

Hairstreak

No 97

Autumn 2016



Butterfly
Conservation



Upper Thames
Branch



Looking at a Purple Emperor in Hell Coppice, Bernwood Forest
Tony Gillie



Oven Bottom

Tony Gillie

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

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

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Cover photo: Silver-spotted Skipper by Stephen Jones

Background: Stoke Common, Bucks

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)

As I write this, I'm afraid that the dominant topic in my thoughts is the woeful weather we suffered in June and early July. Of course, if we think it is bad, then imagine how much worse it is for butterflies and moths; unable to feed, mate and lay eggs because it is too cold or wet or too windy. Sadly, the unfavourable weather will have a negative impact on their survival prospects and only very high quality habitats can mitigate against that. So, please do everything you can to help make habitats near you not simply suitable but ideal for our beleaguered butterflies and moths. That includes in your garden. Both butterflies and moths need not only nectar as adults but also leaves to eat as larvae. Please bear that in mind when weeding. Many garden weeds are essential to the larvae of our favourite butterflies and moths. That reminds me to press you to send in reports for our Garden Survey as the season winds down.

Anyway, it is far from all gloom and doom. We had another excellent New Members Day to help welcome our newer members and this summer had the most field trips ever. Hopefully you got out to some near you? Thanks to all those that gave up their time to show you the wildlife at sites they cherish.

We also attended more shows of one type and another and we got some tremendous help from our members; only with your support can we attend anything like the number we currently do. Our biggest event of the year was four days at Countryfile Live where we met and had positive conversations with literally thousands of people. Thanks to the approximately 60 members that turned out as volunteers at various awareness raising events.

Conservation efforts don't stop in the summer and notable events included further planting of Elm trees for the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly, Dark Mullein for the Striped Lychnis moth and Horseshoe Vetch for the Chalkhill Blue and Dingy Skipper. At least the cool, wet weather was a blessing to the newly planted plants.

Various volunteers from UTB/BC, BBOWT and the National Trust helped out with Duke of Burgundy surveys and larvae collection to keep a small number safely for a release next spring and we were delighted that the patch of Network Rail land, adjacent to a small colony that was cleared in February, seems to have been utilised by the Duke within a few months. More than we dared hope for.

The committee are always looking ahead and so we have been planning the autumn Members' Day. There will be the usual high quality presentations and a brief AGM. If you wish to ask any questions of the committee the AGM is your chance, but please remember to submit them to the secretary (preferably two weeks) ahead of the day.

So a tremendous amount of work done by our members, all of which is very encouraging. Obviously we joined Butterfly Conservation to help butterflies and moths thrive, rather than struggle to survive, and with your work we are making a positive difference.

Butterfly Conservation - Upper Thames Branch

Members' Day & Annual General Meeting

Saturday 29th October
Parish Hall, Benson, Oxfordshire, OX10 6LZ

PROGRAMME

09:45	Doors Open - Registration and Coffee	
10:30	Introduction and Welcome	Nick Bowles
10:35	About the European Interest Group	Simon Spencer
10:45	Review of Upper Thames Moths in 2016	Marc Botham
11:05	Review of Upper Thames Butterflies in 2016	Nick Bowles
11:25	First adventures with UK moths	Vikki Rose
11:55	The Future for Butterflies, Moths and BC	Jim Asher
12:40	Lunch Vote in our annual photographic competition, have a go at the quiz, buy raffle tickets, and view the displays. Richard Lewington will be selling his artwork, and Pemberley Books will have a bookstall.	
14:10	BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Agenda <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Apologies for absence 2 Minutes of last AGM and matters arising 3 Chairman's Report 4 Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts 5 Election of Officers 6 Any Other (previously notified) Business 	
14:40	Holtspur Bottom Reserve – latest news	Tony Gillie
15:00	Modern Butterfly Mythology	Bernard Watts
15:45	Tea and raffle	
16:25	Photographic Competition Results	David Dennis
	Quiz results and winner	Marion Gillie
16:50	Round Up of the Day and Closing remarks	Nick Bowles

Members' Day Speakers

Dr Jim Asher is Chair of Butterfly Conservation, a BC Trustee, and a former Chair of UTB, as well as UTB butterfly recording co-ordinator. He will give us his views on how our butterflies and moths might fare in the future, and the role of Butterfly Conservation in ensuring that the outlook is as favourable as possible.

