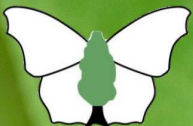


Hairstreak

No 109 Autumn 2020



Butterfly
Conservation



Upper Thames
Branch

Safety and Surveying

Butterfly Conservation has always put the safety of surveyors above the collection of records. For that reason we want people to consider their personal risk of contracting the coronavirus above the need to collect records and to be safe from all other hazards. We understand that there will always be some risks and for that reason there is insurance for surveyors. Guidance on staying safe is available at:

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/recording-and-monitoring/health-safety>

We hope that all surveyors will consider the advice and follow the risk assessment.

We have learnt that some surveyors might not be fully covered by BC's insurance. You are covered if surveying on a WCBS square or transect route and adding your own data to UKBMS. This cover will extend to any other activity - e.g. recording for 10km square purposes or at the request of a Species Champion. However, if you provide data (perhaps by email or written notes) to others to enter centrally, you might not be fully covered. The insurance gives maximum cover to those known to the system. Any surveyor who wishes to have this insurance cover should ask the recipients of their data to add them to the central registers.

Just as you can walk in the countryside without insurance, you can collect butterfly data without insurance. Any of you collecting data on a casual basis can continue as before (it is perfectly acceptable for you to do so); we simply point out that BC's insurance gives the most comprehensive cover to those who are registered as surveyors.

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: Scarlet Tiger by Nick Bowles

Background: Sydlings Copse, Oxon

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP
Charity registered in England (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)

It has been a strange summer for the Upper Thames Branch with no field trips and no meetings of any type. I hope that you have been finding pleasure in the butterflies and moths wherever you saw them, maybe in your own garden or perhaps further afield. The guidance that we may not hold indoor meetings seems likely to apply for many months, so we are not holding a Members' Day this year. However, we will be placing some materials supplied by the speakers that Brenda Mobbs had booked for you onto our web pages in the autumn. We will hold a virtual AGM as well, details of which will follow, to allow a presentation about our work this year and allow questions from you about both that and our finances. There will also be a chance to vote for committee members who will act on your behalf in the coming year.

I suspect many of you have taken more interest in the wildlife close to home this year. I don't think I am alone in taking real pleasure in the butterflies and moths which I see in my garden and especially those that breed there as a result of my creating the right conditions for their caterpillars.

So, while a Dark Green Fritillary was a real delight when it strayed from its 'home' to pass through my garden looking for suitable habitat to lay eggs, the Gatekeepers that breed in the grass which I deliberately leave long all year along a south facing fence, gave even more pleasure. The equivalent weight of sadness was felt over the loss of the 6-spot Burnet, whose caterpillars fed in the garden on the Birds-foot Trefoil for years. This spring it was obvious that I had far less Birds-foot Trefoil than in most recent years and predictably I saw only one 6-spot which left after two days in search of mates elsewhere.



Dark Green Fritillary passing through my town garden and stopping briefly and appropriately, on Bowles Mauve. They are highly unlikely to breed in gardens, requiring large areas of shaded violets.



The media talk of the public's increased appreciation of nature is encouraging and I see some signs of it in postings to my town's Facebook page. However this is countered locally by the continued wreckage of huge areas (some extremely rich in biodiversity) for the construction of HS2 and many other things. The government announcing that in order to help the economy spring back we need to "Build, Build, Build" is deeply worrying.

The inescapable truth we learn from the devastating losses of habitat is that we must have records of what is present before it is threatened with being lost. The presence of very rare creatures can prevent development and a suite of scarce creatures can give protection too. These days developers are charged to repair damage, with a requirement to ensure 'No Net Loss' of biodiversity. Some more enlightened organisations strive for 'Net Gain' (of biodiversity). Of course if there is development where no records exist, it is easily argued that nothing needs to be saved. For that reason I urge every member to send in records of all the wildlife that they see wherever they see it. As chair of BC/UTB I get regular requests for records from villagers trying to save a favourite meadow or woodland; and sadly I frequently need to go back to them and say, "I'm sorry but no-one ever recorded any butterfly or moth there". With no records, all effort to save something is immediately undermined.

Beautiful wild places can be magically captivating and I would agree with anyone that says the beauty alone should be enough to see it protected. Unfortunately planning processes very rarely consider the aesthetics of sites. I would agree that mere numbers of Adonis Blue, Four-spotted or Striped Lychnis, do not capture the tremendous elevating and inspirational buzz that so many places have. Sadly, being a lovely place carries no weight. We must have records or such places will continue to be lost.

We provide advice about recording your sightings at <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording>



Brenda Mobbs at our fantastically beautiful and certainly magical Holtspur Bottom reserve

Our year (since the last AGM) began fairly normally with a focus on our core and key activity – winter conservation work. Based on the records of butterflies and moths that you send in we can determine where conservation effort is most necessary. We then look to engage landowners and local members to try to improve the habitat at sites that hold the key species, most especially where we think that numbers are falling. For some reason we always seem to get more volunteers at tasks in mid Buckinghamshire (thank you very, very much to all those attending) but we are very keen to see work undertaken across all three counties. If you know a site where conservation work could usefully be undertaken please let us know and if other organisations are arranging tasks we are prepared to help advertise and try to get more volunteers along. Unquestionably, working in a larger group is more rewarding – the effect of a large group can be genuinely transformational. Once again we are grateful to Chiltern Rangers, with whom we frequently work, for their organisational skill, effectiveness and expertise.



