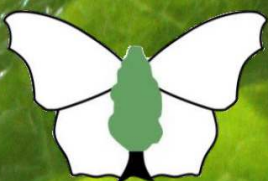


# Hairstreak

No 111 Summer 2021



Butterfly  
Conservation



Upper Thames  
Branch

*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: Duke of Burgundy by David Dennis

## BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE, registered in England & Wales (2206468)  
Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP  
Charity registered in England (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)

This year the spring seemed very slow to arrive for a variety of reasons, but as I write this it is the end of March and absolutely glorious. Almost everyone has seen butterflies in the last two days of warmth and sunshine. Coinciding with the release from the winter lockdown it has been a real tonic.

Another cheering thought is that this year we are planning and quietly confident of delivering, a number of walks to see butterflies and moths. With the ever present threat of Covid-19 we will need to make them socially distanced and safe for all but, none-the-less, we should see the return of an event that was missed by many in 2020. However, we think it too early to hold indoor meetings and unfortunately, for the second year running we will not hold a New Members' Day meeting and we plan to hold the Members' Day and AGM online again in October 2021.

Sadly, even outdoor activities stopped in the winter 2020/21 and the number of conservation work parties; the distillation of our entire reason to exist, was just three. As a group of people that love butterflies and moths and therefore cherish the places where they live, the knowledge that those sites have not been managed is worrying. Recording precisely how butterflies and moths respond to the lack of our work will be ever more important this and next year as we try to understand just how serious this threat to their continued existence is. So, we urge that every member records every butterfly they see. Additionally, our records are the basis of scientific papers and most impressively, that all the data is used to try and influence governmental decisions about environmental policies. This link to the annual feedback on that topic is well worth a visit.

So, I hope you are planning to get out into the outdoors even more often this year. Please join any of our free butterfly walks that appeal to you. All are provided by the kind donation of the time and experience of our members. Please think about the extra precautions required this year and contact the walk leader in advance of attending. We strongly recommend using binoculars during the walk so that people can view the butterflies and moths without crowding together. And if you see anyone who seems to be alone, or less certain about the species they are seeing, help them to enjoy their experience even more with a friendly word. All finalised field trip details will be listed along with all other events at

<http://upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/events.html> which also holds virtually all the information anyone could ever want on our butterflies and moths.

This edition of Hairstreak has a provisional outline of our walk programme; which may well need to be "tweaked" as the lockdown eases through the spring. Supportive material will be found on our Facebook page

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

Twitter feed <https://twitter.com/UpperThamesBC>

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

Depending on when you receive this newsletter there should still be online UTB events to view:

Clearwing Moths - an overview <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/141263618285>

Identifying early summer butterflies  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/140286238917>

Identifying late summer butterflies <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/140291033257>  
and if they have already been delivered, you will find recordings of them along with several others, at [https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/online\\_events](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/online_events)

We advertised these events in the previous Hairstreak (no.110) and hope you saw the advert. A disappointing series of problems with the BC membership database (after a move to new software) leads us to think that many members did not receive Hairstreak. If you speak with other members would you please ask if they have theirs and if they have not then tell them to get in touch. Unless we can tell our Head Office staff who has fallen from the list they might not be reinstated.

And while I'm asking a favour, the threat to our butterflies and moths grows every more pressing. I imagine that everyone knows of somewhere around their home with development or an intensification of agriculture. Despite fine words leading-up to and immediately after the election, our Government does not seem to be taking any new action that will improve natural biodiversity. We must all do everything we can and hope to change the minds of others through our actions.

Finally, I hope you enjoy some breath-taking and exciting moments with butterflies and moths this season and many hours of quiet contentment in their presence.



A guided field trip at our Holtspur Reserve between Beaconsfield and High Wycombe in 2018

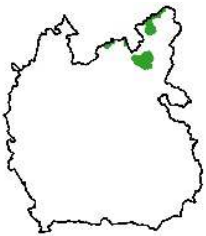
## Regional Action Plan Update

Steve Wheatley, Regional Conservation Manager for SE England

In 2016 Butterfly Conservation launched a 10-year Regional Action Plan and we are now half-way through delivery of this plan. The action plan set out the butterflies and moths in greatest need of conservation action.

Nowhere in the South East has this call-to-action been adopted more wholeheartedly than by our Upper Thames Branch.

Here is a summary of progress being made in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire:



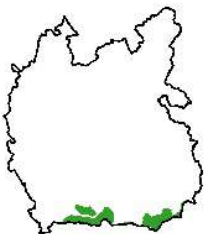
### Wood White

The Woodland Wings project has just wrapped-up. Species champion Nick continues the good work here on the Bucks/Northants border.



### Duke of Burgundy

A project has been delivered to help the Dukes in the Bradenham area. More than 2,000 new cowslips have been planted (grown from seed collected here) and targeted habitat work by contractors and volunteers has taken place. Champions Nick Bowles and Ched George continue to encourage conservation, helped in no small part by many other volunteers plus Natural England, the National Trust, Chilterns AONB, Chiltern Rangers and others.



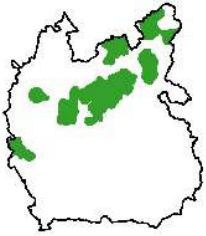
### Silver-studded Blue

The 'Blue-Crew' led by Grahame Hawker continues to undertake searches and surveys, feeding back their findings to land managers on the Thames Basin Heaths.



### Grayling

As the Silver-studded Blue season begins to wane, the Blue Crew will turn its attention to the Grayling.



### **Black Hairstreak**

Species Champion, Stuart, continues the excellent work on the Oxford Clay. Our Five Hairstreaks project has set the foundation for more work coming up over the next few years. Searches are being undertaken over an increasingly wide area. Threats from HS2 and other infrastructure projects will continue to be challenged.



### **Brown Hairstreak**

Like Black Hairstreak, we're making ever improving progress on understanding the challenges and distribution of this butterfly (thanks to Dave Wilton and others). Targeted habitat work been undertaken at MoD Bicester (Arncott) as part of our Five Hairstreaks project. New management guidance is about to be produced.



### **Marsh Fritillary**

David Wilding and the RSPB continue their long-running strategy of increasing Devil's-bit Scabious for a potential Marsh Fritillary return to the Otmoor landscape.



### **White-letter Hairstreak**

With great potential across much of the three counties, we continue to encourage elm conservation, elm growing and elm planting for this butterfly.



### **Drab Looper**

In May 2021 and 2022 there will be extensive searches and surveys for this moth across the South East. Contact Peter Cuss if you'd like to get involved in Berkshire.



### **Striped Lychnis**

Volunteer surveys have confirmed the Upper Thames area is home to more than 70% of the entire UK population. We have been working with the Chilterns AONB team and with the National Trust to build this population. We are also planning searches this July on the North Wessex Downs AONB.



### Heart Moth

Our “We Love Heart Moth” project continues to gather data about this rare oak-feeder, now only found in three sites in the UK (one of which is Windsor Great Park in Berkshire). We are working with landowners including the Crown Estate and the Forestry Commission on this species.



### Pale Shining Brown

A recent project supported by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre has helped to confirm that this moth might now be extinct in the UK. This sad news was featured in the new State of Moths report. The last UK record was 2014 in Oxfordshire.



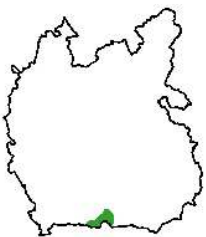
### Silvery Arches

In coordination with landowners and managers, searches for this increasingly rare moth are taking place in the Swinley area in late June this year. It could also be found on other heaths with young birch.



### Four-spotted (feeds on Field Bindweed)

There has been significant success in the east of England with Four-spotted colonising Field Bindweed in new ditches on the edges of agricultural fields. There will be a visit open to volunteers in early June to some of these sites in Cambridgeshire/Hertfordshire.



### Sloe Carpet

At the time of writing, we are just starting a new season of searches, led in Berkshire by Peter Cuss. This rare moth hasn't been recorded in the Branch area since 2007, and by the time you are reading this the Sloe Carpet flight-season will already be over. Any new discovery will be shared with Branch members in later newsletters and online.



### Barberry Carpet

A Barberry Carpet project ended in February. This planted more than 4,000 Barberry plants in the Cotswolds, including West Oxfordshire.



### **Agonopterix atomella (Greenweed Flat-body)**

Volunteers gathered near Otmoor in 2019 for a very successful search of Dyers Greenweed. Our Senior Ecologist, George Tordoff will be trailing a new national survey method this year.

I am personally incredibly grateful and impressed by the positive action undertaken by many key volunteers in the Upper Thames area. I know they would welcome more support and I encourage you to contact them if you're not already involved. The action being delivered is generating real gains for key species. Of all the species identified as priorities in our 2016 action plan, populations of almost all are now stable or have increased over the last five years.

Recording and monitoring is key to us knowing how populations are faring and enabling us to prioritise action. Every butterfly and moth record is valuable and contributes to the local, regional and national picture. And interest in butterflies and moths continues to increase in the Upper Thames area.

Thank you to everyone who records butterflies and moths, and to the volunteers and conservation organisations that are delivering conservation action on the ground. We are five years into the delivery of our action plan. I hope the next five years produces lots more positive action and enjoyable activity to save butterflies and moths and generates some superb and inspiring stories that we can highlight and celebrate when we get to 2025.

If you would like to help and want to know the highest priorities for conservation action in your local area, do contact me ([swheatley@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:swheatley@butterfly-conservation.org)).

### **Recording Forms**

Please remember how important it is to send in your records of butterflies and moths.

The paper recording forms which were previously sent out with Hairstreak are available to download <http://upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording.html> .

If using paper please note to whom those lists should be returned. Detail is listed there.



