to submit are usually pre-defined, but what you put in is often up to you. There are four essential elements to a record, and this applies to any record, not just butterfly and moth records.

What you saw?

This is the species, the common or scientific name. But for some species care is needed, are you sure it was a Small Skipper and not an Essex Skipper? If you are not sure, record as Small/Essex Skipper. If you are recording moths, there are many more species and particular care is needed for the micro moths. Many species cannot be determined without dissection for which a specimen is needed.

When did you see it?

Please record the exact date if you can (e.g. 01/04/2020), week (e.g. 6-12 April 2020), month (e.g. April 2020) or year (e.g. 2019) of the record. A date range is acceptable (e.g. 3rd March to 4th April 2020). But please avoid vague terms and non-standard formats as these may be meaningless or will require a lot of work to correct, e.g. Last week, last month, over the winter, 01.03.2020, 01,03,2020 etc.

Who saw it?

This might seem easy, you just need to put your name. But please make sure you use a name that identifies you. For example if I get records with recorder names …

- D. Ferguson
- Dave Ferguson
- David Ferguson

I have no way of knowing whether these are records from 1, 2, 3 or 4 different people.

Records with a name which does not identify someone have to be recorded as Unknown Recorder, examples include:

- Nick A
- David B
- Adrian Iphone
- Work Party
- Volunteer

Finally, if someone else identified what you saw, please include their name as well.

Where was it seen?

There are two parts to this:

- Grid Reference, usually six figures or more. These days there are plenty of free phone apps that will give you a good one. I like OS Locate.
- Site name. This should describe the place, e.g. Naphill, Forge Road or Howe Park Wood.

Many site names have to be changed because they don't give an idea of the location. This is a manual and time consuming process. Examples of site names that we need to change:

- Blank site name
- My garden
- Field
- Hedge
- Postcodes
- Postcode of where the recorder lives, not where the record is

Postcodes in theory are good, but in reality are a code like a grid reference; they don't really work as a site name. Please use something like Town, Street in preference. Worst of all is where the site name and grid reference do not match. Usually we have to reject these records as we don't know which is right.

Summary

Apologies if this sounds like a moan, it is not. Without your valuable records we would not be in the position we are today. Please continue to record and send in your records, they are very much appreciated.
BMERC is hoping to run some training on generating and submitting records in the near future, please contact us if this is of interest to you.

Neil Fletcher
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre
01296 382431 erc@Buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Butterfly Distribution Recording - an update
How did we do in 2015-2019?

Jim Asher, County butterfly recorder, Berks, Bucks and Oxon

We have been recording butterfly distributions in Upper Thames Branch and across the UK in five-year periods, starting in 1995. The most recent completed 5-year period was 2015-2019, so last year was the last opportunity to record in many coverage gaps to be filled at that stage. In the local area, we collect records at a recorded resolution of 1km or better, and we map them at a resolution of 2km OS grid squares. Results of these surveys have been published by the branch in two atlases[1]. The map in Figure 1a (covering Berks, Bucks & Oxon) shows where we were at the end of 2018, with many gaps evident across our area. As a result of your response to the appeals we made last year, we achieved a total coverage of 2km squares, shown in Figure 1b, of records from 1563 out of 1566 squares covering our three counties – 99.8% of the total. All the 'internal' squares were recorded and poorly recorded squares were greatly improved; only three squares overlapping the edge of our area did not receive records. If we include records available from our neighbouring counties, these few edge squares are covered also.

