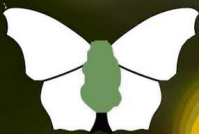


UTB NEWS

No 92

Spring 2015



Butterfly
Conservation



Upper Thames
Branch



Dark Green Fritillary
Joint winner of Overall category

Ben Kiteley



Black-veined White
Joint winner of Overall category

David Hastings

*Articles and photographs for inclusion in this newsletter are welcome.
Photographs should be sent as separate files and not embedded in
the text.*

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

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Cover photo: Orange-tips by Nick Bowles

Opposite page shows the joint overall winners of the 2014 Photo Competition

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE, registered in England & Wales (2206468)
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Charity registered in England (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)

Chairman's Notes

Nick Bowles

Hello and thank you Upper Thames Branch for the opportunity to serve as your Chairman.

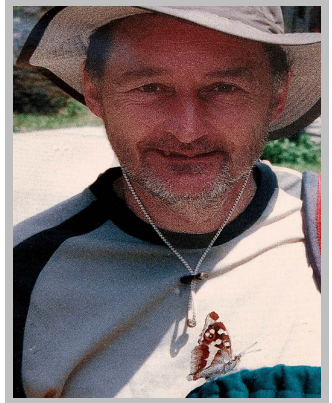
I've been a member for years and a passion (even an obsession) for butterflies has been central to my life. Ask my wife, she will wearily agree. As a lad I, once I grew out of wanting to be a train driver, I decided that I was going to work on a nature reserve and watch wildlife all day long. That never happened. However, that basic childhood desire still burns within me and as I've grown older I have realised that to do that I need to help save and even create, places where wildlife can live. Maybe it's partly because I grew up near Helpston Heath, the area described with such longing by the poet John Clare after it was destroyed by the agricultural improvement of his day (the Enclosures Act). He wrote:

Enclosure like a Buonaparte let not a thing remain,
It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill
And hung the moles for traitors
though the brook is running still
It runs a sicker brook, cold and chill.

Many years ago I wrote a piece to the Upper Thames branch Newsletter which implored the branch to be more than a butterfly spotters' club (or moth spotters' club). I wanted us to be a conservation organisation first and to put the objective of saving valuable habitats above all else.

My view on that hasn't changed and I hope I will be able to oversee even more conservation effort in the Upper Thames area. All in all, we are well placed to achieve it. Jim Asher (as Chairman), with able assistance from a great team of committee members, has put us in a strong position,. The field trip programme, Newsletter (thanks again to Maureen for all she did) the various websites and surveys, a varied programme of winter work and growing membership, all attest to a branch with a very strong core and the ability to achieve great things.

I very much hope that you will join in with some subtle changes to the way we operate to provide more for you the members and a wider involvement in conservation effort. For instance, you will notice changes in the newsletter and one of these changes will be to provide it with a name. If you think of a good name for our branch's main communication medium then please let our new editor Dave Ferguson know (mail to: davidm.ferguson@tiscali.co.uk)



As I say, a great deal of other work will be going on too and we would welcome all offers of help whatever you feel you can offer. You'd be surprised by the things we need help with, for instance we are looking for anyone who is good at germinating seeds to grow some dark mullein seedlings, for the loan of a water bowser (both for our Holtspur Bottom reserve), help with starting a Twitter feed and all manner of things from the arty to the bureaucratic; and to simply walking around some places and telling us what you see.

An expedition to help the endangered European Violet Copper butterfly

Nick Bowles

In late May and June of this year (2015) I shall head back to the unbelievably beautiful region of the Pyrenees (the mountain range between France and Spain) where this incredible species is still hanging on. After years of decline across Europe there are few strongholds left and I want to do more research into the tricky issue of identifying and then saving this butterfly's habitat.

The work will involve searching for and counting both the adult and its eggs (which are laid on Bistort plants). We hope we can find out why it chooses certain plants and how to make more of that type of plant available to the butterfly. You can get more idea of the species' beauty at

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/myynjdn>

or with this QR code.



If you fancy volunteering to help please contact **Nick Bowles**. Some UTB members (and some non members) are going for various periods of time but more help would be appreciated.

2014 UTB Photo Competition report

David Dennis

We never know what the weather will throw at us each butterfly season and 2014 was no exception. Equally, we never know how it will affect our photo competition. However, I'm pleased to report that with each year that passes, the quality of our photographers' efforts seems to get better and better. This year the quality was quite outstanding.

The UK Butterflies section again attracted over 60 entries, and members clearly needed a lot of thinking time before deciding on their favourite shot. But in the end the result was clear. I wrote last year that Jim Asher seemed to come second in pretty much every category, but never won. Well, this year he came both 1st and 2nd in this category, with stunning shots of an Essex Skipper and a Green Hairstreak. As one of our very best photographers this success was well overdue! However, it should also be said that Colin Williams's lovely pair of Wood Whites was not far behind.

The Overseas Butterflies section always delights, with the more exotic species often doing well. This year was no exception with Gillian Taylor's Lattice Brown (3rd) and David Hastings's Black-veined White (2nd) being pipped at the post by Andrew Cornick's very special photo. Was it a Monarch? A Plain Tiger? No, it was a closely related species from the southern states of the US – a 'Queen'!

Tony Rayner is a dab hand with a moth in front of his lens, and so it proved again this year. He took first and third slots with two hawk moths – a Willowherb Hawk (3rd) and a remarkable image of a Broad-bordered Bee Hawk, which won, just ahead of Gillian Taylor's micro which has a name longer than the moth itself and easier to type than to pronounce – *Zygaena carniolica*.

In the Immature Stages category Jim returned to his accustomed position of runner-up with an intriguing close-up of a Red Admiral egg. He also shared 3rd place with Ched George – both of them offering images of a Swallowtail larva – possibly the same one or perhaps brother and sister (some were found locally this year!). But it was Wendy Wilson's extraordinary shot of a wonderfully camouflaged Purple Hairstreak larva that rightly won, receiving more than half of the votes cast.

This year we replaced the Behaviour category with one for Digitally Altered images. It seems that our photographers don't spend half the winter tweaking their images using Photoshop and the like as there were very few entries. We will have to decide whether to give this idea another go next year, but so far it has not really caught on. Wendy Wilson's close-up of a Silver-studded Blue with added text was the winner.

The Previous Winners section, as usual, made a striking impression – in particular the work of one photographer – Nigel Kiteley. Of the five most popular images here, four were Nigel's, including the winner – a beautifully lit, sharp Black-

veined White on a pale background. In my personal view, one of the most striking shots ever entered.