Dr Bernard Watts is on the Committee of the European Interest Group of BC and is the Conservation Officer for the Norfolk branch. Bernard has photographed nearly all of the European butterfly species and is the author of 'European Butterflies: A Portrait in Photographs', a work he is producing in parts. So far he has completed the Papilionids, Pierids and Lycaenids and is currently working on the Nymphalids. In his talk on Modern Butterfly Mythology he will explode some myths about butterfly identification and give some new tips.

Vikki Rose works as Global Environment Coordinator for OUP and is the Oxfordshire Moth Conservation officer for UTB. She became interested in moths last year after getting involved in the Oxford Moth project and (as you will see from her talk) that initial interest has spiraled!

Nick Bowles is Chair of Upper Thames Branch of BC. He is our Chalkhill Blue species champion and a voluntary Conservation Officer for Bucks. Nick is also a regular contributor to British Wildlife magazine.

Dr Simon Spencer is Chair of the European Interest Group of BC, which this year is holding its AGM in parallel with that of UTB. He will give a brief description of the history and aims of the EIG.

Dr Marc Botham of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in Wallingford processes the records from all the butterfly transects in the UK to determine trends in numbers and other important indicators of the status of our species. Marc is also a moth enthusiast, and regularly runs moth traps.

Dr Tony Gillie is a member of the Upper Thames BC committee and has been instrumental in a number of initiatives relating to our Holtspur Bottom reserve, including growing and planting Dark Mullein in the Holtspur area to support the nationally scarce Striped Lychnis moth.

Map & Directions to Benson Parish Hall, our venue for Members' Day

(O.S. maps 164 & 175, grid reference SU618920, postcode OX10 6LZ)

By road:

From **Oxford** direction, take A4074 and on outskirts of Benson turn left at a roundabout with a BP station. Take the next left (Littleworth Road) and turn left at the end into Sunnyside, then immediately right into the Parish Hall car park.

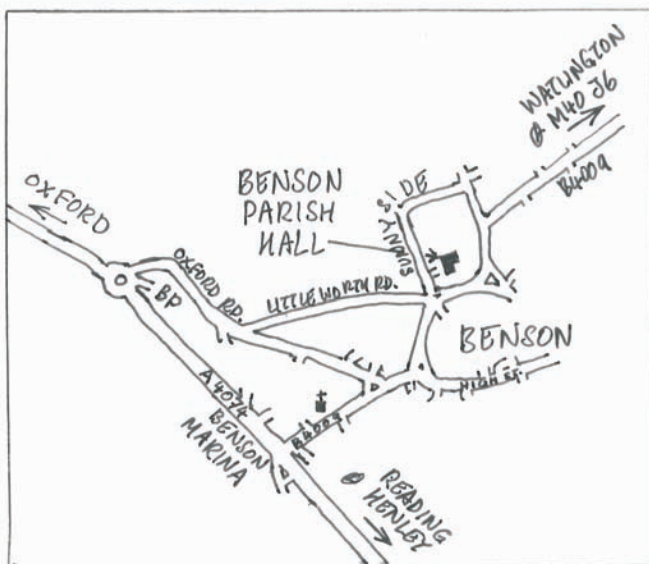
From **Reading** (A4074) or **Henley** (A4130) direction, at the roundabout near Crowmarsh Gifford, take the Oxford road (A4074) for 1.5 miles and turn right to Benson on the B4009 towards Watlington. Pass the church on left and at war memorial triangle, bear right then shortly bear left towards Watlington (B4009, signed to Parish Hall). After about 200m turn left into Sunnyside, crossing Littleworth Road, then immediately right into the Parish Hall car park.

From **Watlington** or **M40 J6**, take B4009 towards Benson. At outskirts of Benson, go through speed chicane, follow road round left and right bends, pass Parish Hall on your right, turn right into Sunnyside and immediately right into the Parish Hall car park.

By public transport:

From **Oxford**, buses X39 & X40 leave at 10 & 40 mins respectively past each hour (from 08:10 onwards) from stop H5 on St Aldates. Alight opposite Benson Marina at 35 or 05 mins respectively past the hour, and it's an eight-minute walk to the Parish Hall. Walk in Reading direction a few yards, turn left onto B4009 towards Watlington, and then follow instructions by road from Reading direction.