Working to prepare habitat for Duke of Burgundy near Princes Risborough

As the winter work gradually ended we started a programme of training for butterfly surveyors. Sadly after four meetings this series of meetings was curtailed by Covid-19. This meant that seven planned meetings were cancelled (including our dedicated moth identification and surveying meeting). Even so, before lockdown, we did manage to reach another 80 keen surveyors. Thank you to all those attending and



Practice transect

those registered to attend whom we had to disappoint. Each year I think that we should be cautious in booking rooms in case we already reached all those wishing to develop their ID skills and survey aspirations. Each year we find an even larger number of enthusiastic applicants. With lockdown preventing meetings, we presented videos via Zoom to some groups and these presentations are visible online. See separate note about the links.

The summer was quite weird with no group field meetings but committee members did still manage a number of visits to impart management advice to landowners. Also, surveyors from previous and this season's training sessions carried out approximately as many formal surveys as in 'normal' years. Some members, finding themselves with more time on their hands this summer, have actually been out doing informal surveys most days and we may well find

that we get more records in 2020 than in previous years. Many of us have found that having a love of butterflies and moths has been very helpful as a means to get on with things that please us during troubling times.

Our Five Hairstreaks project officer Caz was furloughed, so her short term employment has been extended into 2021, but overall the time for her to achieve her aims is similar. Unfortunately the period when she might have been most effectively engaging with landowners and managers was when she was prevented from doing so. Our regional officer Steve was also furloughed and, on his return to work, in July, discovered that his role has been expanded to encompass several additional strands. Despite an extra work load we are grateful that he devoted time to surveys at various UTB sites this summer.

In summary we have had a strange year but still achieved a huge amount. Unfortunately the pleasant group events of the summer have had to be cancelled and I speak for all the committee when I say that we missed meeting you. Quite what is practicable this coming winter is still a mystery. I will be planning conservation tasks and inviting members to join me, but each of these will need to operate with 'bubbles' of 6 volunteers working as separate teams – even if working on the same site. We will do everything feasible to continue with our important work and to keep you informed, but informing our members must mean using electronic means. We cannot send out postal material. The people that used to meet at our national office to insert mailings into envelopes are unable to do so. We hope you will periodically look at the branch website for any new updates.



Steve and UTB key moth officer Peter searching for Striped *Lychnis* caterpillars on a National Trust site.

UTB Members Day and AGM 2020

Writing this in early August it seems very unlikely that we can hold an indoor Members' Day this year. Consequently, we have apologised to our speakers and asked if they would be good enough to provide something for our website to display instead. The AGM is an obligatory event which we must hold and we will announce when this will occur – but not indoors – as a Zoom meeting. This will occur in late October but the date is still to be decided. We will email the date to members about three weeks ahead of that event. It will allow UTB Members to listen to a short account of the year's achievements and to ask questions of the committee. It will also allow voting on the election of committee members (if required) and on accepting the minutes of last year's AGM as correct, suggesting alterations before accepting, or I suppose, rejecting them as a true account. These minutes are printed in the Spring 2020 edition of 'Hairstreak' (page 21 of issue 107).

Material supplied by our erstwhile speakers will be displayed from late October.

Winter conservation work 2020/21

As a conservation organisation our most valuable contribution to our butterflies and moths is the work we do to help ensure that their habitat remains in suitable condition. No amount of photography, describing sightings on social media, or publishing newsletters for members, will save any butterfly or moth as effectively as twenty willing volunteers.



A task to help the Duke by coppicing hazel

Sadly, left to itself, countryside doesn't change in ways that help our wildlife. Most wildlife in southern England is adapted to an open semi-natural habitat created by man. Unless we keep working it, the habitats close up with scrub and trees. Species evolved to do well in clearings disappear, leaving us with a denuded flora and fauna.

I am extremely grateful to the UTB members that come along and give us their time and energy, every now and again, to tackle scrub and plant those essential food plants for rare butterfly and moth species. I know that they get great satisfaction from working to help our wildlife, so it saddens me to point out that with Covid-19 guidance stating that groups from different households are limited to six persons we may well have a reduced ability to act this winter; and I may well be restricted to inviting far smaller numbers of members living close to sites where we plan to work.

I will be exploring every avenue possible to find ways to invite more of you to take part in our most valuable work and really hope to find a solution that enables reduced risk, large scale conservation tasks in the

coming winter. If the guidance changes or I find a sensible, safe workaround, I will post the changes on our website. Please look there for any news.



Volunteer tea break in a clearing created in developing scrub. Brown Hairstreak eggs have been found around this same clearing.

The German word Gestalt means something which is somehow more than its constituent parts; just as your favourite piece of music is more than simply the sound of the instruments used to create it.

Butterflies seem to exemplify Gestalt.

All insects are interesting and some wonderful, but none cause the same frisson of exhilaration, or the same delight as a butterfly floating between flowers. In almost every culture butterflies are regarded as very positive forces. Several European and Asian cultures held that they were embodiments of souls and Native Americans that they could carry your wishes to the gods.



Small and Green-veined Whites

Vladimir Nabokov was as passionate about butterflies as anyone ever was. He wrote “Literature and butterflies are the two sweetest passions known to man.” Surely watching butterflies allows us to detach ourselves from our mundane worries. Carl Sagan said, “We are like butterflies who flutter for a day and think it is forever”. They certainly seem unhurried and untroubled. There does seem to be *something in the fact that they seem so serene.*