We always recognise the single photo that has been voted 'best in show', and, unusually this year, there was a tie for first place. Even more unusually, there were no less than four images with only one vote fewer! So Jim Asher (again!) Ian Dykes, Neil Holman and Wendy Wilson should be very proud of their efforts, but it was David Hastings's Black-veined White and Ben Kiteley's Dark Green Fritillary that secured the top slot – just! So, next year, the Previous Winners section will contain two new names, and, for the first time, a father and son duo.

Finally, my thanks, once again, to Tony Rayner and Pete Thompson for their invaluable help with the organisation, and to all of you who entered and voted, for helping to make this competition such an enjoyable part of our Members' Day.

One of the winners is shown below. The others can be found on the covers. Jim Asher's winning Essex Skipper was featured in the last issue.



Name change

The new style newsletter invites a change in name. Suggestions should be sent to the Editor at davidm.ferguson@tiscali.co.uk.

Maureen's retirement



This beautiful painting by Richard Lewington (centre) depicting Adonis Blues against the chalk grassland of Lardon Chase was presented to Maureen Cross by Jim Asher as a recognition of her 25 years as editor of the newsletter. Maureen leads the field trips to this site and is the species' champion.

Dark Mullein at Holtspur Bottom

Tony Gillie

An appeal to all our gardeners! We're looking for people to help us grow Dark Mullein plants from seed for us to plant on our Holtspur Bottom Reserve.

Dark Mullein (*Verbascum nigrum*) is an attractive tall biennial or short-lived perennial, and is easy to grow from seed in pots or seed trays and then plant out once established. If sown directly into the ground, it does best where there has been some recent soil disturbance. It thrives in well-drained chalky soils in sunny sites, without too much competing vegetation.

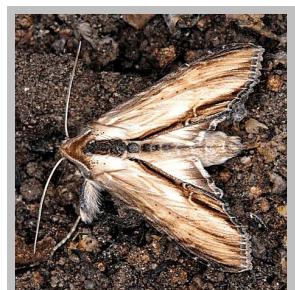
Why are we asking for help?

Last year, an informal poll held amongst people closely connected with our Holtspur Bottom Reserve voted the Striped Lychnis moth as one of the top three species we should target our conservation efforts towards. (The other two were the Chalkhill Blue and Small Blue butterflies.)

We have small numbers of Striped Lychnis still breeding in the Holtspur Valley, and Dark Mullein is their larval food plant (i.e. the plant the adult moths lay their eggs on, and their larvae (caterpillars) subsequently eat). We hope that by massively increasing the numbers of these plants, we will be lending a hand to this threatened species. Our target is to have at least 500 more Dark Mullein plants on the Reserve itself over the next couple of years, and also to encourage people who live close by to plant Dark Mullein. You'll see why we are asking for your help!

The Striped Lychnis

The Striped Lychnis is a nationally scarce moth that was highlighted as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. It can be found on chalk grassland, in field margins and on roadside verges. In the UK, it now only occurs in parts of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, West Sussex, and Hampshire. It is thought the population is fluctuating, but we have insufficient data to be certain, either locally or nationally. The problem is complicated by the fact that the adult moth rarely comes to light (and so



Peter Hall

moth trapping isn't useful as a way of estimating population levels). This leaves counting its larvae as the only sensible survey method. We did this at Holtspur Bottom in 2014, and only found 36 larvae on the whole reserve, which we don't feel is enough to maintain a healthy population in the longer term.

It is thought that decreasing numbers of its larval food plant and habitat loss may be contributing to its decline. A "tidier" countryside is one problem; for example inappropriate roadside management (e.g. the timing of verge cutting by Councils), which removes Dark Mullein plants before the caterpillars have had time to pupate.

What we would like you to do

Any help you could give us in trying to prevent the further decline of this scarce moth would be greatly appreciated. If you are prepared to grow some Dark Mullein plants for our Reserve at Holtspur Bottom, we can provide you with free seeds. Later in the year we will also be looking for volunteers to help us plant out the Dark Mullein people have grown for us: if you would like to help us to do this, contact Nick or Tony (see below) so that we can let you know when it's happening.

Even if you can't grow plants for our reserve, if you live anywhere in the Upper Thames region, you could help by buying some seeds and growing Dark Mullein for example in your garden, on your allotment, or in the grounds of a local school or churchyard (ask permission first!). Although the seeds are widely available, we are happy to recommend a reputable supplier that we have used before if you are unable to find seeds locally.



If you would like to help us, or would just like more information on this project, contact either:

Tony Gillie (tony.gillie@gmail.com, 01865 751201)

or **Nick Bowles** (nick.bowles@ntlworld.com, 01442 382276).

Relevant websites are:

<http://holtspurbottom.info/darkmullein.html>

and <http://holtspurbottom.info/stripedlychnis.html>, which has links to previous Striped Lychnis survey reports, distribution maps and factsheets.



Minutes of Annual General Meeting

25th October 2014 at 2pm

Amersham Community Centre, Chiltern Avenue, Amersham, Bucks HP6 5AH

Present: Jim Asher (Chairman), Dave Wilton (Secretary), Chris Woodrow (Treasurer) and most other Committee Members, along with approximately 80 members of the Branch and guests.

Apologies were received from Denise Asher, Paul Bowyer, Dennis Dell, Mark Duckworth, Dave Ferguson, Stuart Hodges and Roger Kemp.

The **Previous Minutes** were accepted and there were no **Matters Arising**.

Chairman's Report: Jim Asher welcomed everyone and reported on the Branch's 31st year of operation. 2014 had opened on a very stormy note but fortunately things calmed down and dried up and, apart from a surprisingly cool spell in August, we had a good season for butterflies.

BC's "2020 Vision", a strategy to tackle the major problems still facing our butterflies and moths, has as one of its key aims a major growth in membership to increase our resources and impact for the future. Jim was delighted to announce that national membership had passed 25,000 and that our own Branch membership had grown to 1,285 which was a long way from the 26 members we had at the end of our first year in 1982. The biggest single source of recruitment for BC is Big Butterfly Count. Over 40,000 people had taken part in the survey, following which there was another increase in national membership. Making new members feel welcome is an important part of what we do as a branch and another successful New Members' Day was held in May with 25 new members attending at Maiden Erlegh Local Nature Reserve in Berkshire. We ran 28 field trips across the three counties over the flight season and Jim took the opportunity to thank all field trip leaders for their help in making them successful. 2014 was the last year of 'Honest Frank's Tours', with trips to the Isle of Wight, Switzerland and Morecambe Bay. Frank Banyard felt that it was time to hang up his tour umbrella after 21 years and a big thank-you was passed on from all who had participated in them.

Over the winter months we had numerous work parties at both Aston Upthorpe and our own reserve at Holtspur Bottom. Holtspur is looking particularly good now and we have a strong team actively supporting the site, including Nick Bowles, Stuart Hodges, Brenda Mobbs, Frank Banyard and Tony & Marion Gillie. Mark Duckworth had done a fantastic job designing and making special signboards, ably supported by his glamorous assistant, Wendy Wilson. Grateful thanks were also recorded to Chris Dennis for her long support and the generous donation of materials for the signboards.