## Upper Thames Branch surveys

Within the UTB we undertake seven types of Survey (see below). These allow everyone a chance to get involved as there are some surveys requiring very little time and suitable for absolute beginners and others that are more demanding. All are opportunities to learn and we are seeking volunteers to join the survey teams and enjoy making a worthwhile contribution:

- **Garden** surveys (of butterflies, across the entire UTB, conducted according to recorder opportunity)
- Churchyard surveys (of butterflies, across the entire UTB, conducted according to recorder opportunity)
- Transect surveys (a national scheme, along fixed routes at specific sites and following standardised techniques, counting butterflies and day flying moths every week from 1st April to 30th Sept.)
- Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme surveys (both local in the Chilterns and a national scheme, along fixed routes at randomly selected sites and following techniques as for transects, counting butterflies and day flying moths at longer intervals than with transects)
- Single Species surveys (for locally scarce butterflies and moths)
- Single Site surveys (for butterflies and moths)
- 10 km Sq champ surveys (for butterflies across a 10x10 km grid as marked on the OS maps. This allows a watch on the changing nature of the occupancy of the square by various butterfly species)

All these surveys run in addition to casual recording at any time.

Single site surveys, 10km square records and casual records of **butterflies** are best recorded using the **iRecord Butterflies** app or the **Butterflies for the New Millennium** software, though they can be recorded using downloaded Excel spreadsheets. Other surveys have dedicated survey recording sheets or apps.

Site surveys and casual records of **moths** are best recorded with the free to use dedicated **iRecord Moths** section of iRecord app (found on a PC by selecting “Moths” under “Species Group Forms” of the *Record* dropdown menu), or go direct with <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/enter-moth-sightings>. Details for using the app on a smartphone are below.

Bucks. also accepts records on the purchased **MapMate** software (£36) but advises that new users begin with iRecord. County recorders are:

Berks Martin Harvey [kitenetter@googlemail.com](mailto:kitenetter@googlemail.com) using iRecord or Excel

Bucks Martin Albertini [malbertini@onetel.com](mailto:malbertini@onetel.com) using iRecord, Excel or MapMate

Oxon Martin Townsend [martin.townsend4@ntlworld.com](mailto:martin.townsend4@ntlworld.com) using iRecord or direct email

All surveys should be conducted in accordance with Butterfly Conservation’s instructions about Health and Safety.

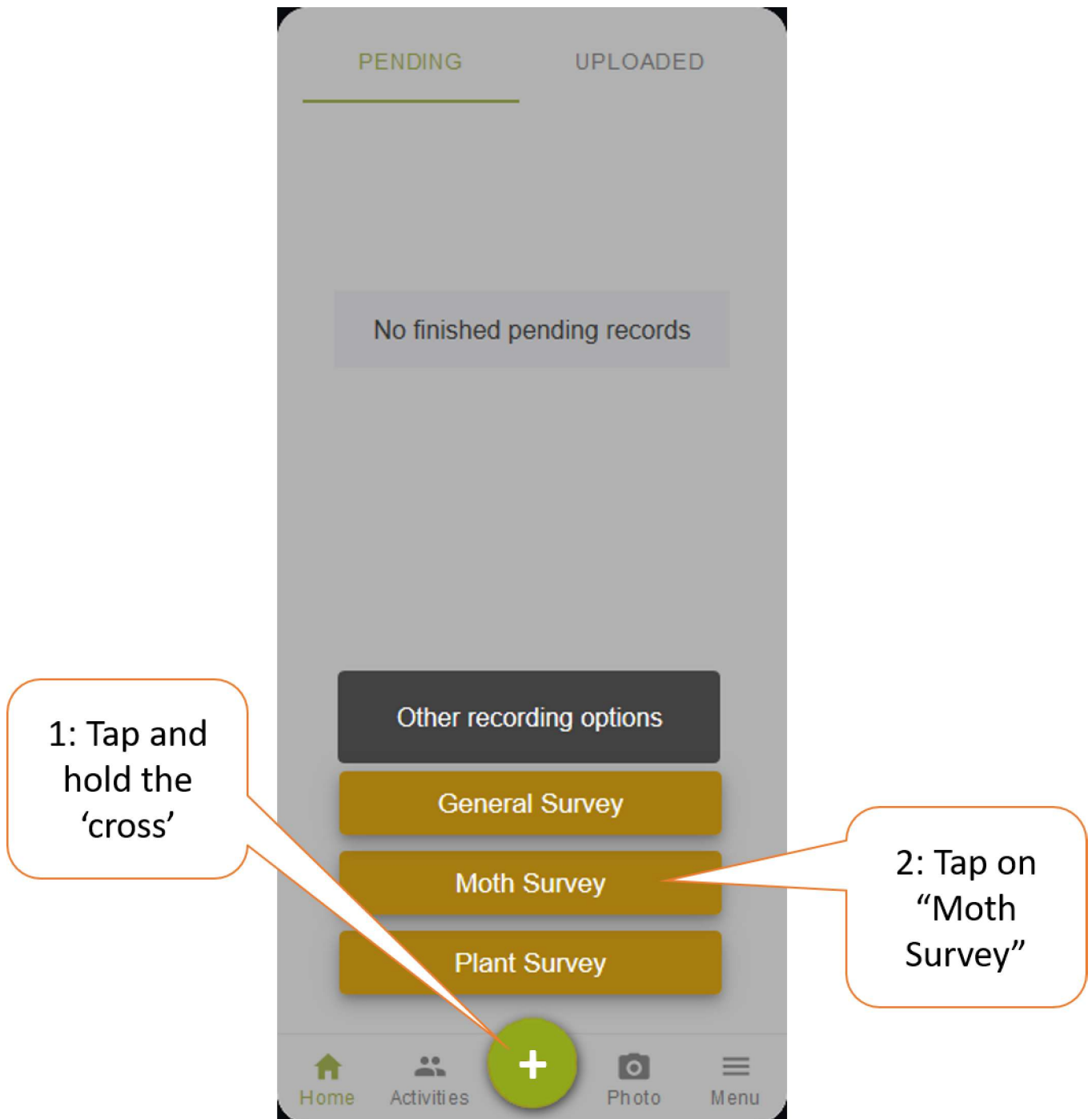
**All surveys require the landowners’ permission.**

## iRecord smartphone 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.:

Survey		
Location	SU616896 CEH Walli...	>
Date	Today	>
Recorders	Harvey, ...	>
Method	MV light	>
Comment		>

1: Add main sample details

ADD SPECIES

2	<b>Common Quaker</b> <i>Orthosia cerasi</i>
1	<b>Early Thorn</b> <i>Selenia dentaria</i>
3	<b>Hebrew Character</b> <i>Orthosia gothica</i>
1	<b>Oak Beauty</b> <i>Biston strataria</i>

2: Add species as they arrive

3: Keep ‘bumping up’ the numbers as more moths are counted

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](http://www.ceh.ac.uk/news-and-media/blogs/new-app-makes-identifying-moths-easier)

## Garden Surveys

### Butterflies

There is a dedicated garden survey form for the UTB if you wish to send butterfly sighting records direct to us for inclusion in the annual garden survey report. That form can be downloaded here:

[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden\\_churchyard\\_records](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden_churchyard_records)

and then completed electronically and emailed to:

Garden Recording Co-ordinator, Chris Woodrow [lepidoptera45@btinternet.com](mailto:lepidoptera45@btinternet.com)

There is also a national garden butterfly recording scheme, which requires registration and online form completion, but also has an interactive map of records and a guide to garden species. The link to that is here:

<https://www.gardenbutterflysurvey.org/>

### Moths

There is currently no similar scheme for moths although a sizeable number of those reporting moths submit most of their sightings from their gardens. To report moth sightings you should first contact the vice county moth recorder for the area where you live. Despite the title of this link, information about those recorders is above and here:

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

Alternatively moth records may be submitted online after registering with iRecord (free app) <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/> and choosing the dedicated "Moths" section under "Species Group Forms" from the *Record* dropdown menu, or by other means as outlined by the vice-county recorders, so please check in advance of submission.

Please note that no separate feedback of moth garden records (compared with sightings elsewhere) is currently available, but you could report moths seen in the garden in the blank space for comment at the bottom of the Garden Butterfly sheet.

## Churchyard Surveys

### Butterflies

There is a dedicated churchyard survey form for the UTB if you wish to send butterfly sighting records direct to us for inclusion in the annual Churchyard survey report. That form can be downloaded using this link:

[https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden\\_churchyard\\_records](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/garden_churchyard_records)

and then completed electronically and emailed to:

Churchyard Recording Co-ordinator, Chris Woodrow [lepidoptera45@btinternet.com](mailto:lepidoptera45@btinternet.com)

Alternatively butterfly records may be submitted online after registering with Butterflies for the New Millennium and using the Site Recording Form; but note this will not currently allow them to be stored as part of the Churchyard survey as there is no separate recording category for Churchyards.

## Transect Surveys

Transects are primarily designed for the recording of butterflies but the UKBMS online system that collects these sightings can also collect moth sightings (and dragonfly sightings).

Those walking transects need to follow some instructions and to submit their records online (after registering) to the UKBMS <https://www.ukbms.org/mydata/>

Transect walkers tend to be part of a team, and walk their route within weeks allocated to them; though it is entirely possible to take on a transect alone, walking every week. Transect teams are coordinated by Mark Chapman and if you want to discuss transects, require an additional walker, or wish to find out what opportunities exist to join a team near your home, he is the person to contact:

[m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com](mailto:m.chapman.butterfly.utb@gmail.com)

The timing and method of the walk is strictly controlled to allow valid comparison of the results from all sites right across the UK. Full detail of the standardised methodology is found at this link:

[https://www.ukbms.org/mydata/sites/www.ukbms.org.mydata/files/downloads/Online\\_Transect\\_Walker\\_Instructions\\_July\\_2016.pdf](https://www.ukbms.org/mydata/sites/www.ukbms.org.mydata/files/downloads/Online_Transect_Walker_Instructions_July_2016.pdf)

A recording of this technique explanation is available in Online Event section of the UTB website.

The UTB work closely with BBOWT and collect data from sites right across the region. Transects can be established anywhere, **with the landowners permission**, but are of most value when they have returned several years of continuous data. It is ill-advised to set up a new transect if its walking cannot be guaranteed and it is far better to support the teams that are already walking established routes within the UTB.

## Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveys (WCBS)

The national survey is directed at randomly assigned 1 km squares dotted right across the UK. This randomised square allocation gave us 28 1km squares in the UTB area. Some are in urban areas and others on farmland, which means that the lists of species they return are far more representative of the 'average' UK location than a Transect might return as transects are clustered on nature reserves. Despite being selected for survey **none** of the squares have been cleared for permission to access to survey. If you are taking on a new survey square you must stick to public rights of way, or contact the landowner for permission to walk field margins.