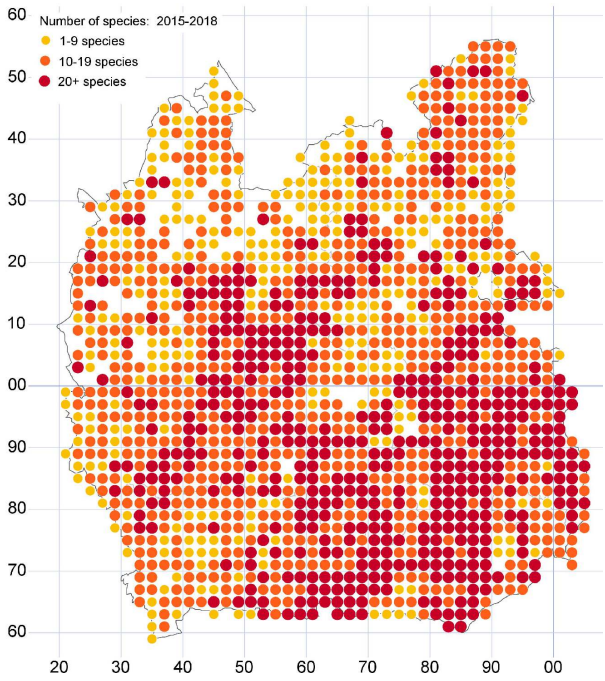


Figure 1a: Record coverage 2015-2018

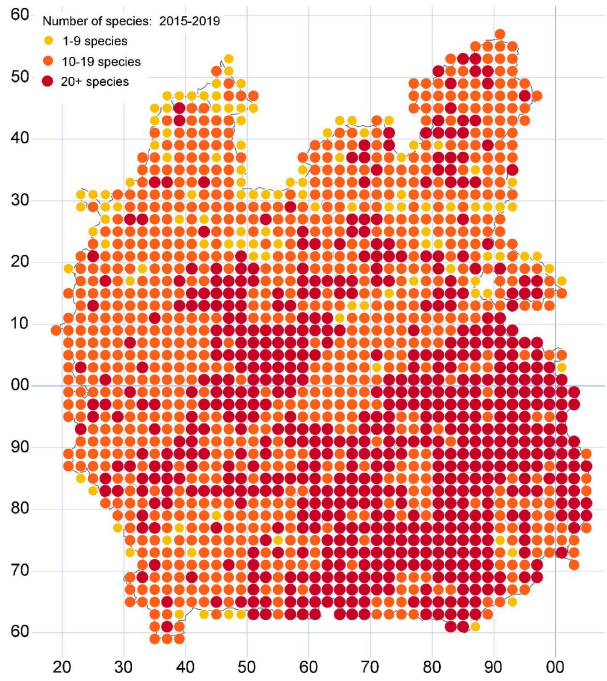


Fig 1b: Record coverage 2015-2019

[1] Asher et al (2016), Atlas of Butterflies in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire, Pisces, Newbury; and Asher et al (2005), The State of Butterflies in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, Pisces, Newbury.

Over the course of 2019, we made over 27,000 visits to 1465 squares, collecting over 64,000 species records; that total does not yet include last year's transect data which were not yet available at the time this article was written (we expect to receive soon about 25,000 transect species records for 2019, which could take the total number of records to nearly 90,000 in one year). We have increased the average number of species recorded per 2km square from 15.8 in 2015-18 to 17.9 in 2015-2019.

This great result is a tribute to those many volunteers who responded to our requests and went out to target un-recorded or poorly recorded squares – a huge thank-you to all of you who took part in this huge effort, and an especially massive thank-you to those who walked many miles in unfamiliar places to collect new records and fill in so many empty or poorly recorded squares. We really couldn't do this without you!

What were the highlights in 2019?

While it is too early to provide the full results, as we don't yet have the transect data and we are still working to check and validate the 2019 records, we can give some highlights of the findings so far here.

The outstanding species of 2019 was, without much doubt, **Painted Lady**. The table below shows the number of 2km squares in which Painted Lady was recorded over the past five years.