With help from David Roy, we held a very effective conservation day at CEH

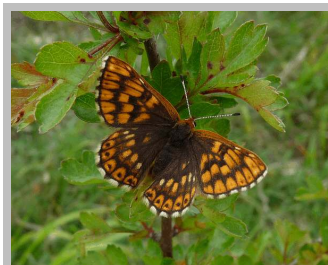
Wallingford with a number of external organisations including BBOWT, the RSPB and National Trust. Jim then ran through the various butterfly and moth recording schemes operating in our three counties, mentioning also that there are plans to produce a national macro-moth atlas in 2018, the 50th anniversary of BC. 2014 was the fifth and final year of the current national butterfly mapping scheme and an overview was given of how the data had been coming in. Intensive efforts in 2014 had resulted in us obtaining records from virtually every tetrad (2km square) in our three counties, another great team achievement. Prizes were awarded to those who had visited the most tetrads: Una Fenton with 131, John Lerpiniere with 186 and Wendy Wilson with a whopping 287! The Branch hoped to publish its own results in 2015, at the very least as a set of maps available electronically with current distributions put into a historical context. A new 5-year recording window opens in 2015 (2015-2019) and plans are already afoot for a new national atlas in 2020, similar in coverage to the Millennium Atlas published in 2001.

A presentation had already been made to Maureen Cross who was standing down following an incredible 25 years of service to the Branch as editor of the Newsletter. Jim was very pleased to announce that Dave Ferguson had been appointed as Maureen's replacement and that the Branch would take this opportunity to revisit the purposes of our Newsletter and see how best it could be updated to meet our members' needs.

Brief mention was made of a two-year Duke of Burgundy project in our local area, funded through a legacy given for conservation work in the Chilterns. A project officer, Sarah Meredith, had been appointed and had started work the previous month, hoping to improve the fortunes of this endangered butterfly in our area.

Moving on to his own role, Jim explained that the BC Council had elected him as national Chair and that he would be taking over from David Dennis at the AGM in November. As a result he had decided to step down from the Upper Thames Committee although would continue to assist the Branch in other ways. Nick Bowles had been elected unanimously as his successor, with Grahame Hawker taking on the role of Vice-Chairman.

Treasurer's Report: Chris Woodrow began his report by drawing everyone's attention to the accounts on the back of the day's programme sheet. Branch finances continued to show a healthy position during the 2013-14 financial year



Duke of Burgundy - female



Duke of Burgundy - male

despite a reduction in overall income and an increase in expenditure. Head Office had instructed branches not to hold on to large cash balances as 'designated funds' because it affected their ability to obtain grants from other organisations for important projects. As a result we made substantial donations during the year to Head Office projects (£4,000) and to BBOWT (£1,000 in support of their Meadow Farm purchase appeal).

The fall in subscription money in the accounts belies continuing growth in Branch membership. The reason for this apparent fall was due to the Head Office practice of topping up subscription payments to the Branch in the first quarter of the financial year based on the number of new members who had joined during the year. In 2013 the additional payment amounted to £582 whereas in 2014 this top-up was only £84. As an example of the continuing growth in membership, subscription payments for the current financial year amounted to £4,854.

On the expenditure side the largest outgoing continues to be the Newsletter, with costs increasing through the growth in membership as well as the rise in postage. However, these are being contained through using the services of Head Office to arrange printing and dispatch (franked mail being much cheaper than buying stamps). The other main expense during the year was on our Holtspur Reserve where grassland maintenance work amounted to £2,280 and this resulted in elimination of the balance remaining in the Holtspur Legacy Restricted Fund.

Although expenditure exceeded net income during the year by over £4,000 Chris was happy to report that the balance of cash in hand at the end of financial year 2013-14 (£19,031.32) represented a sufficient reserve to meet any likely costs in the current year. Chris proposed that the accounts be accepted, this was seconded by Mike Wilkins and agreed unanimously.

Election of Officers: Under our rotational system Nick Bowles, Jan Haseler and Stuart Hodges were seeking re-election to the Committee and no other members had put themselves forward to stand. Jim proposed that all three be re-elected, this was seconded by Chris Woodrow and agreed unanimously. With Jim standing down, the Committee now comprised twelve members:

Nick Bowles (Chair)	Paul Bowyer*	Marion Gillie
Tony Gillie	Jan Haseler	Grahame Hawker* (Vice-Chair)
Stuart Hodges	Brenda Mobbs	David Roy
Richard Soulsby*	Dave Wilton* (Secretary)	Chris Woodrow (Treasurer)

*Those marked * will be due to stand down in rotation at the next AGM in October 2015.*

Any Other Business: Jim made an appeal for help with reviewing the end-of-year accounts, something which Chris Woodrow had found more and more difficult to organise over the past few years. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.30pm.

Members' Day 25 October 2014, Amersham Community Centre Gerry Kendall

The Butterfly Season has run late this year and there must still have been a chance of a late Clouded Yellow on the lovely sunny Saturday selected for the 2014 Members' Day meeting of the Upper Thames Branch (UTB) of Butterfly Conservation. Nevertheless Amersham Community Centre was packed and there was a breathless hush as the Branch Chairman, Jim Asher, rose to speak. Actually, "breathless hush" is overdoing it, but the hubbub diminished a little.

Jim's first task was to introduce Jan Haseler who reviewed the moths seen in 2014. Temperatures had generally been pretty good; many species had emerged earlier than usual and some had, unlike normal years, produced a second generation. Rainfall over the year had been pretty typical but we had, who can forget it, opened the year with floods which had severely dented the numbers of some species, particularly those whose caterpillars overwinter in the soil.

Inevitably, some moths had done well and others badly. Of the more showy species, the spectacular Clifden Nonpareil seemed to be spreading north from its established area along the South Coast. The equally attractive Jersey Tiger is doing very well in the Henley area and had been the subject of an article in the local press.

There had been a number of firsts for our area or at least for one of the three counties. The Toadflax Brocade was first seen in the UK in the 1950s, but had taken until this year to reach Oxon. The aptly named Splendid Brocade was also new to the three counties; even those generally unexcited by moths would be intrigued to learn that it has hairy eyes. Tony Rayner was fortunate to find an Old Lady moth sheltering in his vintage Massey Ferguson Bailer when he was doing some routine lubrication.

Nick Bowles's task was to review butterflies sightings for the year. He started by warning us that the UTB area is not a single homogenous entity and that those from different places would have different perspectives. So it proved, and there were some lively disagreements. Generally, species which had done badly in one area had done well elsewhere, but there were some reasons to be hopeful. For example Green Hairstreak and Silver Studded Blue both seemed to be



Clifden Nonpareil *Marc Botham*



Toadflax Brocade *Adam Hartley*

expanding their ranges.