There are also 50 WCBS squares in the central Chilterns administered by the Tracking the Impact team. For more information about the location of these squares contact Nick Marriner [nmarriner@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:nmarriner@chilternsaonb.org) For a list of the currently unadopted Chiltern squares see the list of the 28 National squares shown below.

WCBS uses the same methodology as Transects; see this link:

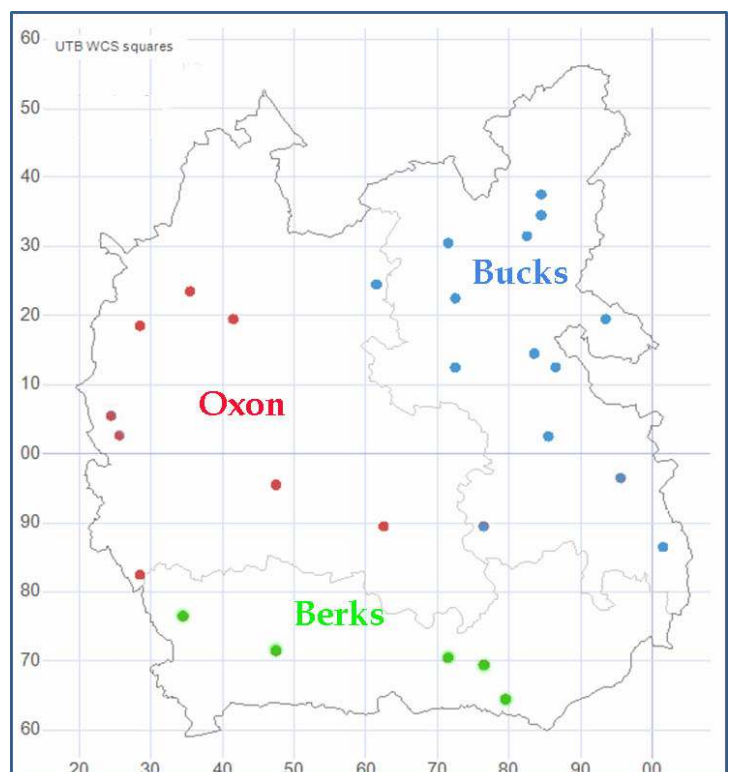
[https://www.ukbms.org/mydata/sites/www.ukbms.org.mydata/files/downloads/Online\\_Transect\\_Walker\\_Instructions\\_July\\_2016.pdf](https://www.ukbms.org/mydata/sites/www.ukbms.org.mydata/files/downloads/Online_Transect_Walker_Instructions_July_2016.pdf)

- but with one major difference; WCBS walks need only take place twice a year, though it is better if they can be done more frequently. They are conducted in partnership with the BTO Breeding Bird Survey. If you are a BTO BBS recorder and wish to start the WCBS survey this year then please contact [bbs@bto.org](mailto:bbs@bto.org) to register and take part.

For the adoption of a square please contact Nick Bowles

[nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com) who will be able to assist you in registering with Butterfly Conservation's national WCBS officer. You get an idea of what is involved here: <https://www.ukbms.org/wcbs>

This map shows the square location; the current state of adoption within the UTB is on the chart below



This list shows the **vacant** squares – with the OS grid ref, name of the closest village, or landmark - in **bold** and no indication of adoption:

<b>SP2405</b>		<b>Filkins, Carterton</b>
SP2502	adopted	Langford
<b>SP2818</b>		<b>Shipton Station, Shipton under Wychwood</b>
<b>SP3523</b>		<b>Wychwood Way, near Enstone</b>
SP4119	adopted	Glympton, Wootton
SP6124	adopted	fields, NE Bicester
<b>SP7130</b>		<b>Padbury</b>
SP7212	adopted	Nether Winchendon
<b>SP7222</b>		<b>betwix Finemere Wd and Runts Wd</b>
<b>SP8231</b>		<b>Salden Wd, Newton Longville</b>
SP8314	adopted	Broughton Crossing, Aylesbury
<b>SP8434</b>		<b>Emerson Valley MK</b>
<b>SP8437</b>		<b>South Laughton Valley Pk, MK</b>
SP8502	adopted	Hampden Hs, Gt Hampden
SP8612	adopted	Aston Clinton
<b>SP9319</b>		<b>Horton Wharf, Cheddington</b>
SU2882	adopted	Ashdown Park NT, Ashbury
SU3476	adopted	Haycroft hill, Lambourne
SU4771	adopted	Snelsmore, s. of Chieveley services
SU4795	adopted	Sutton Wick, s of Abingdon
SU6289	adopted	east of Wallingford
SU7170	adopted	Whitley, Reading
SU7669	adopted	Carters Hill, Sindlesham
<b>SU7689</b>		<b>South End nr Turville</b>
SU7964	adopted	Finchampstead
SU9596	adopted	Coleshill, Amersham
TQ0186		<b>Tatling End, Gerrards Cross</b>

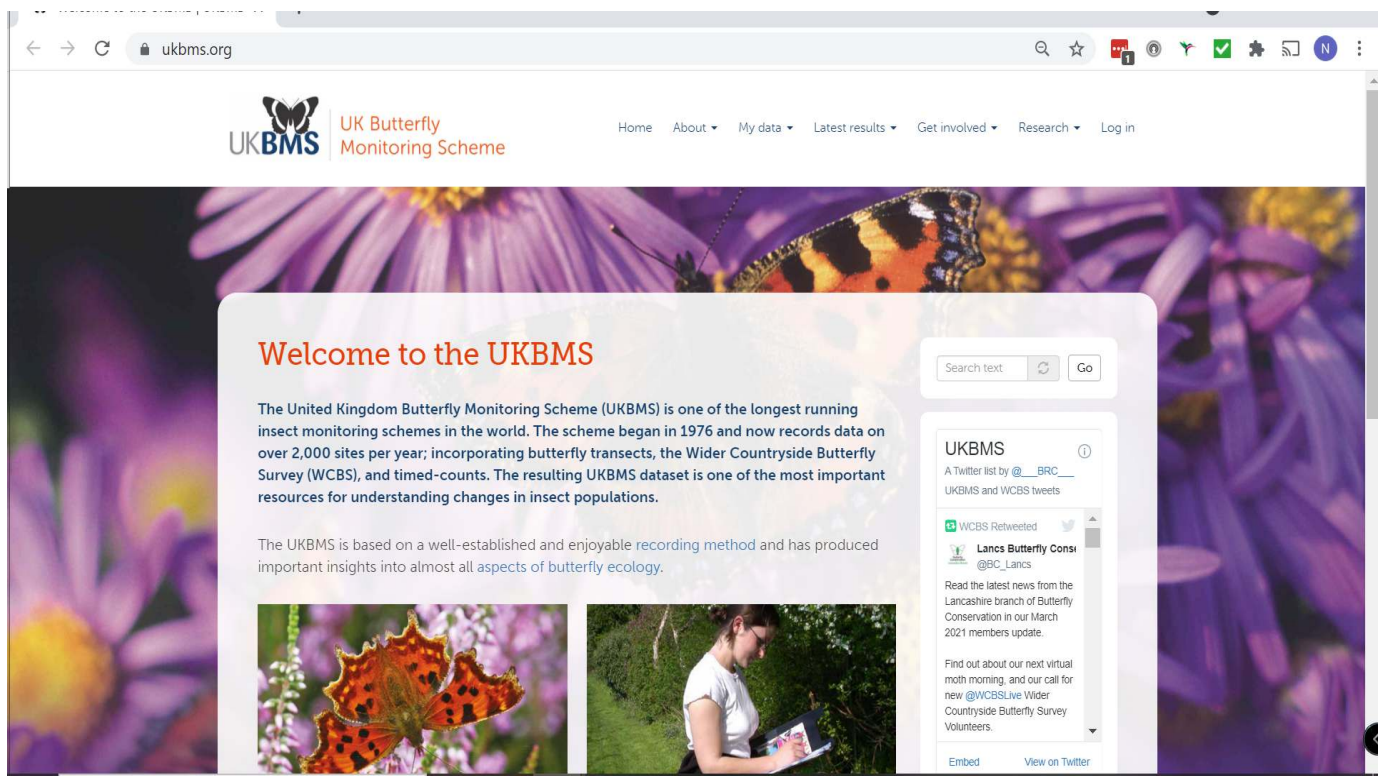
## Un-adopted Chiltern WCBS squares - as of March 2021

Square Name (and 1km Square Ref)
Honour End (SP8601)
Road Farm (SP8802)
Halton Woods (SP8808)
South Heath (SP9000)
Swan Bottom (SP9004)
St Leonards (SP9006)
Cholesbury (SP9206)
The City (SU7896)
Saunderton Lee (SU8099)
Downley Common (SU8495)
Hughenden Valley (SU8696)
Warren Farms (SU8698)
Peterley (SU8799)
Little Missenden east (SU9398)
Great Beards (SU9493)
Seer Green north west (SU9592)
Upper Bottom House (SU9794)

If you can offer to walk one of these Chiltern squares please contact [nmarriner@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:nmarriner@chilternsaonb.org)



# Guidance and information on surveys plus feedback and interpretation of previous nationwide results



## Site based surveys

The sites described below are almost entirely with very limited access, or none at all, for the public. We are hoping to add to these existing sites, and to create new teams of surveyors to walk these sites about once a month in the spring and summer. We wish to record what is there and where the better sections of each site are. For more information please contact Nick Bowles, [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com)

**Arncott (MOD)** near Bicester

**Aston Hill (FE)** near Aston Clinton and Wendover

**Barossa (MOD)** near Camberley

**Bradenham estate (NT)** between Princes Risborough and High Wycombe

**Ditchley Estate** (private) near Charlbury

**High Park, Blenheim Palace** (private) near Stonesfield

**Otmoor (MOD)** NE of Oxford

**Oxford Botanical Gardens (OU)**, near Nuneham Courtenay, Oxford

**Sandford Brakes (CEGB)** near Blackbird Leys, Oxford

**Tilehouse Estate** (private) between Lillingstone and Silverstone, N Bucks.

**Winchester Wood (TW)** near Princes Risborough

**Yattendon Estate** (private) near Hampstead Norreys

## Single species surveys - Butterflies

### Black Hairstreak

We have the greatest concentration of Black Hairstreak colonies of any BC branch and probably the largest numbers of the butterfly within our region. The Species champion for the Black Hairstreak, Stuart Hodges

[swhodges2@gmail.com](mailto:swhodges2@gmail.com) will be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the adult flight period (June and July) searching for adults and from those willing to undertake pupae searches in May and early June and the more difficult task of winter egg searching.