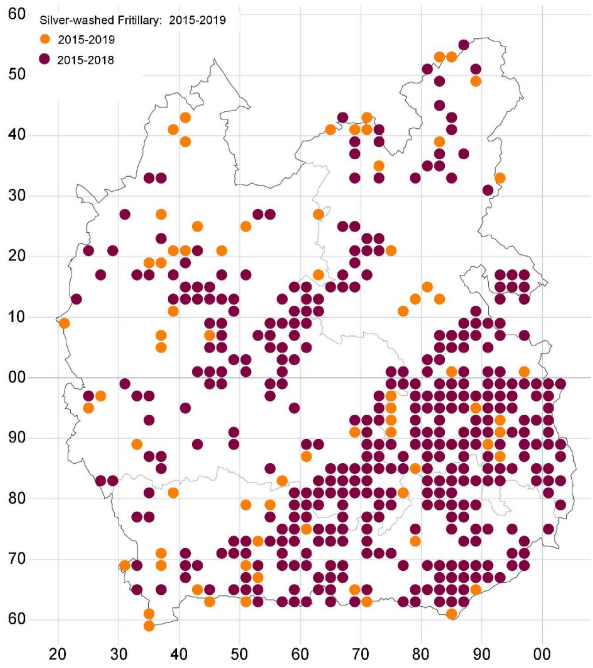
Year:	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Recorded 2km squares	845	1075	1203	1269	1463
2km squares with Painted Lady:	217	303	361	334	890
% of recorded squares	26%	28%	30%	26%	61%

The big increase in recorded squares, from an average of 28% in 2015-18 to 61% in 2019, shows how widespread this butterfly was in 2019 compared to previous years due to the massive migrant influx in mid-summer.
We expect that the transect data for 2019 in our area will also show a higher level of numbers of this species than in recent years when we get access to that data. There is often a strong correlation between abundance of a species and increases in range distribution.

Another species that did well in 2019 was **Silver-washed Fritillary**. The next table shows that it was recorded in 14% of visited squares, although this may increase when we receive the transect data.

Year:	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Recorded 2km squares	845	1075	1203	1269	1463
2km squares with Silver-washed Fritillary:	153	135	212	228	203
% of recorded squares	*18%*	*13%*	*18%*	*18%*	*14%*

Figure 2: Map showing new squares in which Silver-washed Fritillary was recorded in 2019, compared to 2015-2018. The darker dots are the 'historic' records from 2015-18; the orange dots show new records in 2019.



We see here an indication of the continued spread of this butterfly. Once a relatively rare butterfly in our area, is now seems to appear in most sizeable deciduous woodlands with oak trees. As there are many private woodlands in the area in which we are less likely to record this species, due to limitations of access, this species may be even more common that the map indicates.

Small Heath seemed to have a relatively good year, compared with the four previous years. It was recorded in 20% of visited squares:

Year:	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Recorded 2km squares	845	1075	1203	1269	1463
2km squares with Small Heath:	141	125	160	217	293
% of recorded squares	17%	12%	13%	17%	20%

Small Heath has become less common in recent years, disappearing from many sites in our area. It is encouraging to see what appears to be some recovery from a low point.

Best and worst performers

The following results are preliminary and subject to full record verification which is not yet complete.

The square recording the highest number of species recorded over the period 2015-19 is the 2km square covering Aston Rowant NNR, where 37 species were recorded, including Silver-spotted, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Chalkhill and Adonis Blue, White Admiral, Purple Emperor and Dark Green Fritillary. This is a wonderful site, despite its proximity to the M40.

Next best was the square covering Whiteleaf Cross (Princes Risborough) with 36 species. This and several other close-runners indicate the importance of the Chilterns to our local butterfly diversity.