Colonisation by new species is always very exciting and caterpillars of the continental race of the Swallowtail had been found in Bucks. They had pupated and adults had emerged so it can be said that the species bred. These may have originated from butterflies released at weddings or funerals, but similar sightings on the South Coast probably involved insects which had crossed the Channel under their own steam. Our swallowtail is a finicky feeder but caterpillars of the continental race are prepared to eat fennel and wild carrot and there would seem to be no reason why they should not establish themselves.



(Continental) Swallowtail

There was one significant development. The Duke of Burgundy, one of the region's most critical species is to have a professional Project Officer. Sarah Meredith will be trying to improve the fortunes of this species using funding from a legacy to Butterfly Conservation.

Tony Gillie reviewed the status of the UTB reserve at Holtspur Bottom, a 10 acre chalk grassland site near Beaconsfield. The reserve supports a good range of butterflies including two which have colonised during UTB's management: Chalkhill Blue and Dingy Skipper. There is also the nationally rare Striped Lychnis moth. Its beautiful caterpillar feeds on dark mullein and pictures of the one munching the other were shown more than once during the day. Surveys of the plants and of the other invertebrates are under way. Publicity and outreach projects have been intense on this reserve and have born fruit. It was particularly impressive that volunteers had spent 200 hours pulling ragwort, that bane of grazing meadows.

Michael Pocock from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Wallingford gave a talk about the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM). This has been introduced to the UK several times in recent years, it is thought on imported oak trees (Why can't we grow our own oak trees for goodness sake?). It is of concern partly because of the defoliation of the oaks, but also because its hairs can cause severe rashes and also breathing problems. There had been an attempt to eradicate the invader in the Pangbourne area but it was judged impossible to eradicate its largest outbreak in West London. Counter measures were aimed only at slowing the spread.

Michael discussed the question of whether amateur moth trappers could help identify outbreaks of OPM. The answer seemed to be that if OPM were found in an area which had been thought to be free it was a danger sign. But failure to find the moth did not mean that the area was clear. Presumably, like some other moths, the OPM is just not very good at finding its way to light traps.

Michael also spoke about "Citizen Science". This is sometimes trumpeted by politicians as a new idea, but Michael pointed out that volunteers have been recording animal and plant species since the sixteenth century and the database

held at CEH is enormous with, for example records of 11 million macro moths, nearly all from amateurs.

Michael had been particularly involved in “Conker Tree Science”, monitoring the Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner Moth and its parasitic wasps. 18,000 members of the public had submitted more than 10,000 data points. From these it was possible to see that this tiny moth (smaller than a grain of rice) had been spreading at about 25 miles a year. It seemed certain that inadvertent human help lay behind this enormous rate of expansion. If an infected leaf was stored in a plastic bag for a couple of weeks, the moths would emerge into the bag. But as well as the moths, there were likely to be parasitoid wasps. “Parasites” live on their host and may damage it, but they kill it infrequently and by miscalculation rather than design. “Parasitoid” implies that the eggs are laid inside the host, which is consumed from within and inevitably dies.

An extra item appeared on the agenda when Jim Asher made a special presentation to Maureen Cross who was stepping down after 25 years as editor of the UTB Newsletter. Jim drew especial attention to her calmness, patience and skill in dealing with supposed contributors who regarded the final deadline as an indication that they should start drafting before too long (Thanks, Maureen). Maureen is also, of course, Species Champion for the Adonis Blue and she was presented with a superb painting by Richard Lewington showing various stages and varieties of Adonis Blue on a background of Lardon Chase. Something to give you hope and optimism on a cold wet winter night.

The AGM followed the lunch break. There is a separate account of the AGM but we can't overlook one snippet from the Chairman's report. 2014 was the last year of the five-yearly mapping cycle. In this single year the number of mapping observations increased from 71,000 to 123,000 and, just as significantly, now covered all the tetrads (2x2 km squares) in the three counties. But don't rest on your laurels: the next mapping cycle starts on 1 January.

Jim thanked all those who had sent in records. He drew particular attention to the outstanding contributions from Wendy Wilson, John Lepiniere and Una Fenton.

But the Branch also depends on many other volunteers. Jim also thanked all those involved in the Field Trip Programme, especially Paul Bowyer (the organiser) and those involved in the Work Parties and in the management of Holtspur Bottom.

Jim is moving on to become Chair of Butterfly Conservation nationally in succession to David Dennis. He will continue to be active locally (keep the records flowing) but is stepping down as Chair of UTB and from the UTB committee. He was thanked for his outstanding efforts over many years. Nick Bowles and Grahame Hawker (Chair and Vice-Chair) have had high standards set for them.

Matthew Oates spoke most informatively and entertainingly about the Purple Emperor. This is the largest of our butterflies and exceptionally attractive when the light catches its wings just right. It is probably not as rare as it sometimes seems. The problem is that it frequents the canopy and tends to spend a lot of time just sitting. However, the males are very combative when holding territories and will take flight to see off other males. In fact they will also try to see off birds and not

just small ones like blue tits; Matthew had seen them taking on kites and buzzards, if not always with success.

Matthew suggested that one of the best ways of observing the Emperor was to abandon attempts to see it from the ground and to drive gently along the rides on the platform of a cherry picker. Not only are you at the right height, the males will come to you; a cherry picker is not too big for them to attack.

Matthew also had a fascinating account of the lifecycle of this butterfly. The eggs tend to be laid on soft, midgreen and dull leaves in a shady spot. The caterpillars moult a couple of times and then hibernate over winter before completing their development the next year. Incredibly it seems that the caterpillars sometimes move from one tree to another over the winter.

Martin Kincaid spoke about Hairstreaks in Milton Keynes. His title promised White letter Hairstreaks, but Black featured significantly as well and Purple also got in on the act. The stereotype of Milton Keynes may sound unpromising for butterflies but over a fifth of its area is public open space. This is often in the form of long thin edges, but this need not be a serious handicap for some of the hairstreaks.



White-letter Hairstreak

With colleagues Martin had picked out 20 sites where White-Letter Hairstreak had been seen in the past or which otherwise looked promising. They had eventually found the butterfly on 16 of them, albeit in ones and twos rather than in large numbers.

They had also found the rare Black Hairstreak, notably in Howe Park Wood. This is a significant achievement because the butterfly had not been recorded at all in this area over the previous ten years. The Parks Trust in MK is now undertaking habitat management to encourage hairstreaks and, in particular, is planting resistant types of elm. He finished with the observation that Purple Hairstreak is a notoriously under-recorded species but he firmly believed that the White-letter was just as difficult.