Stuart provides regular updates on the results of the surveys.



*Ellen Stickland*

### Brown Hairstreak

We have a quite rapidly expanding colony of Brown Hairstreak in the north of Bucks and Oxon and the beginnings of a colony at Runnymede in Berks – so tiny as to not show on the map.

The species champion for the Brown Hairstreak, Dave Wilton

[wilton@burnhamlodge.plus.com](mailto:wilton@burnhamlodge.plus.com) will be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the adult flight period (July - October) searching for adults and from those willing to undertake the rewarding task of winter egg searching from October to March.

Dave provides updated egg survey maps and can point you at previously unexplored areas worthy of exploration.



*Ellen Stickland*

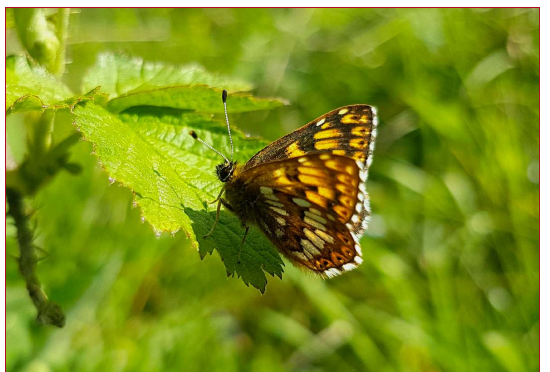
### Duke of Burgundy

We have a very few colonies of Duke in Berks and Bucks; the species is lost from Oxon.

The Species champion for the Duke is Ched George [c5hed.george@btinternet.com](mailto:c5hed.george@btinternet.com)

He will be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the adult flight period (May and June) searching for adults and from those willing to undertake the more difficult task of egg and larvae searching from June until August.

Currently no updates on the results of the surveys are provided as so few people are surveying but there are plans for far more extensive surveying in 2021 so please let Ched know if you can join us.



*Ellen Stickland*

### Silver-studded Blue

We have a very tiny number of very small colonies of Silver-studded Blue in Berks but the species is lost from Bucks and Oxon.

The Species champion for the Silver-studded Blue Grahame Hawker [grahamehawker@hotmail.com](mailto:grahamehawker@hotmail.com) would be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the adult flight period (June to August) searching for adults. Grahame can help with access to some MOD sites with no access normally. Currently no updates on the results of the surveys are provided as so few people are surveying.



*David Ferguson*

### White-letter Hairstreak

This species suffered badly when Dutch Elm disease killed most of the trees in which it was breeding. Recently it has re-appeared across a very large part of the UTB area, breeding on sucker regrowth temporarily and on a few Wych Elm trees that seem to be better able to resist the disease. Unfortunately the wide distribution hides a very low abundance. We are very keen to know where it is breeding and how the population size is changing.

The Species champion for the White-letter Hairstreak, Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

will be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time spotting living Elms above 2m high, looking particularly for those in flower. Once their locations are noted we would hope that surveyors will return during the adult flight period (late June – early August) searching for adults. It is also possible to undertake the rewarding task of winter egg searching from late October to February. Usually from mid-February the larger elms flower, which makes them easier to spot. Eggs hatch then and the larvae crawl inside the flower buds and vanish from sight.



*David Dennis*

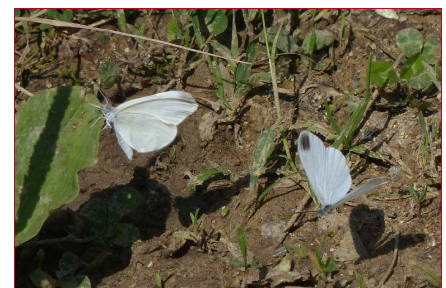
### Wood White

We have a very tiny number of very small colonies of Wood White along the border of Bucks. with Northamptonshire, but the species appears lost from Oxon. where it previously had several colonies.

The species champion for the Wood White, Nick Board [woodw@talktalk.net](mailto:woodw@talktalk.net) would be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the adult flight period (May to Sept) searching for adults. Nick can

help with access to some private woodlands but please do not trespass to survey as it causes trouble with owners who are considering work to help the species.

Currently no updates on the results of the surveys are provided as so few people are surveying and we are uncertain about the butterfly's status.



*David Ferguson*

## Single species surveys - Moths

### Clearwing species

These are not a single species of moth but a family of related species. All are small, day flying bee or wasp mimics and both easily overlooked and very under-recorded.



Large Red-belted Clearwing

Photos by  
Ryszard Szczygieł



Six-belted Clearwing

They do not come to light traps and are best surveyed using pheromone lures – purchased chemical scent bags that smell like female moths to males of the species. These can be used in real time, often attracting males within a few minutes, or placed into small traps and left in situ for longer.



Several species of clearwing can be attracted to lures in gardens; visiting sites with rich biodiversity can reveal several more species. Some lures will attract more than one species but it is worth checking which are most likely to work where you will use them by consulting maps of each species' distribution before purchase.

Six-belted Clearwings entering the narrow gap at the base of a pheromone trap.

Lures are available to buy, at £8.50 each, see

<https://www.angleps.com/pheromones.php>

and they attract:

Currant & White-barred Clearwing

Dusky Clearwing

Hornet Clearwing

Lunar Hornet Clearwing

Yellow-legged & Orange-tailed Clearwing

Thrift & Raspberry Clearwing Note: Thrift clearwing is not found in our area

Red-belted Clearwing

Red-tipped Clearwing

Sallow Clearwing

Six-belted Clearwing

For more information about local usage contact Peter Cuss

[pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

## Drab Looper

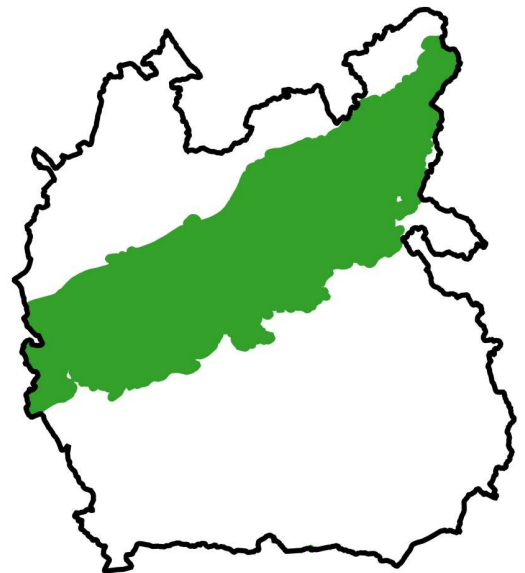
It is intended to create a group email for all those that might be willing to help survey for the Drab Looper. The aim of the project will be to develop a better understanding of the range and population of this scarce species, now restricted to just a small area of central southern Berks, and to assess the condition of its habitat and the amount of the larval foodplant Wood Spurge within the woods in which it occurs. With the help of BC Head office, we can approach landowners in the coming years with a view to improving/creating habitat once we have a better idea as to where the moth is found.

To join the survey team contact Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

## Forester moth



*David Ferguson*



This metallic green, day-flying moth had been retracting its range to just a few favoured haunts, but in the last three years has seen something of a resurgence and is now encountered in many areas of northern and central Bucks and in central Oxon. It can be found where the larval foodplant, sorrel, is growing in semi-natural grassland. It is also found near Chalfont St Peter, Bucks (not shown on map) so it could be found well outside the indicated range.

To join the survey team and stay abreast of where the moth is being seen, contact Peter Cuss [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

### **Four-spotted**

Another day flying moth that has dramatically retracted its range and is now found in very few places just north of the West Berks./Oxon border and only seen in small numbers.

The moth's larvae eat Field Bindweed but only survive where the plant grows on patches of bare soil – and the edges of arable fields are ideal. These are places that are rarely visited by most surveyors as they are so poor for most species. So, the moth could be more widespread than is realised.

If you live in this area (green on the map) or in the very NE of the Chilterns and walk the footpaths through arable fields you might be able to help us find the Four-spotted. There are indications that the moth is recolonising parts of NE Hertfordshire and spreading west.

To stay abreast of where the moth is being seen, contact Peter Cuss  
[pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

### **Striped Lychnis**

This is a night flying moth but it is rarely encountered at light traps. It is best sought by searching for the distinctive larvae during the day while they feed on the flower spikes of Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigra*.

We have established that a very large proportion of the moth's UK population lives in the Chilterns and we think that it could be more widespread in the Berkshire Downs than previously known. We want more surveyors to help continue the larval searches in the Chilterns and new surveyors to begin looking for Dark Mullein and Striped Lychnis in Berkshire.

To help survey for this moth by searching for the Dark Mullein foodplant and its larvae, contact Peter Cuss who will explain the techniques involved.  
[pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

# 10 km Square Champions

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

Key		
<b>SP20</b> C	10K Champion In place	
<b>SP62</b> ?	More help wanted	
<b>SP30</b>	Vacant square	

OS mapping divides the UK into a series of squares and the UTB assign a volunteer to each 10km square to keep tabs on the way that the butterfly species within their square are faring. These volunteers are not expected to visit every part of their square, as many records come in from other recorders, but they should try to visit those parts that return few records.

Each February the 10km champions are updated with all the records from their square in the preceding year and asked to examine the data for signs of change.

We are seeking volunteers to assist Champions who are requesting help and to take on un-adopted squares. Some species champions have made it easier for you to contact them by agreeing to the display of contact details on the map on the website [https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/10km\\_champions](https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/10km_champions) if you hover over the square that interests you, the name will show (if the species champion has agreed that it may).

For more information about the scheme, please contact Jan Haseler [jan.haseler@btinternet.com](mailto:jan.haseler@btinternet.com)

## **New Members**

## **Brenda Mobbs**

Since the last newsletter 24 new members have joined and the membership is now 2070. 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.