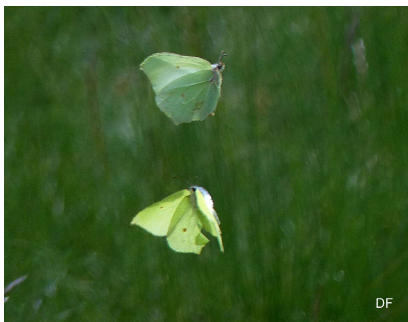
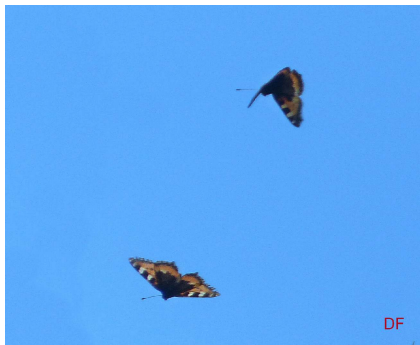
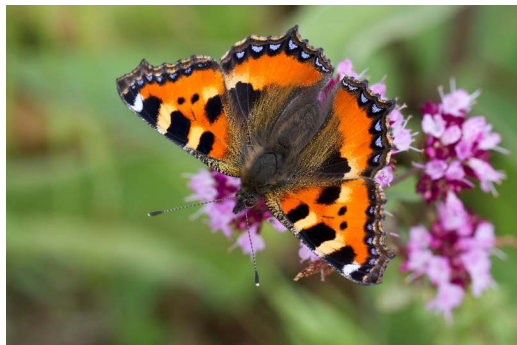


Adonis Blue



Common Blue
Stephen Jones

Rabindranath Tagore put it like this. "The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough."



Yacutinga, Argentina

And as conservationists maybe we understand the ephemeral and tenuous nature of their fragile lives better than many. Maya Angelou wrote, “We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty”. She might have added, and the struggle to survive. We know how uncertain their futures are, yet they seem so carefree.

For me, Edith Wharton best summed up the life affirming, heart lifting effect that butterflies can have with this beautifully expressed phrase,

“They seemed to suddenly come upon happiness as if they had surprised a butterfly in a winter wood”.



Silver-washed Fritillary



Small White
David Dennis



Wood White

Autumn Butterflies
Richard Stewart

Three white butterflies
Dancing above fading leaves
And summer turning.

Camberwell beauty
Purple and cream reflecting
Sunlight on soft plums.

Garlands of ivy
Full of feeding butterflies
And hunting hornets.

Evening sun on leaves
The gold turning to orange
Where a comma basks.

One band of late sun
One glowing silver birch trunk
One red admiral.

Late autumn's remnant
A single frayed speckled wood
On its final flight.

Across the North Sea
Painted ladies head homeward
Riding high thermals.

There are five species of hairstreak butterfly in the UK. Of all butterflies, this group is particularly at risk of habitat destruction, especially from development and changes in farming practices. The Oxford and Amphill Clays are in the Upper Thames region and is the only place in the UK where all five of the hairstreak family of butterflies can be found naturally. We need to protect this unique location and ensure all of these beautiful butterflies have a safe future. This importance was recognised by the setting up of the Five Hairstreaks Project in April 2019 which has the objective of enhancing, highlighting and supporting the excellent work already being carried out by the branch. The branch is blessed with Species Champions for all but the Purple Hairstreak and their dedication and expertise are a real asset. My role as the Five Hairstreaks Project Officer has been to build on this fantastic base. The aim has been to have more active volunteers, better conservation of Hairstreaks, better protection of Hairstreak habitat, more creation of Hairstreak habitat, and more supporters and members.

With so much already going on in the region one of my first tasks was to collate a database of contacts including landowners and partners (existing and potential) to be used as an easy reference resource in the future. It's a very long list so there are plenty of potential opportunities to choose from in the future! I've also been busy putting together easily digestible resources. This is in the form of Best Practice documentation for Recorders and new volunteers, Land Managers & Advisors and Developers including best-practice examples.

Partnership working is always integral to any project and it's been great to contact and meet with so many enthusiastic members of the public, other organisations and landowners. One example of great partnership working is building a good working relationship with the people involved with large private estates. (see photo). This was just one of the sites where we used the existing knowledge and expertise of our Black hairstreak species champion, Stuart Hodges, to identify priority sites to target our efforts. We were also



fortunate enough to meet the gamekeeper/warden, site manager and site owner and then return with the Brown Hairstreak Species champion, Dave Wilton, to carry out an egg search to confirm the presence of Brown Hairstreak on the site.

Additional egg searches were organised as part of the project over the winter, including a very successful one at Bure Park in Bicester. This had a focus on community engagement and encouraging families to take part. As well as a butterfly egg searching trail for children (which is now available as an off the self-package that can be used nationally) we were able to show the public real Brown Hairstreak eggs, much to the delight and amazement of some of the locals who had no idea that such

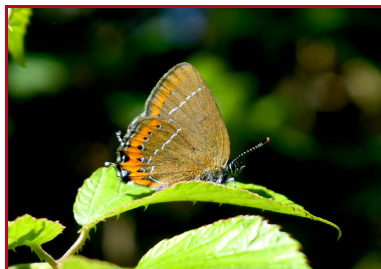
a rare species was on their doorstep. (see photo of event).

I was all set up for a jam packed series of events and activities over the spring and summer, including a talk at the Oxford Museum of Natural History, and then the dreaded Covid hit and like everything else, plans were cancelled. Given that the project is ending in October it was disappointing to say the least. On the up side, now that the leg work has been done, these events and activities can easily be picked up again and delivered in the future.

One event that was planned and will be launched nationally from next year is the Five Hairstreak Challenge, whereby we will be challenging you to spot as many of the hairstreak species as possible within one year. Are you up for the challenge? Perhaps you've been lucky enough to have seen all five this year?! If so please don't forget to report your sighting (e.g. via [iRecord Butterflies](#)). I'd love to hear from you via social media if you've seen any hairstreaks this year or have some interesting experiences to share. Use the hashtag #5HS and I'll find it or tag me @ctempleBC on twitter.