The Photography Competition will have a separate account. All I can say is that the standard was so high that I was tempted to boot my camera into the long grass.

The Quiz is a firmly established part of Members' Day. This year it was less fiendish than sometimes and the "Which Butterfly do the following pictures suggest?" section was kind to beginners.

The Chairman rounded off the day by thanking those who had worked so hard and effectively to make it a success. Brenda Mobbs and Wendy Wilson had organised the main event. The Photography competition had been run by David Dennis, Pete Thompson and Tony Rayner. Tony and Marion Gillie had been responsible for the Quiz and for a good deal else.

The food was donated by members and organised by Gillian Oldfield, Margaret Price and Una Fenton. I was helping myself to lunch next to a member who is

active in Butterfly Conservation nationally. "UTB lunch is the best on the circuit" he said. Nobody would disagree.

The day is completed by our exhibitors. Richard Lewington's paintings and prints threaten to cover every spare inch of your walls and Pemberley Books will overflow your shelves. And we also had our own UTB displays of habitats and reserves in our area.

Family Easter Egg hunt

10th April 14.30 - 16.30

Otmoor RSPB reserve

FREE EVENT

Come and help us hunt for eggs - not chocolate eggs, butterfly eggs. We will show your family how to find the eggs of the rare and beautiful Brown Hairstreak butterfly and award small prizes to the children that manage to find three eggs (under guidance by the event's leaders).

Adults may bring no more than three children to supervise please, and if possible each child needs a magnifying glass. Everybody needs clothing suitable for the probably muddy and possibly chilly conditions.

Once we have rediscovered some eggs that are being studied to see how they make progress from egg to butterfly, we will search an area of hedgerow for previously undiscovered eggs, helping us to understand more about this rare butterfly and its colony at Otmoor RSPB reserve.

Sorry, limited numbers so please book in advance - nick.bowles@ntlworld.com

Upper Thames Branch Website

www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Have your butterfly sightings and photos posted on the website by sending them to: wendy.campbell@tiscali.co.uk

Upper Thames Branch Moth Sightings Blog

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

Follow us on Facebook

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

Diary date

Saturday 31st October 2015 - Upper Thames Branch Members' Day and AGM 2015

Our annual Members' Day and AGM will take place on Saturday 31st October 2015 at St Peter's Church Hall, Earley, Berks RG6 1EY.

The Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) in the Upper Thames Region 2004 - 2013. Part 2: behaviour Dennis Dell

Prologue

Close encounters of a third kind. Allen Beechey's report from Oakley Wood, 8/7/2005:

"A woman walked from her car to me (at junc. of CP path and main ride) with a PE on her hand. She said that it was feeding on her car roof. PE remained on her hand for 6 minutes, in which time I photographed it. Then she transferred the PE to my hand. PE stayed on my hand for 10 more minutes (feeding on salts) before flying off and circling me once before flying to ride side Hazel (W side of ride) and perching for next 5 minutes (12ft up). At this point this individual was witnessed by Becky.



Woodell. PE then flew off over the back of the hazel before reappearing and gliding low, along the ride and settling on the ride briefly (walking whilst probing ground for salts). The PE then flew to grass (about 10ft flight) and then onto my rucksack, climbing inside the top pocket. PE then flew around me before landing on my leg. PE finally flew off up into Oaks (between main ride and car park) on East side of ride".

From Andy Reynolds, 25/7/2006, administering the last rites:

"On his last legs and raggedy. Sitting on the parched ride, he remained there as I sat down next to him. I poured a wee puddle of water from which he drank."

Introduction

Part I dealt with our observations over this 10 year period. Part II deals with the qualitative aspects of behaviour/ecology.

I started Part I with a poem and here is another one from the poet Crabbe [1754-1832], which alludes to the strong tradition of Natural History that existed among the London weavers.

*"There is my friend the Weaver; strong desires
Reign in his breast, 'tis beauty he admires:
See! to the shady grove he wings his way,
And feels in hope the raptures of the day-
Eager he looks; and soon to glad his eyes,
From the sweet bower, by nature formed arise*



*Bright troops of virgin moths and butterflies;
Who broke that morning from their half year's sleep,
To fly o'er flowers where they were wont to creep.
Above the sovereign oak, a sovereign skims,
The Purple Emp'ror, strong in wing and limbs;
He fears no bailiff's wrath, no baron's blame,
His is untaxed and undisputed game.
No less the place of curious plant he knows,
He both his Fauna and his Flora shows."*



If any of you could explain to me the meaning of the last two lines, I'd be grateful!

This part is divided into four sections:

1. Habitats
2. Territories and behaviour within habitats
3. Feeding
- 4 Activity

The earlier stages are not dealt with at all; this would make the article too long.

Acknowledgements

Wendy and Mick Campbell have been the most enthusiastic and active observers of iris over these last 10 years. This article includes their comments as a result of their experiences, and I am grateful to them for their efforts. Most winters, they explore new woods to assess their suitability, and this has allowed them to discover new iris habitats almost every year.

In part I, I acknowledged the contributions of Matthew Oates, Neil Hume and Ken Willmott to the overall understanding of this species. Elizabeth Goodyear and Andrew Middleton of Herts and Middlesex Branch have also made outstanding contributions. I commend their latest publication in the journal 'Dispar': Eastern Region report for 2014, at <http://www.dispar.org/reference.php?id=91>.

1. Habitats

This was dealt with in Part I. Some further details are added here.

1.1 Away from woods

That HIM is essentially an insect of forests and woodlands is not in dispute. What is becoming increasingly clear, however, is that it is certainly not only confined to such habitats. Not only from Upper Thames, but from other regions too, evidence has been accumulating of this species appearing away from woodlands and in more open habitats. The question arises as to whether HIM (= **His Imperial Majesty: ed**) is breeding in such areas and is capable of maintaining a long term presence there. It is worth listing the 32 non-woodland observations from the last 10 years. With a few exceptions, all of these sightings were not more than 1km from woodland.

The two highlighted in red are particularly interesting. The tree nursery is in

north Oxfordshire, and the nearest wood where *iris* has been seen is 5km away. The supermarket is in Earley near Reading in a built up area. The nearest woods are 1.3km away, and *iris* would have had to cross the River Loddon and the M4 to get to this supermarket.

From other regions, notably Sussex, Matthew Oates and Neil Hulme report the presence of *iris* in several spots along the crest of the South Downs. Most interestingly, a very large area, consisting of former arable fields with scattered Oaks along old field margins and small copses supports the second largest population in the UK.