Looking at the preliminary analysis results, and comparing the last five years (2015-19) with the previous 5-year period (2010-14) for squares visited in both periods, there are good and bad performers amongst our species, as determined by new squares gained less old squares lost, in squares recorded in both periods. The best and worst three (where we are statistically confident of the results) are shown below:

Species	Sqs: 2015-19	% of total	Sqs: 2010-14	% of total	Gains-Losses
White-letter Hairstreak	139	9.1%	49	3.2%	+184%
Adonis Blue	33	2.2%	13	0.9%	+154%
Painted Lady	1076	71%	460	30%	+134%
Small Tortoiseshell	1286	84%	1344	88%	-4%
Peacock	1236	81%	1308	86%	-6%
Clouded Yellow	144	9.4%	201	13.2%	-28%

We continue to see declines in our rarest species, in particular, Wall, Duke of Burgundy and Wood White, but the numbers of squares recorded for those species are so small now and may change as we complete verification checks that changes measured in this way are not as reliable at this stage as for those above. We will carry out a more complete analysis when we have all the data and we have completed verification.

Next steps

If you are reading this and you have not yet sent in your records for 2019 (or for any previous year), please email them to me them as soon as possible. When we have gathered in the last of the records, including the download of transect records, and we have completed our checking and validation, we plan to publish a set of species distribution maps for 2015-19 in an electronic (pdf) format later this year.

The new recording period: 2020-2024

2020 marks the start of the next 5-year window for butterfly distribution recording, which will run until the end of 2024. If you have been involved in the recording so far and would like to continue, or if you are relatively new to recording and would like to get more involved, we would be very pleased to have your help. It is a great excuse to enjoy a healthy walk in the countryside in good weather (we need that to see butterflies), to explore areas of our countryside you have not visited before and to provide useful data on the health of our wildlife. Seeing butterflies in the natural landscape really can lift the spirits!

For more information about recording, please contact me (jim.asher@btinternet.com) or Peter Ogden (peter.ogden@virgin.net) or see the recording page on our website – https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording.

As we are starting with a clean sheet, any records you gather this year will add new dots to the maps and start to build the picture for us. We welcome all records you may be able to gather, all the way from casual sightings made while you are out and about, through to planned visits to places where we have no recent records, aimed at getting comprehensive coverage of our three counties.

Recorders are increasingly encouraged to record online, using the iRecord Butterflies app, available free of charge for Android and iPhone devices. We are also happy to receive records in electronic format, preferably using the Excel file template available from the 'Your Records' page of our website: https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording. For those who are not able to use electronic media, we still accept paper form submission. The forms can be downloaded from the same page as the Excel template, but if this does not work for you, please let us know and we will post you some copies.

We have 79 10km OS grid squares covering our three counties. For many of these, we have a 10km square champion, who coordinates recording within that square so that we can better manage to achieve full coverage of up to 25 2km squares in each 10km square. Please look for more details on our website at

https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/10km_champions.

We still have 27 10km squares for which we are looking for a volunteer to take a local champion role. Many of these are county edge squares with fewer than 25 2km squares to cover. We would welcome your help with this as it really does help increase coverage. Please contact jan.haseler@btinternet.com for more details.

Covid-19 restrictions

2020 will be a difficult year to access the countryside as the rules about Covid-19 ask us to remain at home and to go out only for essential purposes or for exercise close to home. You can still help during this period of restriction by submitting recording butterflies in your garden or on walks you take for exercise close to home. Please start to do this now as we enter the spring and continue into summer– these may be the best records we will be able to gather this year, and they will be particularly welcome. We look forward to restrictions being relaxed, hopefully before the end of the flying season.

Churchyard survey - 2019

Phil Tizzard

A total of 24 churchyards were surveyed by 12 surveyors in 2019, down from 28 in 2018 and down from a peak of 69 in 2014. A total of 1326 individual butterflies were recorded, with St. John's, Stone recording the most species at 19, closely followed by St. Denys, Stanford in the Vale, and St. Mary's, Cholsey each with 18. The average recorded was nine species and the lowest one!

The table below summarises the percent of churchyards recording each species, over the past eleven years of the survey.

Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
No. of sites	24	28	33	67	59	69	68	50	54	45	36
Small White	100	78	75	57	68	65	87	60	74	76	75
Meadow Brown	92	71	72	57	63	78	81	66	56	56	78
Holly Blue	79	61	45	49	51	17	34	32	67	33	33
Orange-tip	42	68	57	42	37	39	37	32	52	33	42
Large White	67	64	54	39	58	45	81	32	67	60	89
Speckled Wood	50	43	57	33	44	62	54	26	46	47	72
Brimstone	29	43	33	31	39	42	34	22	30	29	33
Red Admiral	46	29	36	28	27	43	22	36	52	36	28
Ringlet	54	50	39	27	42	42	44	50	28	40	53
Small Tortoiseshell	25	25	30	27	41	61	47	14	22	29	44
Green-veined White	54	64	24	27	41	46	35	28	46	42	58
Peacock	29	25	15	24	41	42	43	12	19	24	44
Gatekeeper	54	43	51	22	47	58	54	42	39	36	36
Marbled White	42	21	18	13	19	16	16	10	13	13	8
Comma	17	29	24	10	24	42	40	22	20	27	44
Small Skipper	21	17	9	10	17	23	18	10	6	9	22
Large Skipper	8	11	6	9	14	12	15	6	9	16	14
Common Blue	25	21	24	7	20	20	22	4	22	36	31
Painted Lady	25	7	9	6	2	4	4	2	0	9	56
Essex Skipper	13	11	6	4	14	12	4	2	4	2	0
Small Copper	8	11	9	1	12	12	13	12	19	18	17
Brown Argus	13	18	9	1	10	6	4	2	17	2	8
Small Heath	4	0	6	1	5	3	4	4	0	2	0
Silver-w Fritillary	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
Purple Hairstreak	0	7	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	3
Chalkhill Blue	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
Small Blue	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	2	4	8
Key	70-100%			50-69%			30-49%				

It is difficult to extract any meaningful trends across the years, because a) there is a big change in sample size, b) there is no accounting for possible habitat change – e.g. from "manicured" (butterfly-unfriendly) to "managed as butterfly-friendly", and c) the level of effort is not standardised. Despite this a few broad observations can be made.

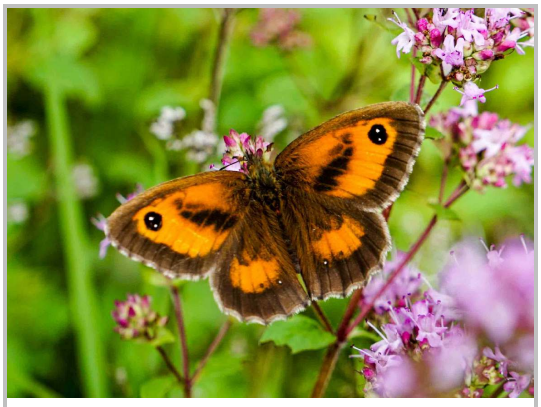
Firstly, it is perhaps surprising that **Painted Lady** did not figure more strongly in 2019, being recorded in only 25% of churchyards compared with 56% (out of 36) in the prior invasion year of 2009.

Marbled White was recorded in 10 churchyards out of the 24, which is the second highest number ever, after the three years 2013, 2014 and 2015, when it was recorded from 11 of the 59–69 churchyards surveyed in those years. This does look like a significant change, and is consistent with the large increase recorded by the Big Butterfly Count.On the other hand, **Peacock** numbers were essentially unchanged from 2018, and do not appear to reflect the findings of the Big Butterfly Count, where numbers were up 235% on last year.

Brown Argus
David Ferguson

Looking at **Brown Argus**, one might conclude that it was being recorded more frequently in the past two years. In fact it was seen in just three churchyards in 2019, which is very similar to the eleven-year average of 3.5 churchyards, so there has probably been no real change.

On the other hand, I think one might reasonably conclude that **Holly Blue** is faring better, being recorded in 19 out of the 24 churchyards in 2019, compared with 17/28 and 15/33 in the prior two years...and 12/36 in 2009. I certainly found from my atlas surveying that churchyards were a good place to find Holly Blues.