5 from Berkshire  
11 from Buckinghamshire  
8 from Oxfordshire

All of you are welcome to join field meetings, work parties and attend Members' Day. Up to date news on activities can be found on our website: [www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk)



## Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) Field Volunteer



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 butterfly and moth surveys on a range of [Local Wildlife Sites \(LWS\)](#) across the county of Berkshire. The LWS's cover a range of habitat types including woodland, wetland, heathland, bog and grassland, and have the potential to support a variety of species.

**Please note:** Surveys and procedures are constantly being reviewed and 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](mailto:caitlin.coombs@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

See here for full details: <http://www.tverc.org/cms/news/field-volunteers-needed>

## Learning to love caterpillars

Sue Taylor

It's easy to forget caterpillars, they are not for the most part as beautiful or charismatic as the adults. If we find them in our gardens, especially anywhere near our veg we tend to think pest! Unfair I feel, as most are not pests and a pity as without caterpillars there are no butterflies and moths. Realising this I try and encourage caterpillars in my garden by allowing wild bits and planting wild plants that I know are good foodplants. It is very rewarding to see a species in my garden that is only there because I have provided its foodplant.

Fortunately a great many caterpillars are beautiful and charismatic and they are well worth studying for many have fascinating ways of life, from the various blue butterflies that persuade ants to look after them, to caterpillars that perfectly resemble bird poo... until they move.

Many species spend much more time as a caterpillar than as an adult. To be able to conserve species we need to have a good understanding of the requirements of the caterpillars and these can be complex. For example, because the adults rarely come to light traps and so are rarely seen we survey for the rare Striped Lychnis moth by counting caterpillars on Dark Mullein. Each year we inspect literally thousands of Dark Mullein flower spikes. To our eyes they all look pretty much the same but for some reason only a few plants are chosen and we are trying to work out why. If we can work out why they chose particular plants this should help us better cater for the Striped Lychnis. Is it shelter, aspect, sunlight, the amount of groundcover under the plant? We don't know yet.

Striped Lychnis caterpillars are large and colourful. They feed in the day on a single food plant and are relatively easy to find. But many other species are well camouflaged or live inside their foodplants in leaf mines. Some build cases which protect them as they graze. A great many feed at night and are only seen if we disturb their hiding places. So finding caterpillars can be a challenge and we then have another challenge to try and work out which species it is!

So how do you go about identifying a caterpillar?

- Where did you find it? The plant it is on is likely to be the foodplant and this is a big clue.
- Where you are geographically is important. The approximate distribution and rarity of most species is known and can help rule out some candidates, though nature always throws up surprises.
- When did you find it. Most caterpillars are only found in particular months.
- Take some good photos if you can and note how big it is.

Now you can reach for a book or hit the internet.

For macromoths and butterflies there is an excellent new book, the 'Field Guide to the Caterpillars of Great Britain and Ireland' by Henwood and Stirling, illustrated by Richard Lewington and published by Bloomsbury. Approx £24.00. The accurate and

detailed illustrations are backed up by detailed descriptions, photos and maps. It is well worth the investment.

For the smaller moths I reach for The Field Guide to Micromoths of Britain and Ireland by Sterling, Parsons and Lewington, the plates illustrate the adults but the text details many of the larvae.

For species that live as leaf miners then the website British Leafminers [www.Leafmines.co.uk](http://www.Leafmines.co.uk) is excellent. It allows you to search by the foodplant and it has many good photos.

Flies also create leaf mines but only lepidopteran larvae leave a long line of dark frass in the centre of the 'mine'.

Now you have identified your caterpillar I would urge you to record it. Arguably this is more important even than recording the adults. After all the adults move sometimes over a long distances, but the caterpillars prove the existence of a breeding population in a particular location.

Please record your sightings on iRecord including your name, grid ref, site name, the date, the species. In order for the sighting to be verified you will need to add a photo and it is preferable to mention the plant it was found on too; that is vital if it is a leaf miner. To help the verifiers please mention on the comments that it is a caterpillar even if this seems obvious from the photo.

It is well worth taking a fresh look at caterpillars and learning to love them. If you are new to caterpillars then we have posted an introductory leaflet on the Upper Thames website. You will find it under 'About' and then 'Publications'.

A selection of caterpillars are shown there but there are over 2550 to choose from!

Have fun, oh and keep a look out for their parasitoids. They are fascinating too!



A *Stigmella* caterpillar. There are two species. It could be on rose so to be sure I'd have to rear it on to an adult.



*Stigmella tityrella*, a common species on beech leaves.



Scalloped Hook-tip



Pale Tussock



Mullein Moth



Striped Lychnis



Pebble Prominent



Buff-tips

The importance of making species records was brought home to me with a painful bump recently.

Our Local Plan has been out to consultation. To my disappointment huge swathes of greenbelt land on my doorstep are being proposed as places for new housing. This will inevitably mean that many of the familiar hedgerows, copses and hedgerow trees will be at risk of removal or major disruption, vastly reducing their biodiversity and degrading their value as wildlife corridors.

It is an all too familiar tale and although there are promises to retain important features and put in 'landscaping' I do not see how, given the scale of loss of established green corridors and green verges, that the required 10% biodiversity gain can be achieved.

To inform my arguments, that these are important green corridors, I looked at the records. I was terribly disappointed to find that almost all the records locally were the ones I had made. As I am relatively new to recording, they date back only a few years and although I have memories of all sorts of things stretching back decades, without evidence and exact dates these are no more than hearsay. Now when I most need to prove how precious these habitats are, I cannot.

I started to feel guilty. I had spent so many happy hours in lovely places recording amazing species, but should I have spent this time more profitably trudging round my local lanes recording there? I thought I had time to gradually do that, but suddenly the window of opportunity was gone. At best, future records will only help modify existing plans.

The reality is that we all have busy lives and need to spend our free time wisely, and we need to look after ourselves too. The records I have made wherever I have been are important - I wasn't wasting my time. What is needed is more people making wildlife records, and for me to have more time to spend recording locally.

Covid19 lockdowns of course saw many more of us paying close attention to our gardens and indeed most of my local records are from my garden and nearest woodland. I was pleased I had at least those to draw on, as they included at least 8 species listed under section 41 of the NERC Act 2006, and several other rarely recorded species. I am probably the only one ever to mention Snow Fleas in a letter of objection!

Lesson learned, I will be spending more time making wildlife records in the lanes and fields adjacent to the areas to be developed, but I will balance that against the equally important records I make elsewhere, all of which add to what we know about climate change, the spread of invasive species and of course to help the people responsible for our green spaces and nature reserves to appropriately manage these special places.

It is all very well spotting Small Heath, White-letter Hairstreaks, Small blues, or emptying a diverse collection of moths from your trap, but what are they living on and where? They cannot survive without their specific habitats.

So please, please, learn from my experience, make records of all the wildlife close to you, anything you can competently recognise including the plants and habitats that

the animals rely on.

You can put all your species records including your moth and butterfly sightings on iRecord. These will be shared with your local Environmental Records Centre and be available when planning searches are carried out and may help identify the most important habitats to be retained near you.

As a bonus you will undoubtedly find all sorts of wonderful things you never knew were there. I have.



Toadflax Brocade in my garden



Elephant Hawkmoth in my garden



Elms supporting a White-letter Hairstreak population likely to be torn out for 'access'.



Ringlet in my garden

One hundred and thirty four gardens across the UTB region took part in the Garden Butterfly Survey last year, compared with just 75 in 2019. A total of 36 species was recorded and there were just over 11,000 sightings. The average number of species recorded was 11, whilst the maximum was 29.

Top of the league was **Peacock** seen in 83% of gardens, followed by **Brimstone**, **Holly Blue**, **Orange-tip**, **Small White** and **Large White** – see table below. Apart from the order, the only change in the top ten compared with the prior year, was that **Meadow Brown** moved out and **Large White** moved in, though **Red Admiral** seemed to struggle, slipping from 2nd to 7th in the table. However, apart from some minor changes highlighted in yellow in the chart, the top ten has remained remarkably constant over the last ten years.



### PERCENTAGE OF GARDENS REPORTING SPECIES

Species	2020	Avg rank 2010-2019	2019	2017	2016	2015	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Peacock	1	4	5	9	9	5	1	5	1	3	7	1
Brimstone	2	1	3	4	5	1	8	3	2	1	2	2
Holly Blue	3	7	6	11	2	2	14	6	9	8	3	9
Orange-tip	4	3	4	3	3	7	4	4	6	4	4	3
Small White	5	5	1	6	4	10	5	1	3	7	5	5
Large White	6	6	12	7	6	6	6	12	4	5	6	4
Red Admiral	7	2	2	1	1	8	2	2	10	2	1	6
Comma	8	9	10	2	11	11	10	10	8	6	8	8
Gatekeeper	9	10	7	10	7	3	11	7	11	11	10	7
Small Tortoiseshell	10	8	8	5	8	4	3	8	5	10	11	10
Meadow Brown	11	11	9	8	10	9	7	9	7	9	12	11
Speckled Wood	12	12	13	12	12	12	9	13	13	12	9	12
Green-veined White	13	13	14	13	13	13	12	14	12	13	13	13
Ringlet	14	14	15	14	15	14	13	15	14	14	14	15
Common Blue	15	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	15	16	15	14
Marbled White	16	17	17	17	17	19	18	17	18	18	17	21
Large Skipper	17	18	19	19	19	18	20	19	20	15	16	18
Painted Lady	18	15	11	15	14	15	15	11	16	19	18	17
Small Skipper	19	19	20	18	18	17	17	20	17	17	20	19
Small Copper	20	20	18	20	20	20	19	18	19	20	19	16
Small Heath	21	23	21	23	24	24	24	21	22	21	21	23
Silver-washed Fritillary	22	21	23	21	21	21	21	23	21	22	23	22
Brown Argus	23	22	22	22	23	23	23	22	23	23	22	20
Essex Skipper	24	24	24	24	22	22	22	24	24	24	24	24

At the other end of the scale, there were just single records of **Chalkhill Blue**, **Small Blue**, **White Admiral**, **Dingy Skipper** and **Swallowtail**. This is the first time that **Swallowtail** has appeared in the garden survey, and one wonders where it originated. Was it perhaps a migrant from the continent, or from the south coast where they have been breeding recently, or did it originate from the release of captive-bred stock? Whichever, it's a very nice butterfly to find in your garden (and one I've not seen in the UK yet!). Also recorded in single figures were **Clouded Yellow** and **Grizzled Skipper**, plus four of the **Hairstreaks**, **Green**, **Purple**, **White-letter** and **Brown**, with one of the latter appropriately being recorded in the garden of the species champion!