The five hairstreaks:



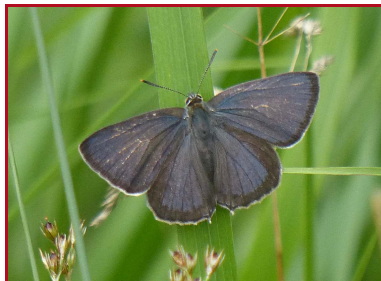
Black Hairstreak
Ellen Stickland



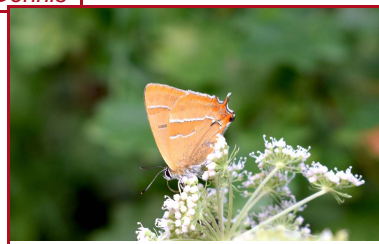
White-letter Hairstreak
David Dennis



Green Hairstreak
David Ferguson



Purple Hairstreak
David Ferguson



Brown Hairstreak
Ellen Stickland

Clearwing moths are lovely little moths with stained glass windows for wings, so to catch sight of one is always a treat. Unlike many other day flying moths they are rarely seen by the casual observer as they seem to hide away and don't spend a lot of time on flowers.

We have 15 species in the UK and three occasional species that are more common on the continent. Of these 11 are found in our region (that I am aware of). Until fairly recently sightings of adults have been sparse, restricted to lucky sightings from people being at the right place at the right time or individuals being swept from vegetation. Now though there are pheromone lures available for many of our species and these are getting more and more reliable as new ones are developed for specific species.

A pheromone lure is basically a rubber bung or plastic vial that has been impregnated with a chemical that mimics the pheromone scent that the female gives out. The males detect the chemical and fly to the lure expecting to find a receptive female. The lure is often put in a trap which allows the moths to fly in and then be released unharmed. Having the lures available is great as it is allowing us to map the distribution of these moths some of which are thought to be quite rare.

2020 has been a clearwing year for me, I treated myself to a set of lures for my birthday, but then, without the lures, was privileged to have four sightings, each one a special moment that will stay with me for a long time.



Pheromone lure

The Six-belted clearwing

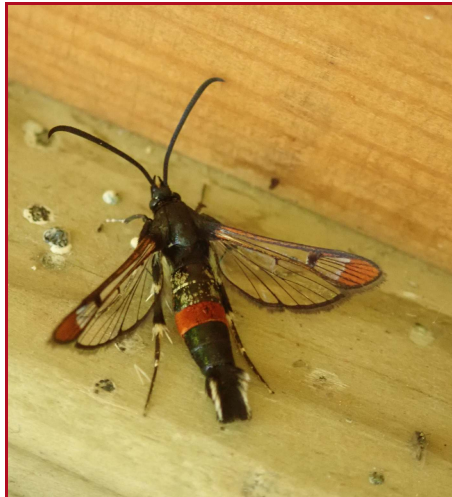
(Bebmecia ichneumoniformis) was my first sighting, a female at Ivinghoe, I thought it was a nomad bee until it stopped and I could see the wings and antennae. Since then I have been out with the lure for this species and have had excellent results, the most spectacular being at College Lake* where within a minute over 20 males were flying around the lure.

This lovely little moth has six yellow stripes on a black abdomen (five in the female). Its main foodplant is Birds-foot trefoil. It is a nationally scarce species but locally common in our region.



Red-tipped clearwing

(Symanthodon formicaeformis) needs willow trees for its larvae, though I found mine in one of the hides at College Lake. It has a smart red belt and red tips to its clear wings. I have never successfully attracted one to a lure. It's another nationally scarce species.



Sallow Clearwing

(*Symanthodon flaviventris*) possibly my favourite sighting. I'd just seen my second Red-tipped Clearwing and suddenly there on a hogweed flower was another clearwing. It wasn't until I got home that I realised I had seen a Sallow Clearwing, and not until I had contacted Dave Wilton that I realised how lucky I was, it was only the second ever Bucks sighting and as this moth has a two year life cycle and is more commonly seen in even years so I was doubly lucky. Dave Wilton then went back to the site near Grendon Underwood and put out lures. Thanks to him and a few other people with the Sallow lure more sightings are coming in.



Lunar Hornet Clearwing

(*Sessia bembeciformis*) - this one I saw with a lure. Neil Fletcher and I had a socially distanced recording session at College Lake and caught just one of these magnificent moths, which if it hadn't been in the trap I would have definitely mistaken for a hornet. It is listed as common though seldom seen. It too needs willow, its larvae tunnelling under the bark and into the wood.

Thanks to Neil I now understand how best to use the clearwing pheromone lures and I look forward to putting mine to good use next year. If you are interested in seeing these lovely little moths then Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies sell the full range of available lures and traps, though from my experience, maybe just start with the lure for the six-belted clearwing as this is the easiest to get results with. Don't forget to report any sightings, we are keen to know more about these lovely moths and where they are found.



*You should always ask permission of the landowner before using nets, traps or lures. My thanks to BBOWT for their permission to survey.

We have a number of nationally rare species of moths in our region. Most will come to light so are monitored by moth trapping, but the Striped Lychnis (*Shargacucullia lychnitis*) rarely comes to light so the best way to monitor its population is to count the caterpillars. Fortunately, the caterpillars are brightly coloured and feed only on the flower spikes of the Dark Mullein plant (*Verbascum nigrum*) which helps considerably. This is a nationally scarce species with two strongholds, one in Hampshire and ours in the Chilterns. You may have read the article in the last edition of 'Butterfly' about the work Butterfly Conservation is doing to protect this species.



Dark Mullein



Striped Lychnis caterpillar

Peter Cuss is the Upper Thames Branch Champion for our rare moths and coordinates our annual survey of the Striped Lychnis moth. The survey is no small task. Currently we have over 20 sites where we know the moth is found. There are several others where the foodplant is present and we are watching these in the hope the moth will colonise.