Iris sightings away from woods and forests

Habitat type	Number of observations	Distance from nearest wood	Comments
private garden	14	0.5 to 1km	
golf course	3	0 to 0.5km	
middle of village	3	1km	
BBOWT reserve	3	0.3 to 1.5km	2 are bog/heathland, one is rough grassland/scrub
farmyard	2	0.2 to 0.5km	
unimproved grassland	1	0.5km	
parkland	1	0.5km	National Trust
wall of public house	1	0.3km	
tree nursery	1	5km	
inside a conference building	1	1.0km	
path through reservoir	1	1.3km	
supermarket car park	1	1.3km	

1.2 Points of observation

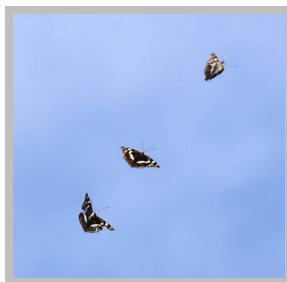
Clearly, we spend our time looking for *iris* from accessible areas, which are rides and woodland margins. Because of this, we have no idea of how *iris* is distributed throughout a wood. It may well be that this species is distributed fairly evenly

throughout a wood. To research this, we would need to climb a cherry picker to points above the canopy, and repeat this throughout a wood: a daunting and expensive project. We have one record of *iris* in a dense part of Waterperry Wood. Part of a transect walk goes through a dense part; a male was observed at the base of an Ash here, crawling onto faeces.

2. Territories and behaviour within habitats

1. Territories

A great deal has been written and discussed concerning the territorial behaviour of the male. If we define territorial behaviour as the congregation of males, year after year, around the crowns of groups of trees at the high point of woods, we have very few examples of this from our region. In fact, there are only two woods where we notice this regularly. In Little Wood, which is on a steep slope, we always see activity at the top of this slope around the crown of a huge Ash and the neighbouring birch trees. In neighbouring Piddington Wood, at a high point in one corner, we also see males every year around the dominant Oaks and Ashes along this high edge. We have observed *iris* at high points in other woods, but there has not been continuous occupation from year to year.



There are places in other woods where we can rely on seeing several males most years, but, interestingly, these are not woods with notable high spots. In these 'flat' woods, *iris* congregates around groups of the tallest trees, typically, pines and poplars. This is a strategy that probably allows them to spot females at a distance. In Waterperry Wood, there is a place along the main north-south ride where several males are seen most years over a few days. There is nothing that seems to make this spot more favourable than others along this ride: there are some big old Sallows and some tall poplars, but we can find this feature along the length of this ride. So what makes this spot so special? In neighbouring Oakley Wood, from the car park down along the main ride we see a lot of activity every year, but it is not, mainly, tree top activity. The area of the car park up to the road boundary is certainly the highest point in the wood, but only once have we seen several males around the tops of the Oaks here. We thought that we had found a territory, but this behaviour has never been repeated in subsequent years.

Between 30 and 40 years ago, a reliable territory was a group of Oaks on the edge of a car park at Hell Coppice, at the southern end of Bernwood Forest. This is not a high spot. *Iris* deserted this territory a long time ago, and more were then seen in the Oakley Wood car park at the northern end. One possibility may lie in the attraction cars have for *iris*. The Hell Coppice car park was closed, and the Oakley Wood car park was opened, maybe causing a 'migration' of *iris* northwards through the wood.

2. Typical behaviour within woods

We note two major activities: arboreal and low flights.

a) Arboreal.

Apart from territorial behaviour, discussed above, *iris* spends a lot of time flying rapidly around the trees below the crown, flying from tree to tree along a ride. The term 'oak edging' has been coined for this activity, and it is thought that males are looking for females. Even more time is spent perching, in which the males alight on leaves, quite high up, facing outwards towards a ride. This is considered as an alternative to oak edging as a strategy to look for females. Several observers, having spotted *iris* 'on perch', note that he can stay there for hours at a time without taking to the wing. When he eventually does take flight, if he is alone, he indulges in short, elegant, gliding flights across canopies, which often last only a few seconds. If, however, there is another male on territory, then they will engage each other in fierce aerial battles in which they soar to great heights together, almost disappearing from view, before they eventually return to their perches. These aggressive males will even chase birds and dragonflies if they enter their territory. On one occasion, a male was seen chasing a red kite!

It has been stated that Oak is the preferred perching and display tree. That may be the case generally but in our region Ash seems to be just as popular. Perching has been observed on most deciduous trees but what is particularly interesting is that we have also observed activity around and on Corsican and Scots pines.

b) Low flights

Iris engages in low skimming flights along a ride, often landing. This is not associated with any particular time of the day, although before midday is probably the best time. This may be observed along gravelled rides where there is no vegetation, e.g., in Bernwood Forest. In woods where the rides are grassy, low flights are not common. The possible reasons may be found under the paragraph entitled 'feeding habits'.

c) Foreign objects

Iris has a penchant for man made objects within a wood. Cars are particularly popular. Maybe it is the warmth on the metal surface which is the attraction; they often can be seen probing the metal surface with their proboscis. They have been found inside cars if a window is left open. Buildings within woods are also a good place to look. There are many instances of *iris* of circling and landing on people, on their clothes and skin.

d) Activity flurries

We have often noticed sudden bursts of activity, when several will be seen oak edging at the same time, or else skimming up and down a ride. This can last several minutes. This is best observed along the long ride which runs through Bernwood from Oakley car park to the Shabbington turning circle. Observers, walking in the opposite direction to oneself, mention such activity further down the ride, but when we reach the spot, about 10 minutes later, often there is nothing to be seen. At peak season, there are often days of maximum activity, when people report larger than average numbers from different woods on the same day. One observer watched 8

to 10 individuals in 2010 flying at low level along a ride; after 30 minutes they suddenly dispersed and were not seen again at this spot on that day.

e] Female activity

Most of the comments above refer to males. The female generally emerges later than the male. The main female activity involves flights in and around Sallows, looking for suitable ovipositing sites. They are also seen flying low along woodland tracks, often drinking from muddy rides. They are easier to spot, because they tend not to fly high, and they often bask low down on the Sallows and deciduous trees. Courtship flights involving one or more males flying behind females have been observed on several occasions; chains of four males following one female, and six males following one female have been observed. Actual mating is rarely observed: we have only noted a few instances in our region.

3. Feeding

It is extremely unusual for *iris* to take nectar from flowers. We had one extraordinary event last summer. A female appeared in a member's Chinnor garden and proceeded to feed on buddleia for a long time: there is a photographic record. It reappeared on the following day and did the same. We also have a photo of a male nectaring on Self-Heal from Northants.

Although it spends a long time hidden in the tops of trees, we have only one record of feeding on aphid secretions [honeydew] on leaves. *Iris* will come to sap runs, and several members have observed this over the years. Perhaps the most remarkable example was in 2013, when over six days in early August, up to three females were seen at a large Oak knothole in Rushbeds Wood. Several observers saw this.