The first species to be recorded in the year was **Comma** on January 4th, seen briefly in relatively warm sunshine, before rapidly disappearing into dense ivy, presumably to resume its disturbed hibernation. This was followed by **Red Admiral** on January 10th, but there was then a gap until the first **Peacock** was reported on February 8th, which was five weeks later than in 2019. The first **Brimstone** was a month later still, on March 8th. At the end of the season, both **Red Admiral** and **Small Tortoiseshell** were reported on November 22nd and there was a very late **Brimstone** on December 12th to round off the year.

### EARLIEST AND LATEST DATES IN 2020 AND COMPARISON TO 2019

SPECIES	EARLIEST RECORD	DAYS ±TO LAST YR	LATEST RECORD	DAYS ±TO LAST YR	SPECIES	EARLIEST RECORD	DAYS ±TO LAST YR	LATEST RECORD	DAYS ±TO LAST YR
Comma	04-Jan	48	07-Nov	-10	Brown Argus	21-May	4	26-Aug	34
Red Admiral	10-Jan	-8	22-Nov	7	Clouded Yellow	24-May	-56	05-Sep	-46
Peacock	08-Feb	-34	13-Nov	-24	Large Skipper	24-May	-7	25-Aug	-20
Brimstone	08-Mar	-23	12-Dec	-32	Meadow Brown	24-May	34	20-Sep	9
Small Tortoiseshell	15-Mar	-19	22-Nov	-18	Small Skipper	29-May	-23	09-Aug	16
Small White	15-Mar	9	18-Oct	10	Dark Green Fritillary	30-May	-29	09-Aug	9
Green-veined White	22-Mar	2	07-Oct	8	Marbled White	07-Jun	-7	09-Aug	2
Holly Blue	22-Mar	2	28-Sep	-8	Silver-washed Fritillary	07-Jun	-28	20-Sep	-29
Orange-tip	22-Mar	2	28-Aug	2	Essex Skipper	14-Jun	-7	06-Aug	7
Painted Lady	25-Mar	-2	28-Sep	29	Gatekeeper	14-Jun	10	06-Sep	43
Speckled Wood	29-Mar	9	18-Oct	-5	Ringlet	14-Jun	-7	16-Aug	65
Large White	03-Apr	-10	13-Nov	-24	White-letter Hairstreak	14-Jun	0	13-Jul	15
Common Blue	12-Apr	-12	20-Sep	9	White Admiral	21-Jun	-28	21-Jun	37
Dingy Skipper	19-Apr	9	17-May	16	Purple Hairstreak	05-Jul	-37	08-Aug	5
Small Heath	19-Apr	23	04-Oct	-12	Chalk Hill Blue	21-Jul	1	21-Jul	1
Green Hairstreak	08-May	-10	31-May	-33	Brown Hairstreak	02-Aug	1	09-Aug	
Small Copper	10-May	-19	05-Oct	1	Small Blue	09-Aug	84	16-Aug	-19
Grizzled Skipper	12-May	6	24-May	2	Swallowtail	12-Aug	1	07-Sep	

Turning to the number of sightings, **Painted Lady** saw the most dramatic change, with only 39 reports compared with 496 the previous year, but then 2019 was a big **Painted Lady** migration year. More importantly though, the number of sightings of **Speckled Wood**, **Ringlet**, and **Marbled White** were significantly lower than the prior year, despite the large increase in participating gardens. On a pro-rata basis, numbers for these three species were less than half their 2019 levels. This to some extent mirrors the findings of the Big Butterfly Count, which reported that **Speckled**



**Wood** experienced its worst year since the start of the project, and **Ringlet**, **Marbled White**, **Meadow Brown** and **Gatekeeper** all had their second to worst years.

Two other species where the number of sightings were significantly lower were **Small Copper** and **Common Blue**. The **Small Copper** count was only 59 compared with 120 the year before, a pro-rata reduction of nearly 75%. This definitely runs counter to the findings of the Big Butterfly Count which reported that **Small Copper** was up on previous years and had its second-best year since the launch of the project in 2010. **Common Blue** was down 60% on a pro-rata basis, again at variance with the Big Butterfly Count which reported that numbers of **Common Blue** were up slightly on 2019 levels. Of course the Big Butterfly Count only takes a sample over a limited time period, whereas our survey runs for the whole season, so no doubt this is a factor.

On a positive note, three species—**Peacock**, **Green-veined White** and **Holly Blue**—all showed a small pro-rata increase over 2019 and clearly these three species had a good year in our gardens.

Looking at ten years of history, it is hard to deduce any really significant long-term trends. Twenty four of the total of 40 species on the list have been recorded every year in varying numbers, and their fortunes fluctuate year by year. Wall, Grayling and Silver-spotted Skipper have dropped off the radar, but then they were very rarely recorded previously.

One thing is clear though, and that is that gardens are an important habitat for many of our commoner species of butterfly and monitoring their fortunes through surveys like this makes an essential contribution to our overall knowledge of their populations and their distribution. So it is very encouraging to see what I believe was a record number of gardens being reported last year – please continue to report in 2021, and please encourage others to do so as well!

So thank you to everyone who supplied data by whatever method last year, to Chris Woodrow for entering all the paper records into spreadsheets and to Jim Asher for consolidating and summarising the data from a wide variety of sources.



Meadow Browns

## The State of Britain's Larger Moths 2021

The State of Britain's Larger Moths 2021 is a 44 page report based on data from the Rothamsted Insect Survey (RIS) and the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS). This article is a condensation of the results with additional photos. The passages in italics are direct quotes from the report.

### Extinct

Three moths have not been recorded for over 10 years and are now considered extinct: Brighton Wainscot, Bordered Gothic and Stout Dart.

### Probably extinct

Pale Shining Brown has not been recorded since 2017. It used to occur in Oxfordshire.

### Colonists

Since 2000, 53 species have colonised the UK. Some are new species such as the Black-dotted Chestnut which was first recorded in Dartford in 2011 and has now reached Denham, Bucks while others are long-established migrants which have established colonies, probably as a result of climate change. Tree-lichen Beauty is an example which is now found within the UTB area.

Less desirable are those species which arrived on imported plants as they are often pest species. Examples are Oak Processionary and Gypsy Moth.

### Abundance and distribution

*Over the past five decades the abundance of nocturnal larger moths decreased by 33%, with a greater decline in southern Britain (39%) than in the north (22%). In contrast, larger moths increased in distribution, by an average of 9%, likely driven by climate change.*

### Abundance

Abundance was based on data collected from the RIS network of light-traps. Between 1968 and 2017 the total abundance of larger moths decreased significantly by 33%. *In all, 175 species (41% of the total) had statistically significant decreases compared with only 42 species (10% of the total) with significant population increases. The remaining 210 species (49%) had non-significant trends.*



Brighton Wainscot  
David Ferguson



Black-spotted Chestnut  
Robin Knill-Jones



Oak Processionary  
Adam Basset

## Moths with declining abundance

Thirty species have declined in abundance by an average of 38% or more over a ten year period. Six are illustrated.



Oak Lutestring  
52%

*Dave Wilton*



Figure of Eight  
48%

*Dave Wilton*



Dusky-lemon Sallow  
47%

*Peter Alfrey*



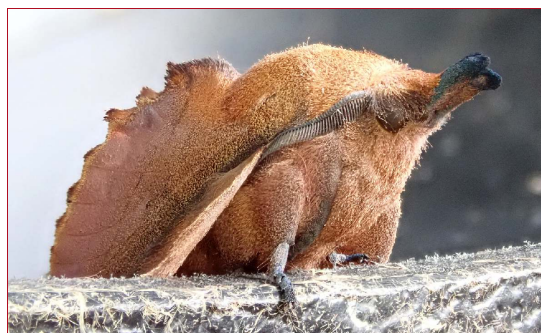
Dot Moth  
40%

*David Ferguson*



Hedge Rustic  
48%

*Alastair Driver*



Lappet  
53%

*Dave Wilton*

## Moths with declining distribution

Thirty species have declined in distribution by an average of 26% or more over a ten year period. Six are illustrated.



Netted Pug  
64%  
*Andy Newbold*



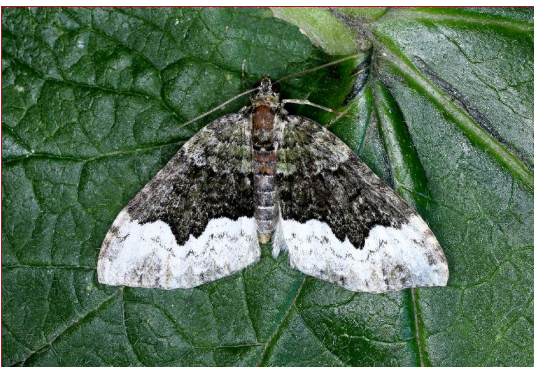
Orange Moth  
40%  
*Peter Hall*



Lead-coloured Drab  
35%  
*Dave Wilton*



Mocha  
35%  
*Dave Wilton*



Cloaked Carpet  
29%  
*Nic Hallam*



Shore Wainscot  
29%  
*Myrna Beardsworth*

## Garden Tiger

Since the 1960s Garden Tigers have declined in abundance by 90% and in distribution by 24%.

*Writing more than a century ago, Richard South observed that the Garden Tiger was a moth that “few persons living in the country, and at all interested in the natural objects around them, will fail to recognize”. Sadly, after a 90% decline in abundance since the late 1960s, as well as a significant reduction in distribution (24% decrease since 1970), many people are no longer familiar with this spectacular moth or its “woolly bear” caterpillars.*



Dave Wilton

*This disconnect is linked with another phenomenon called ‘shifting baseline syndrome’, whereby people who did not experience higher levels of wildlife abundance in the past accept the current depleted populations as the norm. Together, these have negative implications for conservation; people who are detached from nature or unaware of the scale of change are unlikely to support ambitious efforts to restore it.*

## Dark Spinach

There was a 90% decrease in abundance (1968 - 2017) and a 52% decrease in distribution (1970 - 2016). The larval foodplants are goosefoots and oraches, plants of weedy places. The species is thus susceptible to tidying-up.