Some of the sites are quite small with only a few plants to search but Bradenham National Trust Estate near High Wycombe has a huge number of plants spread over a wide area; it is possibly the best site in the UK for the moth. It took about 40 volunteer hours to complete the survey on this site alone.

These are the provisional survey results compiled by Peter.

SITE	LARVAE RECORDED	FLOWER SPIKES RECORDED
Bix, roadside	5	150
Bradenham NT Estate	480	7205
Caversham Heath Golf Course	24	110
Dairy Lane, Verge	28	180
Green Farm Hughenden, NT	208	4598
Henley to Stoner, roadside	57	411
Holtspur UTB Reserve	71	375
Homefield Wood, BBOWT/FC	30	745
Lower Assendon	5	250
Mapledurham Estate	5	60
Moulsford	21	150
Peppard Hill	6	35
Skirmett, roadside	5	50
Swains Wood, BBOWT	3	30
Turville	12	48
Warburg Reserve, BBOWT	6	1
Watlington Hill, NT Estate	259	2000
West Wycombe Hill, NT estate	24	210
Wormsley Estate	26	157
Yoesden Bank Reserve, BBOWT	78	571
Totals	1353	17336

If you would like to help with next year's survey we would love to hear from you. It is not complicated, we just count the number of flower spikes we search and the number of larvae seen.

Our dedicated team spent many hours in the field but more hands will make the task easier going forward. The survey generally takes place in the middle weeks of July when the caterpillars are big enough to be seen but have not started to pupate. If you think you can help (even just a couple of hours) or if you have seen Striped Lychnis on a site not listed, please contact Peter Cuss, whose details can be found on our website.

A huge thank you to the surveyors Grahame Dennis, Josie Cuss, James Scott, Nick and Mary Bowles, Jill Allen, Mary-Anne Hall, Andy Spragg, Steve Wheatley, Sue Taylor and most of all Peter Cuss for the huge effort that has gone into this year's survey.

Before I go... in searching for the Striped Lychnis larvae all sorts of other bugs and beasties were seen on the Dark Mullein as the Striped Lychnis is just one part of a complex food web centred around this plant.

While counting I saw other moth larvae, rare weevils, predatory wasps, flies that parasitise moth larvae, ladybirds, plant bugs and predatory bugs, sawfly larvae, spiders and a lizard! I asked an expert to help me identify the sawfly species and though he also asked colleagues on the continent, they didn't know. The only species known to feed on mullein don't look like that. It really brought home to me how much we still have to learn about so much of our wildlife and how important our records are, be they casual observations or formal surveys.

Green Fingered Conservationists

Are you gifted in growing things?

Several UTB members germinate seeds for planting out at various nature reserves and we have a constant trickle of enquiries from land owners who want to improve their land through the inclusion of various butterfly and moth food plants (I suppose that should say caterpillar food plants).

Generally speaking we can supply you with seed if you have time, space and the necessary equipment to grow us some plants. Then, in turn, we can supply the plants to these various landowners (and hope for a donation to BC in return).

We have seed of Horseshoe Vetch (to help Adonis Blue, Chalk Hill Blue, Common Blue, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak, plus a number of micro moths), Dark Mullein (to help the Chiltern speciality Striped Lychnis moth), Kidney Vetch (to help Small Blue), Cowslip (to help Duke of Burgundy) and Bird's-foot Trefoil (to help Common Blue, Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak and burnet moths, plus a number of micro moths).

We also have the ability to take cuttings from some Dutch Elm Disease resistant elm trees. However, getting these to propagate has proved tricky and we would hope that someone with some expertise in growing woody cuttings would help us with these valuable stems. We are planting these to help the White-letter Hairstreak.

If you feel that you would enjoy helping in this way please contact Nick Bowles nick.bowles@ntlworld.com

Cholsey's first Hornet Moth

Evelyn Toal, age 9

A couple of days ago, me and my friends (Lily, Daisy and Ellie) decided to meet in the Cholsey park for lunch and have a proper catch up instead of chatting online. We were climbing trees when Daisy spotted a very peculiar insect. At first, I thought it was a toy stuck to the tree trunk, but then it crawled across the tree. Daisy thought it was a wasp, then I soon corrected her and told her it couldn't have been a wasp due to its size (about 3cm).

We called over Ellie and Lily for them to see it. They had no clue to what it was either. I knew my Mum would know what it was because she's an entomologist, so I ran up the mound where my Mum was sitting, and told her about our find. She came down and we showed her the insect. She examined the insect, then she said it was a Hornet. She looked at it a little closer and then she told us it was a sawfly. She took some photos then we went back home and looked it up in her book where the sawfly were. We found one that looked similar.

The next day when my Mum and brother came back from tennis, they announced that it was a Hornet Moth! We looked at the sawfly that we thought was it, then spotted that that one had different coloured stripes on its bottom (its abdomen) and different antennae. A few days later, we discovered that it was actually the first ever Hornet Moth to be spotted in Cholsey!

Submitting our record

As our moth was a first sighting for this area, my Mum submitted it as a record to the iRecord website. This means it can be used by scientists to track how Hornet Moths are doing. The record tells you where and what date the moth was found and who identified it. We also tweeted the photo and so far it has got 178 likes (which is the most likes we've got for a tweet).

Footnote by Martin Harvey, Berkshire county moth recorder

What a brilliant discovery by Evelyn and her friends! Hornet Moth is an uncommon species in Berkshire and as Evelyn says this one is the first for Cholsey, and for the 10 km square that covers this area. So it will be a new dot on the map, and more importantly a really exciting moth encounter! Thanks to Evelyn's mum, Claire Carvell, for recording the moth, and a very big thank you to Evelyn for finding it and writing such a good description of the event.