The main source of nutrition appears to be minerals from the ride surfaces and unknown sustenance from animal faeces. Dog faeces are very popular and *iris* will remain for a considerable time imbibing from this source. When it lands on human skin, the proboscis probes the surface, presumably taking salts. There are two records of *iris* coming to dog urine: one on a low Hosta leaf in a garden, used as a favoured spot for urinating by a small dog; the second was on wood chips which had been urinated on. We also have several records of *iris* being attracted to rubbish bins and bags of rubbish. Muddy ride surfaces are also used.

There is an unproven theory that males imbibe minerals from rides to build up their strength prior to mating.



4. Activity related to time of day and weather conditions

Since the vast majority of our recorders are looking from about 11 am until about 4 pm, we have accumulated little evidence relating to early morning or late afternoon activity. Observers from other regions maintain, that, on hot sunny days, the best time to look is from about 10.00 am until early afternoon, when activity dies off until early evening. We have recorded a number of sightings in overcast conditions with temperatures as low as 16 degrees. Strong wind does not always deter *iris* from flying. On one occasion, above the Oaks in Oakley Wood car park, we saw three or four individuals active under very windy conditions. The latest flight records we have are up to 18.40.

5. Conclusion

There is a great deal about the behaviour of this enigmatic butterfly which we still don't understand. We will continue to accumulate observations in the hope of unlocking the secrets of His Imperial Majesty.

New Members

Brenda Mobbs

Since the last newsletter 138 new members have joined and the membership is now over 1,300. This is a very good increase in the last few months. 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 the following new members who have joined since the last newsletter was published. All of you are welcome to join the work parties in the winter and field meetings in the spring and summer.

BERKSHIRE

Mrs T J Bennett	Burghfield Common, Reading
Miss N Robinson	Kingsclere, Newbury
Mr J Marshall & Ms J Hayden	Shaw, Newbury
Mr G Barker	Maidenhead
Mrs L Martin	Lower Earley, Reading
Miss L Stark	Caversham, Reading
Ms S Golinski	Forest Park, Bracknell
Mr A Tomczynski	Emmer Green, Reading
Ms G White	Wokingham
Mrs M Froud	Binfield, Bracknell
Miss K Ford	Wokingham
Mr & Mrs J Benford & Family	Theale, Reading
Mr C Falcous & Ms T Ringrose & Family	College Town, Sandhurst
Ms C Chauhaan	Woodley, Reading
Miss C Pettis	Shefford Woodlands, Hungerford
Mr J Ashford	Maidenhead
Miss N Youngs	Bracknell

Mr & Mrs A Sabri & Family
Mr & Mrs P Faithfull
Mr & Mrs Stonehill & Family
Mr & Mrs Z Sattar
Mr & Mrs P Illenden
Ms C Estrada
Mr & Mrs G Sandwell
Miss E Casey
Mr R Sandercock
Mrs A Whittle
Mr & Mrs P Faithfull
Mrs J Cockman
Miss S Jewer
Mrs M Slatter
Mrs L Chalmers
Mr M Why

Slough
Earley, Reading
Thatcham
Slough
Reading
Bracknell
Bracknell
Slough
Broad Street, Crowthorne
Caversham, Reading
Earley, Reading
Windsor
Reading
Streatley, Reading
Woodley, Reading
Bracknell

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Miss L Horsman
Mr & Mrs K Robson
Mr K Pickering
Mr & Mrs J Pettit
Mr & Mrs N Sweet
Miss L Manwaring
Ms G Spree
Ms M J Bailey
Mr A Crombet-Beel & Ms Z Halliday
Mrs S M Ward
Miss R Turner
Mr & Mrs R Lloyd & Family
Mr & Mrs T Kelly & Family
Mr S Taylor
Mr W Stephen
Miss M Tollerfield
Mr & Mrs L Onunekwu
Mrs P Cheyo
Dr L Caesar
Miss J Hunt
Mrs R Muller
Mr & Mrs A Mumford
Miss R Forsyth
Mr K Rajput
Mr R Tomlin
Mr K Wollington
Mrs S Cox
Mrs S Stacey
Mrs E Machell
Mr A Machell
Mr P Lund

Penn, High Wycombe
Eaglestone, Milton Keynes
Marlow
Long Crendon, Aylesbury
Marlow
Aylesbury
Amersham
Holtspur, Beaconsfield
Wolverton Mill, Milton Keynes
Little Hampden, Great Missenden
Seer Green, Beaconsfield
Aylesbury
Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes
Marlow
Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes
Amersham
Westcroft, Milton Keynes
Bancroft Park, Milton Keynes
Stone, Aylesbury
Haddenham, Aylesbury
Downs Barn, Milton Keynes
Taplow, Maidenhead
High Wycombe
Taplow, Maidenhead
Chesham
Bolbeck Park, Milton Keynes
Penn, High Wycombe
High Wycombe
Aylesbury
Aylesbury
Bancroft, Milton Keynes

Mr & Mrs A Mylles
Mrs J Allen
Mr J Ridgway
Mrs S Croxford
Mr M Greenwell
Mrs R Brooke

Haddenham, Aylesbury
Berryfields, Aylesbury
Walton Park, Milton Keynes
Monks Risborough
Woburn Sands
Drayton Beauchamp, Aylesbury

OXFORDSHIRE

Mrs C Westcott
Mr & Mrs T Corrie
Mr G Forde & Miss G Brown
Mrs J Hunt
Mr C & Miss J Stubberfield
Mr A & Mr T Clark
Miss R O'Reilly
Mr M P Brookes
Mr & Mrs P Blackman & Family
Mr & Mrs R Bennett
Mr M J Williamson
Mr & Mrs D Knight
Mr R Grant
Miss S Lavery
Mr N Wright
Mr & Mrs A Green
Miss J Kennett
Mr J Keyworth & Miss B Croker
Miss E Jenkins
Mr D Walker & Miss L Clarke
Mr D Guyoncourt
Miss V Jefferson
Mr & Mrs J White & Family
Mrs S M Paice
Miss R Bowden
Mrs P Green
Miss S Hatton
Miss G Allnatt
Mrs P Hughes
Mrs R Marffy
Mr J Gant
Mrs L Browne
Mrs J Wylie
Ms A Williams
Mr & Mrs A Buck & Family
Mr & Mrs W Orson
Mrs K Wareing

Headington, Oxford
Lower Heyford, Bicester
Wantage
Stonesfield, Witney
Charlbury, Chipping Norton
Banbury
Banbury
Long Wittenham, Abingdon
Didcot
Broughton, Banbury
Chipping Norton
Upper Brailes, Banbury
Cowley, Oxford
Henley-on-Thames
Cholsey, Wallingford
Chinnor
Faringdon
Abingdon
Tetsworth, Thame
Stanford in the Vale, Faringdon
Abingdon
Oxford
Appleton, Abingdon
Witney
Hambleden, Henley on Thames
Combe, Witney
Cholsey, Wallingford
Iffley, Oxford
Bicester
Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford
Bicester
Benson, Wallingford
Freeland, Witney
Charlton-on-Otmoor, Kidlington
Oxford
West Hanney, Wantage
Littlemore, Oxford

Conservation Work Parties

Much of our winter effort is at our own Holtspur Bottom reserve near Beaconsfield. We also work at Aston Upthorpe in Oxfordshire. You might combine a walk around the site with a brief session of work. Nobody has to work for the entire session. There are a variety of tasks and no great strength is required. Tools and full instructions are provided.