Gatekeeper
Stephen Jones

In terms of numbers, five species—**Small White**, **Meadow Brown**, **Gatekeeper**, **Large White** and **Marbled White**—accounted for two thirds of all the sightings. **Small White** was recorded in every churchyard, and together with **Meadow Brown** these two species consistently figure as the top two over the last eight years. In addition **Small White** and **Meadow Brown** were also the most numerous across the whole survey, with 182 and 355 counted respectively.

As can be seen, the number of churchyards surveyed has dropped considerably in recent years. If you would like to take part in the survey and know of a churchyard that you would like to cover, then please get in touch.

My thanks to all those who contributed their time, effort and data to the survey in 2019 , and thanks too to Chris Woodrow who transcribed all of the paper inputs into Excel.

Volunteer Churchyard Butterfly Recorders Required

Surveyors are needed to record the butterfly populations in the churchyards across the Upper Thames region, especially in Buckinghamshire where more than 30 churchyards have not been surveyed since 2018. The survey only requires four visits to a churchyard during the summer, so not particularly onerous. We also need surveyors in West Oxfordshire and West Berkshire particularly, but any churchyard in the three counties that is not currently surveyed would be of benefit. If you are able to give a small amount of time to this important recording to expand our knowledge of our vulnerable butterfly populations, please contact me initially at lepidoptera45@btinternet.com with details of where you live, and the name of the churchyard(s) you could survey, so I can ensure that two people do not survey the same churchyard!

Chris Woodrow – Survey Co-ordinator

TVERC Field Surveyors

Are you a nature enthusiast? Do you have experience in species identification and wildlife surveys? Would you like the opportunity to visit protected sites, contribute to TVERC's records, and play a role in the success of the Berkshire Local Wildlife Sites Project? You may be able to help us!

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) are looking for enthusiastic volunteer naturalists with good identification skills and an ability to work alone in the field to help out with additional species surveys on a range of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) across the county of Berkshire. The LWSs cover a range of habitat types including woodland, wetland, heathland, bog and grassland, and have the potential to support a variety of rare species.

PLEASE NOTE: Surveys may not be able to go ahead early this season as originally planned, but please register your interest for future surveys, either later in the season or next year. Surveys will be undertaken in line with the UK government's and CIEEMs latest advice on Covid-19.

To register your interest, please contact Caitlin Coombs, TVERC Biodiversity Officer, and we can discuss which sites you may be interested in and make further arrangements.

caitlin.coombs@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Garden Survey - 2019 — Phil Tizzard

Seventy-six gardens across the region took part in the Garden Survey last year, recording 34 species in total and nearly 9000 individual sightings. A third of all gardens recorded between 15 and 20 species, with the greatest number recorded being 27.


Large White on verbena bonariensis

The most frequently reported species was **Small White**, noted in 70 of the 75 gardens, and the least frequently recorded was **Clouded Yellow**, seen in just one garden.
The first species to be recorded in the year was **Red Admiral** on January 1st and this species also took the prize for the latest sighting, being recorded on 29th November. January 4th saw the first **Peacock** of the year, but the first **Brimstone**, **Comma** and **Small Tortoiseshell** didn't appear until February—see table below for details of all the earliest and latest dates.