This exciting discovery got a lot of attention on Twitter!

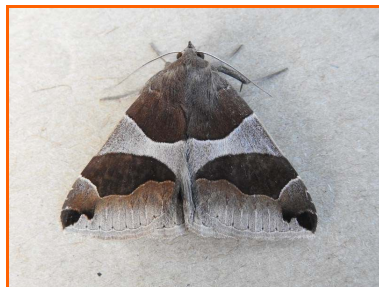
Moth News from Berkshire

Martin Harvey, Berkshire county moth recorder

It's been a busy year for moth recorders in Berkshire, with updates and additions to our website, and plenty of recording taking place, resulting in several species new to the county. Here are some highlights, with apologies for anything I've missed out!

New to the county

Bernard Clark became the first person to add a new species to the county macro-moth list in 2020, bringing the all-time macro-moth total for the county to 643 species. On 1st July Bernard's moth trap in Maidenhead was graced with the spectacular Passenger moth, *Dysgonia algira*. This is a rare migrant in Britain, with only one or two individuals seen anywhere in the country in most years. Its caterpillars feed on bramble and its range is apparently expanding on the continent so perhaps it is a moth we will see more of in the future.



Passenger
Bernard Clark

Three rather smaller moths found in 2020 are new for the county micro-moth list. These are *Monochroa palustrellus* (Wainscot Neb), found by Derek Barker in Maidenhead in June; *Lyonetia prunifoliella* (Striped Bent-wing), found by David Short in Windsor in July; and *Parornix carpinella* (Hornbeam Slender), found by Finley Hutchinson (this one also needed input from Peter Hall to confirm via dissection – thanks to Peter for all the work he does to support moth recording in the Upper Thames area).



Wainscot Neb
Monochroa palustrellus
Derek Barker

Welcome returns

It's been a good year for several rare species recorded after having been 'missing' for many years.

- Purple-bordered Gold is a resident of the damper heathlands in east Berkshire, and tends to stay in rather inaccessible places, so Derek Barker's record from Bracknell Forest in June was a good find, and the first record since 2016.
- Four-spotted is a priority species in the region, with old records for the Didcot/Appleford/Wittenham area, but little recent evidence of it still being in the county. Tony Rayner found it in his Cholsey garden in July, and this is the first record to make it onto the database since 2006 (although I suspect there are one or two other records that have yet to make their way to me). It had been seen once before in Tony's garden in 2004, raising faint hopes that there may be a small breeding population surviving unseen in the area for all that time.

- Both species of crimson underwing have been seen in Berkshire this year, an exceptional occurrence. Dark Crimson has become slightly more frequent in the county in recent years, but is still rare, and after two records in 2019 (Douglas Boyes/Liam Crowley at Wytham Woods and Jack Jones at Dinton Pastures) this year Lucinda Warner found it near Aldermaston. Whether these scattered sightings represent migrants or the beginnings of a new resident population is hard to know. And Marc Botham found Light Crimson at Bagley Wood in July, the first in the county since 1995, and with very few records before that, most dating back to the early part of the 20th century.

Continuing expansions

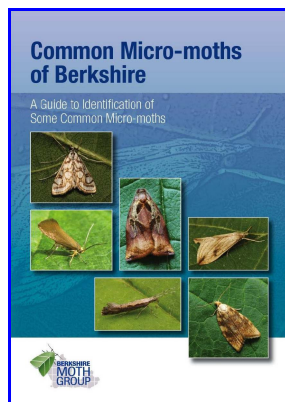
Some recent arrivals in the county seem to be spreading more rapidly in the last year or two. Toadflax Brocade is an attractive moth with colourful caterpillars on Purple Toadflax, and does well in urban gardens. It's popped up in several new places this year, and since this is a moth that doesn't seem to cause any harm it is nice to see it doing well.

Less likely to receive a welcome is the Box Tree Moth, *Cydalima perspectalis*. This has caterpillars that are capable of defoliating Box shrubs, and is now present in large numbers in many of Berkshire's urban areas, and is now being seen in more rural locations as well. It's an attractive moth but likely to be unpopular with gardeners. Ironically it is a recent arrival in this country, and was most likely imported with Box plants within the horticultural trade.

Website resources

It will be welcome news for many moth recorders that the *Common Micro-moths of Berkshire* is now available as a high-quality PDF download. It was first published by the Berkshire Moth Group in 2013, and was very well-received. Printed copies are now sold out, but the 2nd edition download can be obtained from the [Resources page](#) of the Berkshire Moth Group website.

Also on that page are a moth records summary for 2019, and recently revised checklists of the macro- and micro-moths of Berkshire. Various other parts of the website have been refreshed; for instance, the full run of moth reports by Les and Martin Finch for their surveys in the Maidenhead area and other sites is available to download from the [Publications page](#).



Finally, if you haven't already seen it do have a look at the very helpful "Moths for Beginners" guides, written by John Thacker, who works with me on verifying the Berkshire moth records. John's guides provide an excellent introduction to moth recording and identification, and can be downloaded from the [UTB website](#).



Four-spotted
Tony Rayner



Purple-bordered Gold
Derek Barker



Striped Bent-wing
Lyonetia prunifoliella
David Short

New Members

Brenda Mobbs

Since the last newsletter 68 new members have joined and the membership is now 1974. 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.