Please bring stout footwear, a drink and a snack.

All work parties start at 10.00 a.m. unless otherwise stated. At both sites we usually finish about 13.00 although in good weather conditions we may continue until about 14.00.

PLEASE, ALWAYS CONTACT THE TASK LEADER IN ADVANCE and check also for any updates on the branch website as details frequently change according to weather, number of volunteers, etc.

Holtspur Bottom:

Meeting Point SU918906; HP9 1BT

1 Mar 2015 (Sunday)

Tasks to be decided (Possibly will not run)

Nick Bowles 01442 382276

Aston Upthorpe:

Meeting Point SU550844

21 Feb 2015 (Saturday)

Scrub clearance

Jim Asher 01865 391727

Brown Hairstreak winter egg hunts

Anyone is very welcome to join us – no previous experience required! It would be useful to bring a hand lens (x10) or small magnifying glass but otherwise no equipment is needed. Please wear warm clothing and waterproof footwear. In the past the weather or other circumstances have very occasionally caused a search to be cancelled at the last minute, so if you do intend to join us:

please let Dave Wilton know by the evening before, preferably by e-mail to wilton@burnhamlodge.plus.com (otherwise via text or telephone to 07751 472004).

Where changes are known about in sufficient time, information will be posted on the branch website (<http://upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/>). Since publication of the last newsletter, details of one additional search have been confirmed (see below). Any others will be posted on the website.

Saturday 28th February: Bernwood Meadows, Bucks (10.30am – 1pm)

Meet in the main Oakley Wood car-park for Bernwood Forest (grid reference SP611116) off the road between Stanton St John and Oakley. We will walk from there to the meadows (the forest path is often quite muddy so wellies are recommended). There is a good deal of blackthorn to be searched so it would be helpful to have as many participants as possible!

Upper Thames Branch Conservation Review Day Dinton Pastures (Multiple Activity Centre) 28th March 2015

Doors open at 10.00 for drinks and biscuits

The day is for interested members to gather and DISCUSS.
There will be presentations but they are intended to fuel discussion.

This day is not intended simply to be of interest to the experts within the society, but also to allow any interested member to learn a little of our conservation work and have an input into the conversations that shape our future plans.

10.15 [Nick Bowles](#): introduction

10.20 [Ched George](#): The Duke in the Chilterns

10.40 [Sarah Meredith](#): Recovering the Duke

11.20 tea break

12.00 [Tony Gillie](#): The Striped Lychnis at Holtspur Bottom

12.25 [Martin Albertini](#): The Striped Lychnis

12.50 Lunchtime *please bring a packed lunch* drinks and biscuits provided

14.00 [Dennis Dell](#): Marsh Fritillary

14.30 [Nick Bowles](#): how transect walk data can inform dialogue with land managers

14.45 tea break

15.00 [Jim Asher](#): Last 15 years of data collected by UTB

15.30 [Grahame Hawker](#): closing remarks

Room to be vacated by 16.00

Directions:

By car: From junction 10 M4, take the A329(M) towards Reading. After one mile follow signs to Winnersh on the A329. After just over a mile turn left at Winnersh crossroads onto the B3030 to Twyford. The park is sign-posted on the left after one mile. For the MAC go past the entrance, take the next left along Sandford Lane. It is signposted after 400m.

By bus: Buses 128 and 129 between Reading and Wokingham run every hour except Sundays and stop near main entrance.

By train: The nearest train station is at Winnersh, which is a 10-15 minute walk from the Park. Walk out of the station and turn left, continue down this road until you go over a motorway bridge, then the Park is sign-posted on the left.

Cycle racks are provided in the Dragonfly café garden.

Field Meetings

Saturday 16th May 11.00am. Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks.

Mainly for Duke of Burgundy. Other spring butterflies will also be present. Some steep slopes and rabbit holes so please wear suitable footwear. Meet at NT car park for Ivinghoe Beacon (O/S map 165, SP963159). **Leader: Robin Carr, tel: 01296 625734**

Sunday 17th May 11.00am. Aston Upthorpe Downs, Oxon.

Spring butterflies including Dingy & Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreak. Steep chalk slopes. From the A417 a mile east of Blewbury, turn S along narrow lane opposite turning to Aston Upthorpe Village. Park by grain dryer half a mile along the lane. (O/S map 174, SU550844). **Leader: Gerry Kendall tel: 01865 245029.**

Saturday 23rd May 10.30am. Granglands NR, Lower Cadsden, Bucks

Spring butterflies on chalk downland with some steep slopes, so please wear suitable footwear. Parking by the roadside at the entrance to the National Trust's Pulpit Hill (O/S map 165, grid reference SP 832046). **Leader: Roger Kemp tel: 01296 748932**

Sunday 24th May 11.00am. Stonepit Field, Great Linford, Milton Keynes

An area of open grassland including a limestone scrape. A good locality for Small Blue and other more common grassland butterflies. Stonepit car park. (O/S map 152 grid reference SP845423) **Leader: Martin Kincaid tel: 01908 235362**

Saturday 30th May 10.30am. Lardon Chase, Streatley, Berks

A walk to see the Adonis Blue. Very steep slopes so please wear suitable footwear. Meet in the National Trust car park off the A4009 at the top of the hill out of Streatley. (O/S map 174, SU 583806). **Leader: Maureen Cross 01491 871239**

Sunday 31st May 10.30am. Hackpen Hill also known as Crowhole Bottom and the Devil's Punchbowl, Oxon. Spring butterflies and day flying moths including Wood Tiger moth. Steep slopes. Meet at the Sparsholt Firs car park on the B4001.(O/S map 174, SU 355847). **Leaders: Mike and Gillian Taylor tel: 01235 751646**

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01494 712486 bc.upperthames@gmail.com



Silver-studded Blue

Wendy Wilson

Winner of Digital Alteration category



Purple Hairstreak larva

Wendy Wilson

Winner of Immature Stages category



Black-veined White

Nigel Kiteley

Winner of Previous Winners category



Queen

Andrew Cornick

Winner of Overseas category