EARLIEST AND LATEST DATES 2019

SPECIES	Earliest record	Latest record	SPECIES	Earliest record	Latest record
Red Admiral	01-Jan	29-Nov	Small Heath	12-May	22-Sep
Peacock	04-Jan	20-Oct	Grizzled Skipper	18-May	26-May
Brimstone	13-Feb	10-Nov	Brown Argus	19-May	29-Sep
Comma	20-Feb	28-Oct	Small Blue	19-May	28-Jul
Small Tortoiseshell	24-Feb	04-Nov	Large Skipper	02-Jun	05-Aug
Painted Lady	23-Mar	27-Oct	Gatekeeper	06-Jun	19-Oct
Green-veined White	24-Mar	15-Oct	Marbled White	16-Jun	11-Aug
Holly Blue	24-Mar	20-Sep	White-letter Hairstreak	16-Jun	28-Jul
Large White	24-Mar	20-Oct	Essex Skipper	23-Jun	13-Aug
Orange-tip	24-Mar	30-Aug	Ringlet	23-Jun	20-Oct
Small White	24-Mar	28-Oct	Small Skipper	23-Jun	25-Aug
Common Blue	31-Mar	29-Sep	Dark Green Fritillary	30-Jun	18-Aug
Speckled Wood	07-Apr	13-Oct	Silver-washed Fritillary	07-Jul	22-Aug
Small Copper	21-Apr	06-Oct	Clouded Yellow	21-Jul	21-Jul
Meadow Brown	22-Apr	29-Sep	White Admiral	21-Jul	28-Jul
Dingy Skipper	28-Apr	02-Jun	Chalkhill Blue	22-Jul	22-Jul
Green Hairstreak	28-Apr	28-Apr	Purple Hairstreak	13-Aug	13-Aug

PERCENTAGE OF RECORDERS REPORTING EACH SPECIES

SPECIES	2019	Avg	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Small White	93	92	86	95	86	96	96	92	94	86	96	94
Red Admiral	91	93	93	99	87	97	84	98	97	86	93	94
Brimstone	89	94	89	93	95	92	98	99	96	89	97	87
Orange-tip	88	90	90	95	87	96	93	93	96	87	86	80
Peacock	85	92	84	84	90	100	98	96	85	89	100	96
Holly Blue	85	86	82	96	91	63	88	87	96	81	81	96
Gatekeeper	84	86	84	91	91	84	84	81	79	86	89	87
Small Tortoiseshell	81	86	88	88	91	97	94	84	78	81	93	61
Meadow Brown	81	84	85	82	87	93	92	87	76	79	81	80
Comma	80	88	93	79	85	85	91	93	85	84	94	88
Painted Lady	80	50	48	71	65	49	44	24	31	40	100	28
Large White	77	92	85	92	90	93	94	93	93	87	94	97
Speckled Wood	63	77	71	74	76	86	77	71	84	74	84	77
Green-veined White	56	70	61	74	69	71	79	62	75	74	73	64
Ringlet	52	62	61	58	66	67	69	62	61	61	66	46
Common Blue	44	49	36	40	55	48	53	33	55	73	54	39
Marbled White	43	32	34	31	33	41	38	25	36	24	33	26
Small Copper	36	29	24	22	24	36	38	16	31	50	33	19
Small Skipper	33	34	33	29	48	48	44	26	25	31	31	20
Large Skipper	33	34	24	28	42	33	37	36	46	39	33	25
Brown Argus	16	15	13	8	16	14	13	8	18	30	20	7
Small Heath	16	12	11	7	9	12	17	15	19	10	7	12
Silver-washed	13	16	19	12	21	21	24	12	9	23	10	4
Essex Skipper	11	10	10	12	20	15	10	8	6	9	4	9
Small Blue	7	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	6	0	1
Dark Green Fritillary	5	2	2	2	3	5	4	0	0	0	3	0
White-letter Hairstreak	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	3	1	0
Dingy Skipper	4	2	1	0	0	3	3	1	4	3	1	1
Grizzled Skipper	4	1	0	0	3	1	1	0	3	0	0	0
White Admiral	3	2	3	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	0	0
Purple Hairstreak	3	2	1	0	2	0	4	1	4	4	1	1
Green Hairstreak	3	2	0	2	5	3	1	2	4	0	3	1
Clouded Yellow	1	2	1	2	2	5	7	0	0	0	6	0
Purple Emperor	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
Chalkhill Blue	0	2	1	0	2	2	5	1	1	4	3	0
Brown Hairstreak	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0
Wall	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Grayling	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Silver-spotted Skipper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

The table above shows the percentage of gardens reporting each species in 2019 and in each of the ten years from 2008-2017, (there is no 2018 data), plus the long term (2008-2017) average (Avg).