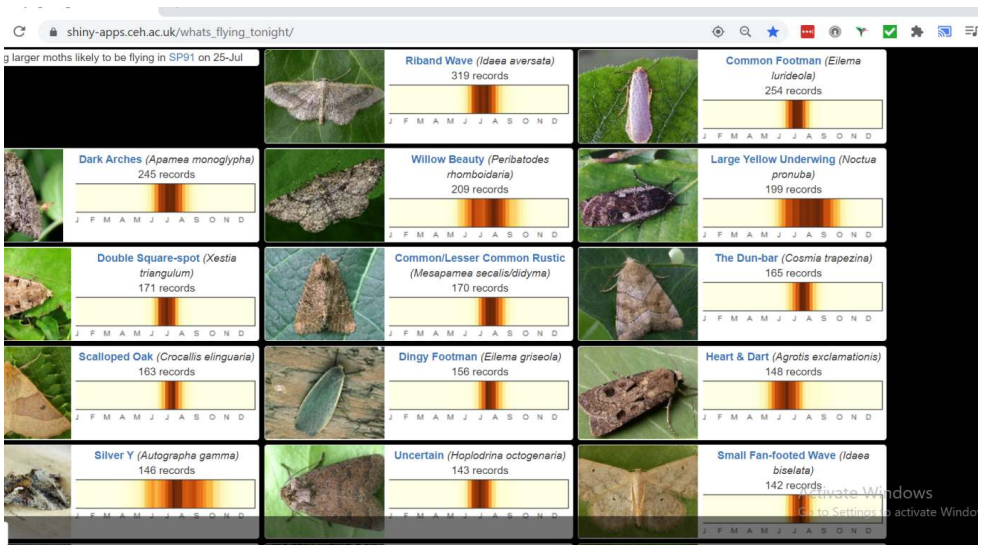
- 23 from Berkshire
- 22 from Buckinghamshire
- 23 from Oxfordshire
- 2 from elsewhere

All of you are welcome to join field meetings, work parties and attend Members' Day and will be invited to a New Members' Day. Unfortunately at the moment all events are unable to proceed due to Covid-19. Up to date news on activities can be found on our website: www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Newcomers to Moths and many more experienced should find apps that predict what you are likely to see in any particular place and on any particular date very helpful.

We suppose you might use them (along with a weather forecast) to try to decide which days and nights to find particular species, but most of us use these apps to narrow down the various tricky Noctuid and Pug moths to those most likely to be seen, as an aid in identification.

“What’s Flying Tonight” is an app that is designed to work like an app for a smart device. It can use the GPS in your device to automatically locate the correct moth records, but you can also manually change the date and location. It also works from a computer though you might need to input the location details. The beauty of “What’s Flying Tonight” is that it informs you of the macro-moth species that are likely to be on the wing **in the area where you are today**, using your device’s GPS to work out where you are; or, if you choose to alter the location and date, which moths are likely to be seen anywhere in the UK, on any date.



To use “What’s Flying Tonight” you search for it in your web browser rather than download the app. It can be saved as a favourite but not directly installed (which saves storage space in the device). Once the app accesses your GPS (and location) it displays a thumbnail of the moths in the order that they are most likely to be seen, plus a calendar of their flight time. Clicking the thumbnail enlarges the picture.

Search “What’s Flying Tonight”

- or enter....https://shiny-apps.ceh.ac.uk/whats_flying_tonight

If you don't like the idea of letting an app know your location over the internet, you might prefer the similarly named "Flying Tonight".

https://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying_tonight.php

This is an app that provides you with a list of moths to be seen (again in order of likelihood) in Hampshire. Those living in Berkshire and southern Bucks and Oxon should find that it gives very similar results to "What's Flying Tonight".

"Flying Tonight" simply lists the species recorded flying on the same date in the past decade with those in the greatest abundance first. As with the previous app, you search up the day's lists with a search engine rather than install an app.

The following species have been recorded flying on this same date, 07/08/20, in the past decade. The list is ranked by descending order of number of records on the county database (only the 200 most commonly recorded species are shown)

Alternatively, select any week of the year:
 |

For each of the last ten years, the relative abundance is indicated by a graphic, as follows:

- - 100 or more records
- - 50-99 records
- - 20-49 records
- - 10-19 records
- - 5-9 records
- 1-4 records
- No records in this week

Code / Vernacular / Scientific	Family	Image	Total Records	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
73.325 Shuttle-shaped Dart <i>Agrotis quita</i>	Noctuidae		1058	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
73.348 Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing <i>Noctua jurtina</i>	Noctuidae		1023	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
70.258 Willow Beauty <i>Peripatodes rhomboidaria</i>	Geometridae		981	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
73.329 Flame Shoulder <i>Ochropleura plecta</i>	Noctuidae		916	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
70.226 Brimstone Moth <i>Opisthograxis luteolata</i>	Geometridae		803	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
70.018 Riband Wave <i>Idaea aversata</i>	Geometridae		873	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

There is no doubt that we have all experienced some unprecedentedly difficult times since lockdown began in March and our conservation charities, amongst many businesses and organisations, are facing huge financial difficulties as a result. However, there are many instances, big and small, of opportunities that have opened and of benefits accrued as a result of the enforced change in all our lives. National organisations are calling for the government to take this opportunity to change direction in support of a greener future for the nation whilst the public has been making use of the countryside at far higher levels than previously.