Myrna Beardsworth

## Northern and Mountain Moths

Presumably as a result of global warming, northern and mountain moths are decreasing.

Examples are:

Grey Mountain Moth with a 81% decrease in distribution

Brindled Ochre (76%)

Grey Chi (57%)

Glaucous Shears (38%)

Autumn Green Carpet (38%)

## Moths with increasing abundance

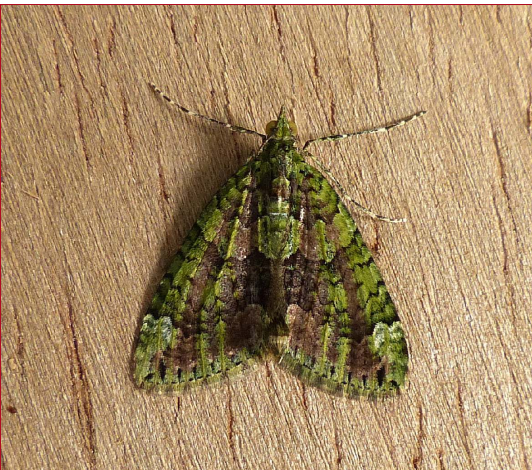
Thirty species have increased in abundance by an average of 19% or more over a ten year period. Six are illustrated.



Least Carpet  
131%  
*David Ferguson*



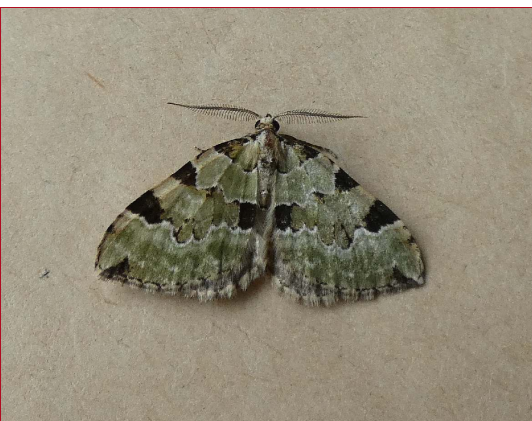
Straw Dot  
64%  
*Dave Wilton*



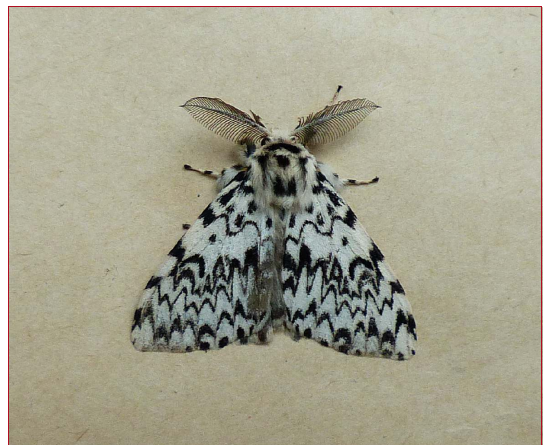
Red-green Carpet  
46%  
*David Ferguson*



Treble Brown-spot  
44%  
*Dave Wilton*



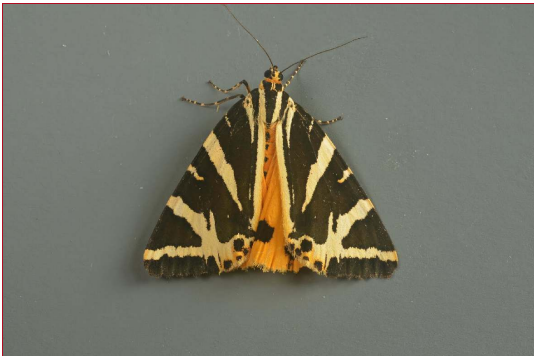
Green Carpet  
31%  
*David Ferguson*



Black Arches  
19%  
*David Ferguson*

## Moths with increasing distribution

Thirty species have increased in distribution by an average of 24% or more over a ten year period. Six are illustrated.



Jersey Tiger  
119%

*Andrew King*



Webb's Wainscot  
52%

*Dave Wilton*



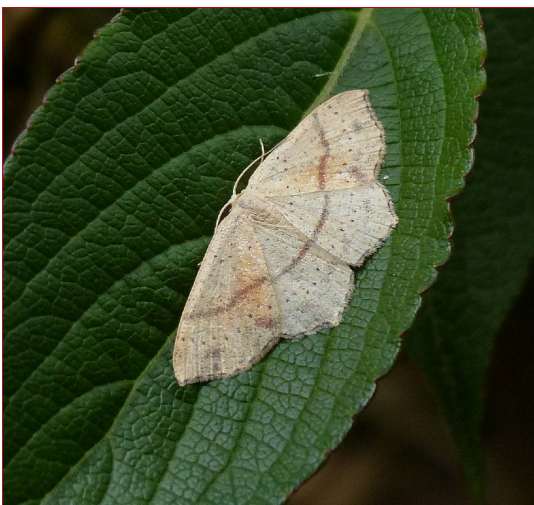
Scarlet Tiger  
44%

*Richard Ellis*



Dotted Chestnut  
32%

*Dave Wilton*



Maiden's Blush  
30%

*David Ferguson*



Old Lady  
33%

*David Ferguson*

## Spreading North

Of 487 larger moth species with sufficient data and the potential to spread northwards, the mean range margin change was a northward shift of 5.1km per year over the period 1995–2016 (Fig. 7). In all, 346 species (71% of the total) had statistically significant rates of northward expansion.

## Footmen

The caterpillars of the footmen moths feed on lichens and algae, organisms that benefit from cleaner air. This is then reflected in the increased distribution of these moths. Some are illustrated below with their % increase.



Buff Footman  
524%  
*Mark Griffiths*



Dingy Footman  
391%  
*Mark Griffiths*



Red-necked Footman  
66%  
*Darren Seaman*



Orange Footman  
115%  
*Mark Griffiths*



## Phenology changes

The timing of life cycle events - phenology - has been significantly changed by global warming. The growing season of plants is the most obvious change but the warming up of the planet has affected all living things, including moths. The species that emerge in the first half of the year are now appearing at least 13 days earlier than during the 1970s while autumn moths are now flying later in the year.

It has been found that in some double-brooded species earlier emergence of the first brood can result in a larger second brood; examples are Green Carpet and Burnished Brass. However, in single-brooded species with a restricted habitat, earlier emergence can result in a smaller brood. Another change has occurred in species such as Burnished Brass and Swallow-tailed Moth, which were thought to be single brooded, but are now known to produce small second broods. This change in behaviour could form 'development traps' as individuals contend with lower quality foodplants and deteriorating climatic conditions later in the year.

## Drivers of change

### Land use

Destruction of habitat and increased management are obvious factors in the decrease of moths.

### Climate change

As already mentioned, many moths have colonised the UK and many others have spread northwards. A study has predicted that >60% of 422 moth species could increase in distribution because of climate change.

### Chemical pollution

*The UK's soils and water bodies are increasingly enriched with mineral nutrients emanating from chemical fertilizers, farm and urban effluent and pollution from vehicles and industry. Nitrogen enrichment, in particular, is expected to affect moths via changes to the chemistry, structure and composition of plant communities.*

It follows that species whose larval foodplant thrives in high nutrient soils do rather better than those whose larval foodplants prefer poor soils.



**Blood-vein**  
Increased larval mortality was shown to occur when nitrogen fertilizer was applied to the host plants.

*David Ferguson*

## Conserving moths

*In addition to being beautiful, fascinating creatures in their own right, moths play numerous roles in ecosystems and so their conservation is important for maintaining ecological functions. Moths and, in particular, their caterpillars are essential in the diets of a wide range of predators, including bats and many birds, and act as hosts for a huge diversity of parasitoid flies and wasps. Moth caterpillars are important herbivores, while adult moths have under-studied and under-valued roles as pollinators of plants. Recent studies in Britain have revealed that moths transport pollen from a wide variety of native and cultivated plants and some wildflowers rely almost entirely on moth pollination, such as Greater and Lesser Butterfly-orchids.*

*Butterfly Conservation has been working hard to conserve the UK's moths over the past three decades, in collaboration with numerous partner organisations, volunteers and landowners.*

In the report there follows descriptions of projects to conserve targeted rare species. Barberry Carpet, Black-veined Moth, *Choreutis diana*, Grass Wave, Drab Looper and New Forest Burnet are given as examples.

The full report is available as a pdf at

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths/the-state-of-britains-moths>



Black-veined Moth  
*David Ferguson*

## Field Meetings

***For all field trips, it is recommended that arms and legs are covered to protect from insect bites. Binoculars would be an advantage so that some form of social distancing can be achieved.***

***COVID – If you develop the symptoms of Covid 19 or if you have been in contact with others who are unwell with possible Covid 19 symptoms, or you have been told to quarantine or to self-isolate by the Track and Trace System, please do not attend.***

***Please check BC website for up to date information on how Covid or any other events may affect our trips at***

[www.butterfly-conservation.org.uk](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org.uk)

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

**Saturday 22nd May 10.30am**

**Pitstone Quarry, Bucks**

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

Meet at Pitstone Church SP941149 Explorer Map 181.

Leader and contact: [Nick Bowles 01442 382276](tel:01442382276)

**Sunday 23rd May 11.00am**

**Aston Upthorpe Downs, Oxon**

Target species: Spring butterflies including Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreak. Steep slopes.

From the A417, a mile east of Blewbury, turn south along the narrow lane opposite the turning to Aston Upthorpe village. Park by the grain dryer half a mile along the lane. OS Map 174; Grid Reference SU550844

Leader and contact: [Gerry Kendall 01865 245029](tel:01865245029)

**Sunday 23rd May 11.00am**

**Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks**

A walk to see the Dark Green Fritillary in one of the best sites in the Upper Thames Branch region. There are some very steep slopes and rabbit holes so please wear suitable footwear.