It is not possible to determine which of the changes is statistically significant, although perhaps the larger the change, the more likely it is to be significant. However one can draw some inferences by comparison with a much larger dataset, namely the trends of UK butterfly species based on the results of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). To quote from the latest UKBMS report: "...2019 was an excellent year for butterflies. Just over half of species (53%) showed a higher population index in 2019 compared to the year before. Four species had their best year on record in the UK in 2019 (**Chequered Skipper**, **Orange-tip**, **Brimstone**, and **Marbled White**)".

So do the results of last year's UTB garden survey reflect these trends?

Taking a look at the top six places in the table, we find that **Brimstone**, **Red Admiral**, **Peacock**, **Small White**, and **Orange-tip** have all retained their status in the top six compared to the long-term average, but that **Large White** has slipped from its long-term average of 5th to 12th place. This feels consistent with the 40% year-on-year decline in abundance reported by UKBMS, but as will be seen later, actual counts held up well.

Small White
David Dennis

Other species showing a fairly large decrease from the long-term average are **Speckled Wood**, recorded in 63% of gardens in 2019 compared to the long-term average of 77%, and **Green-veined White**, the latter mirroring a country-wide decline of 43%. At the other end of the scale **Marbled White** was recorded from 43% of gardens, up 11 points on the long-term average, again apparently reflecting the trend in the country at large, where numbers were up by 66%. And unsurprisingly, in an invasion year, **Painted Lady** jumped strongly being recorded from 80% of gardens compared with the long-term average of 50%.

Common Blue
Stephen Jones

One of the species that fared particularly badly at a national level was the **Common Blue**, which showed a 55% decline nationally. But this does not seem to have been reflected in the number of gardens recording the species, as there was only a slight drop compared to the long-term average, and no change compared to the last three years.

Looking now at numbers of individuals counted, the six species with the highest total counts were **Small White**, **Red Admiral**, **Large**

White, **Brimstone**, **Holly Blue** and **Painted Lady**, these six accounting for 50% of the overall total count. Of course these totals are not absolute numbers since inevitably some individuals will have been counted more than once; but nevertheless, in a good year for **Red Admiral**, **Brimstone** and **Painted Lady** it is not surprising to see these species amongst the highest counts. What is perhaps surprising, given that it appeared in fewer gardens, is that numerically speaking **Large White** was third in the ranking, which implies that where it was seen, numbers were good. The other surprise perhaps is **Holly Blue**, with a count nearly the same as **Brimstone**, despite a 24% decline nationally.

With movement restricted due to the Coronavirus outbreak, 2020 is an excellent year to start recording butterflies in your garden, if you don't already do so. So if you want to get involved, please follow this link

https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/gardens to download the appropriate form. If you are at all familiar with Excel, please use the spreadsheet to report your observations, rather than the paper form, as it makes consolidating the data so much easier!

Finally, my thanks to all those who supplied data for the survey last year, to Chris Woodrow for entering all the paper records onto spreadsheets and to Jim Asher for consolidating and summarising the data.

New Members — Brenda Mobbs

Since the last newsletter 98 new members have joined and membership is now 1967. 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.

24 from Berkshire
26 from Buckinghamshire
38 from Oxfordshire
2 from elsewhere

All of you are welcome to join field meetings, work parties and attend Members' Day and will be invited to a New Members' Day.

Details of events are found in this newsletter or on our website:
www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Aston Upthorpe volunteers...again

Photos by Jim Asher

Vicky Webb at Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre

Photos by Jim Asher

In Buckinghamshire, the Bucks Invertebrate Group organise many 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://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

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

Holtspur Bottom Reserve
http://www.holtspurbottom.info

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