For instance, in the latest edition of the RSPB magazine 'Nature's Home', Nicola Chester writes about *'the small, wild wonders all around us [that] have been soothing minds, bodies and even communities'* and Simon Barnes observes that *'nature isn't just a bonus. We can now see it as the necessity it is, not just for our health and sanity but for the future of the world.'*

3 things we can do to help

Support Conservation organisations

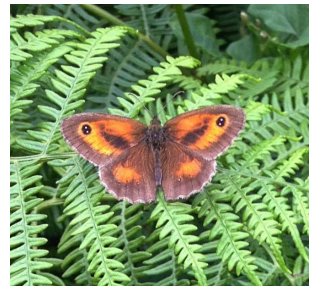
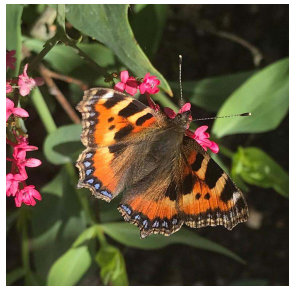
Visit charities' websites for information about volunteering activities, such as conservation work parties and recording groups:

<https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/conservation>

Submit your Observations and Records

Being confined to a home patch for a long period has enabled many people to appreciate and discover more about their immediate area, daily, over the course of the changing seasons. This may well have generated observations of wildlife, and hopefully of butterflies, that could add immensely to the data that is collected and recorded annually by many volunteers. This is particularly important since transects and regular recording visits were not possible for a considerable period during lockdown. If you have any observations of wildlife, they can be easily submitted via iRecord, or follow the information given here:

<https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording>



A few local sightings

Planting Seeds and Gardening for Wildlife

Margery Slatter

There are numerous sources of advice and information about the best ways to encourage wildlife through managing the increasingly important habitats provided by our gardens. Insects benefit enormously from nectar sources provided by flowers and from nest sites etc in our gardens. Leaving a few areas to 'go wild' and cutting the lawn less frequently have visible benefits in a short time.

You could also plant seeds and grow plants for particular conservation purposes, such as the Upper Thames Branch Striped Lychnis Moth project which aims to increase the range of this priority species in our region by planting its larval foodplant in carefully selected locations.

Growing the plants is quite easy. All you need is some compost, pots and patience (once some locally collected Dark Mullein seed has been supplied). Seeds take up to four weeks to emerge and then go on doing so for up to a month! Pricking out into pots and regular watering produces plants ready to be transported to their planting site in late summer/early autumn for expected consumption the following year.



Dark Mullein grown from locally collected seed

If this is something which you could do to help, look out for appeals in forthcoming editions of 'Hairstreak', or for the Striped Lychnis Project contact:

https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/priority_moths

Butterfly Conservation: Upper Thames Branch

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2020

INCOME	2020			2019		
Membership						
Subscriptions	8187.00			7560.00		
Legacies/donations (inc. Gift Aid)	2718.87			1618.51		
Events/fundraising	555.00			658.00		
Atlas sales	0.00			40.00		
Other	960.00			20.68		
<i>Sub-total</i>		12420.87			9897.19	
Conservation						
Holtspur Reserve	1778.45			427.01		
Atlas donations	0.00			0.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		1778.45			427.01	
Finance/Admin						
VAT Refund	45.41			36.09		
Holtspur Bank HLS	2007.31			0.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		2052.72			36.09	
Total income			16252.04			10360.29
EXPENDITURE						
Membership						
Newsletter	3760.15			3181.25		
Events/fundraising	573.24			518.25		
Stock purchases	0.00			0.00		
Other				0.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		4333.39			3699.50	
Conservation						
Holtspur Reserve	925.09			666.00		
Atlas (postage)	0.00			0.00		
Equipment/Training	1730.10			117.50		
HLS re Holtspur Bank	2007.31			0.00		

Other Projects	636.68			423.15		
Subs/donations	146.00			11106.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		5446.18			12312.65	
Finance/Admin						
Admin/Insurance	75.00			75		
VAT	357.40			108.13		
<i>Sub-total</i>		432.40			183.13	
Total expenditure			10210.97			16195.28
Net income/expenditure			6041.07			5834.99
Cash b/f			7881.99			13716.98
Total cash available			13923.06			7881.99
STATEMENT OF NET ASSETS AT 31 MARCH 2019						
NET ASSETS						
Fixed assets (after depr'n)		0.00			0.00	
Stock, debtors & creditors		0.00			0.00	
Cash		13923.06			7881.99	
Total			13923.06			7881.99
ALLOCATION OF NET ASSETS						
Endowment		0.00			0.00	
Restricted		1407.50			447.50	
Designated		5600.00			5157.00	
Unallocated		6915.56			2277.49	
Total			13923.06			7881.99

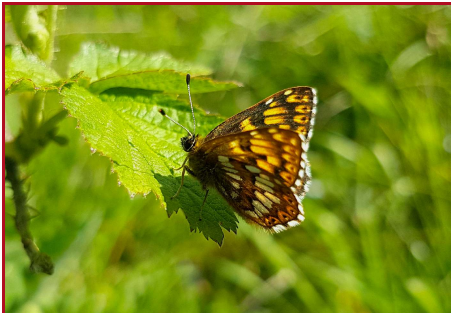
If any member not attending the AGM has any questions on the accounts please email the Treasurer.



Chalkhill Blue



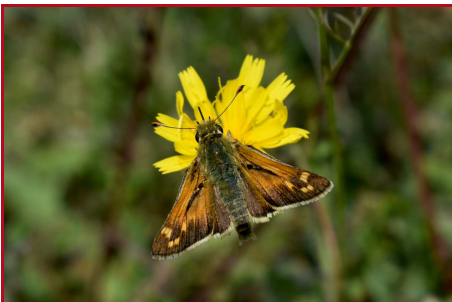
Brown Argus



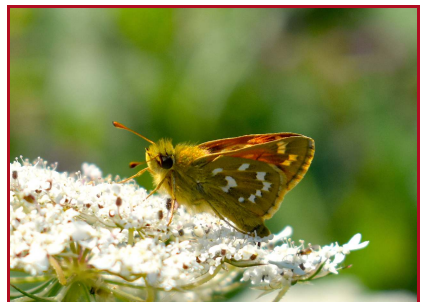
Duke of Burgundy



Silver-washed Fritillary



Silver-spotted Skipper



Silver-spotted Skipper

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://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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