Meet in the car park (OS Map 165, Grid Ref: SP963160)

Leader and contact: [Steph Rodgers 07734 389301](tel:07734389301)

**Thursday 27th May 10.30am**

**Yoesden Bank, Bucks**

Target Species: Adonis Blue. We also hope to see other spring chalk downland species. Wear appropriate footwear: steep slopes.

Meet at the entrance field by the pumping station in Bottom Road, Radnage.

Parking in field. SU789975

Leader and contact: [Sue Taylor taylor57sc@gmail.com](mailto:taylor57sc@gmail.com) & [Brenda Mobbs 01494 712486](tel:01494712486)

**Saturday 29th May 10.30am**

**Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks**

Targeting: Adonis Blue. Very steep grass slopes. Meet in the main National Trust car park off the A4009 at the top of the hill out of Streatley (OS Map 174, Grid Ref: SU583806). Leader and contact: Maureen Cross 01491 871239

**Sunday 30th May 10.30am**

**Buttler's Hangings SSSI, Bucks**

We hope to see a variety of spring species, and possibly the first brood of Adonis Blue. After meeting at the south end of the National Trust car park on the top of West Wycombe Hill (Grid Reference SU827950), we will walk through the woods, along the top of the ridge, until we arrive at Buttler's Hangings. A walk of about 4 kilometres in total with very steep slopes, so please wear suitable footwear. Please note that it is not possible to park on the road directly below Buttler's Hangings.

Leader and contact: Peter Ogden 07596 495007

**Tuesday 1st June 2.00pm**

**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

A field trip to try and find Black Hairstreak pupae.

Meet at entrance on the Edgcott to Quainton road at OS Map 165, Grid Ref: SP720209.

Leader and contact: Stuart Hodges 01296 730217 and 07941 763850

**Saturday 5th June 11.00am**

**Bradenham, Bucks**

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

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

**Saturday 12th June at 10.30am**

**Finemere Wood, Bucks**

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

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

Leader and contact: Stuart Hodges 01296 730217 and 07941 763850

**Wednesday Evenings 16/6, 23/6, 30/7 at 7.00pm**

**Wednesday Evenings 7/7, 14/7 at 6.30pm**

**East Hagbourne, Oxon**

A repeat of fascinating evening walks, exploring what butterflies get up to outside of transect hours. Target species: Marbled White, Small Blue, and other Summer butterflies. Sustrans path on top of disused railway line from Didcot to Upton. Some rough ground but alongside of metalled path. Meet at the Village Hall at East Hagbourne. This period overlaps with the height of the Marbled White season. Around the solstice, butterflies can be in flight until 2100 and perching until 2200. OS Map 174; Grid Reference SU525883

Leader and contact: Karen Saxl 01235 818574

**Thursday 17th June 11.00am**

**Silchester Common, Hants**

A good site for the Silver-studded Blue. The ground is uneven so please wear suitable footwear. There is also a lot of gorse so long trousers are advisable. Meet in the car park on the west side of Pamber Road in Silchester.

OS Map 175, Grid Ref: SU625622

Leader and contact: [Bryan Williams 0118 9792177, mobile 07919 921910](mailto:bryan.williams@bt.com)

**Saturday 26th June 10.30am**

**Holtspur Bottom Reserve, Bucks**

Meet at the Holtspur Bottom Reserve entrance in Ridings Lane. We hope to see the Small Blue, as well as most of the common Summer species.

Landranger Map 175; Grid Reference SU918906

Leader and contact: [Brenda Mobbs 01494 712486](mailto:brenda.mobbs@bt.com)

**Sunday 27th June 10.30am**

**Hackpen Hill also known as Crowhole Bottom and Devil's Punchbowl, Oxon**

A walk in search of various butterflies and day-flying moths. There are steep slopes requiring suitable footwear. Meet at Sparsholt Firs on the Ridgeway by the B4001, OS Map 174, Grid Ref: SU344850

Leader and contact: [Gillian Taylor 01235 751646](mailto:gillian.taylor@bt.com)

**Tuesday 6th July 2.00pm**

**Maidenhead Thicket, Berks**

Meet at the 'Butterfly trail car park' (OS Map 175, Grid Ref: SU 857809).

Target species is the White-letter Hairstreak but hopefully a good selection of woodland butterflies. Silver Washed Fritillary, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral are all seen here as well as the occasional Purple Emperor.

Contact [Peter Cuss 07938 577944](mailto:peter.cuss@bt.com) email [pj.cuss@gmail.com](mailto:pj.cuss@gmail.com)

**Thursday 8th July 10.00am**

**Bernwood Forest Bucks/Oxon**

Weather permitting, good numbers of summer butterflies should be seen: the main attraction being the Purple Emperor.

Meet in the main Oakley Wood car park (OS Map 164, Grid Ref: SP611117).

Leader and Contact: [Tony Gillie](mailto:tony.gillie@gmail.com) email: [tony.gillie@gmail.com](mailto:tony.gillie@gmail.com)

**Tuesday 13th July 11.00am**

**Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks**

A walk to see the Dark Green Fritillary in one of the best sites in the Upper Thames Branch region. There are some very steep slopes and rabbit holes so please wear suitable footwear.

Meet in the car park (OS Map 165, Grid Ref: SP963160)

Leader and contact: [Paul Bowyer 01628 526225](mailto:paul.bowyer@bt.com)

**Saturday 17th July 10.00am**

**Paices Wood, Aldermaston, Berks**

A look at the varied habitats of this country parkland which supports a variety of species. Entrance is south of Youngs Industrial Estate between Aldermaston and Tadley off A340. Parking at OS Map 174, Grid Ref: SU587639, on the west side of A340 (best sat nav post code is RG7 4PG). Follow the brown signs!

Leader and contact: [John Lerpiniere 0118 375 1756](mailto:john.lerpiniere@bt.com)

**Thursday 5th August 11.00am**

**Greenham Common, Berks**

Lots of butterfly species to see, our main target is the Grayling...

Meet at the car park near the control tower.

OS Map 174, Grid Ref: SU501652 off Bury's Bank Road.

Leader and contact: [Paul Bowyer 01628 526225](#)

**Saturday 7th August 10.30am**

**Kimble Rifle Range near  
Monks Risborough, Bucks**

Summer butterflies (including Chalkhill Blue and hopefully Silver-spotted Skipper) and day-flying moths at this BBOWT reserve. This is a 3 kilometre walk and includes some slopes, but is possible with grippy shoes and the exercising of caution about rabbit holes and ant hills.

Parking: Map 165, Grid Ref: SP832045 on Longdown Hill near HP27 0NB.

Leader and contact: [Nick Bowles 01442 382276](#)

**Monday 9th August 10.30am**

**Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon**

Target species includes the Silver-spotted Skipper and other mid-summer chalk downland species. The site has steep slopes and rabbit holes.

From near J5 of the M40, west of Stokenchurch, take the A40 sign posted Oxford. Now follow brown tourist signs for the nature reserve, first turning left after 1km, then right after a further 550m. Follow this road (beware potholes) to the second car park at the very end.

Parking donation requested. SU731966 OSmap 165

Leader and contact: [Paul Huckle paul.huckle@btinternet.com](mailto:paul.huckle@btinternet.com)

**Saturday 14th August 10.30am**

**Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks**

Targeting: Adonis Blue. Very steep grass slopes. Meet in the main National Trust car park off the A4009 at the top of the hill out of Streatley (OS Map 174, Grid Ref: SU583806). Leader and contact: [Maureen Cross 01491 871239](#)

**Sunday 15th August 10.30am**

**Hundred Acre Piece, Mortimer**

The wide flowery rides through the conifer plantation on the Berks/Hants border are one of the local hotspots for the Grayling butterfly. Park in the quiet cul-de-sac of Stephen's Firs, Mortimer. OS Map: 175, Grid Ref: SU644647.

Leader and contact: [Jan Haseler 0118 9414750/07464 603236](#)

## NEW EDITOR NEEDED

I (= the Editor) will be retiring after the autumn edition. This decision was not made through any disenchantment with the job but through a recognition that the ageing process might be a performance limiting factor. It follows that a replacement needs to be appointed before the end of the year, which is the deadline for the 2022 spring edition.

I thought it would be useful to describe the production process.

Each issue of Hairstreak is a single word processed document with embedded graphics. The graphics can be photos, drawings, maps, graphs and headings but all are in jpg format or similar. This document is then converted to pdf format using Adobe Acrobat and the pdf sent to Butterfly Conservation Headquarters. After that, if all goes well, the Editor has no more involvement.

Hairstreak is produced using three pieces of software: a word processor, imaging software, and Adobe Acrobat. Desk-top publishing software is not used and a printer is not required.

All articles arrive as MS Word documents, increasingly in docx format. The preferred word processor is thus a recent version of Word. However, other word processors are available - I myself use Wordperfect. The imaging software needs to be able to handle layers, assuming you wish to retain the style of the cover.

Finally, an editor's job is to edit, which means spotting and correcting errors in the text. This means, in turn, that a good grasp of English is an essential requirement. However, Hairstreak does not have an overall style of writing which means that editing is quite light.

If you are interested in this quite congenial and rewarding job then contact Nick Bowles at [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com)

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

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

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

### Upper Thames Branch Website

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

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

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

Upper Thames Branch Moth Sightings Blog

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

Follow us on Facebook

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

and Twitter - [@UpperThamesBC](https://twitter.com/UpperThamesBC)

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

Holtspur Bottom Reserve

<http://www.holtspurbottom.info>

## Upper Thames Branch Officers

**Chairman** Nick Bowles

01442 382276 [nick.bowles@ntlworld.com](mailto:nick.bowles@ntlworld.com)

**Vice-chairman & Conservation & Recording Chairman** Grahame Hawker

Well Cottage, 22 Brimpton Common, Reading RG7 4RZ

0118 9814405 [grahamehawker@hotmail.com](mailto:grahamehawker@hotmail.com)

**Hon Secretary & Branch Contact** Dave Wilton

25 Burnham Road, Westcott, Aylesbury HP18 0PL

01296 658701 [wilton@burnhamlodge.plus.com](mailto:wilton@burnhamlodge.plus.com)

**Hon Treasurer** Chris Woodrow

39 Old London Road, Benson, Wallingford OX10 6RR

01491 838637 [lepidoptera45@btinternet.com](mailto:lepidoptera45@btinternet.com)

**Membership Secretary** Brenda Mobbs

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