From **Reading**, buses X39 & X40 leave the Rail Station at 10 and 30 mins respectively past each hour (from 09:10 onwards). Alight at Benson Marina at 55 or 25 mins respectively past the hour, cross the road, and see instructions above.



Members' Day Photographic Competition

Saturday 29th October 2016

I guess we're now getting used to summers which require us to dodge rain showers in order to see and – if we're lucky – photograph our glorious butterflies and moths. Never mind, we've had to do this many times before and still produced images to delight the audience at Members' Day.

NOW! If you don't usually enter our Photo Competition, this next bit is for you!!

There will be an extra '**Newer Entrants**' category this year, reserved entirely for members who have never previously entered, or who have done so no more than twice before. Previous prize winners from any category are not eligible to compete in the New Entrants section. You might be a younger member just getting into butterfly photography, or a more experienced person who just needs a bit of extra encouragement! Entries in this category can be of either butterflies or moths, taken, in the wild, in the UK or overseas and at any stage of life from egg onwards.

As usual, there will be two parallel competitions, and the winners in each will be selected by popular vote:

Members' competition – open to members (apart from recent winners of the overall 'best in show' prize, who have been individually notified.)

You can enter a maximum of ten images across all categories, but in the case of UK Butterflies, it's now a maximum of just six (so look out your very best!).

There will be **six** categories, as shown below:

- 1. UK butterflies**
- 2. Overseas butterflies**
- 3. Moths**
- 4. Immature stages**
- 5. Newer Entrants** (new category – see above)

All photos entered for these first five categories should be **without digital alteration**. For this purpose, 'digital alteration' means making changes to the subject matter by digital means – such as removing or replacing parts of the image, deleting grass stems or blemishes. It does **not** preclude the use of cropping, brightness and contrast adjustments, or some degree of sharpening that happens anyway in most cameras and printers. All these are allowed.

6. Digital creativity

This is your opportunity to be really adventurous and show the beauty of our insects in a very different way. Alterations to lighting, colour and background – or the use of distortion, collage, superimposed images or anything else you can think of – are all

specifically encouraged in this category.

All Members' Competition prints should be a maximum of 19x13cm including mount.

There will be prizes for the most popular photos in each category, though only one prize per photographer, and an additional prize for 'best in show'. All photos entered should be prints, taken in the wild since last year's Members' Day. Please write the photographer's name and telephone number on the back, plus the category being entered. Mounting on card, and adding a title, can enhance any photo, but this is optional.

2. Recent Winners' Competition – open to recent winners of the overall 'best in show' prize.

Recent winners of the members' competition have put on an inspiring display in recent years, and we are asking each of them to contribute any 6 prints, preferably mounted on grey card, with an overall maximum size, including mount, of 30x25cm.

Finally, I would like to confirm that by entering our competitions, you are giving UTB permission to use (with acknowledgement) any of your images in our newsletters or electronic media.

So get your creative and technological juices flowing and help us to create an even better display than last year – in spite of the weather!!

Members' Day Lunch and Tea

Your food offerings are welcome!

In the hope that we can continue to feed everyone at lunchtime and teatime on Members' Day, I am asking again ALL members who are attending on the day to bring along a contribution. It can be either savoury or sweet. If possible, it would be helpful if you could let me know what you might bring during the week before the meeting. Also, if you could help behind the scenes, please do come and see us in the kitchen. I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you on the day.

Gillian Oldfield – 01993 891565 (all messages left on the answer-phone will be listened to!)

South East Region Action Plan

Steve Wheatley - Senior Regional Officer, South East

What butterfly and moth species are most in need of conservation action in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire? This is something I have been working on with the help of Branch members in the Upper Thames area and across the South East region. This review of Butterfly Conservation's Regional Action Plan is a great opportunity for us to check and refresh our priorities in terms of priority species and where we can most effectively put resources to save butterflies, moths and their habitats.

Thanks to the constant diligent work of Stuart Hodges as Coordinator for the Branch, the new Regional Action Plan for 2016 - 2025 is almost complete. The plan includes **seven** Top Priority butterfly species and **nine** Top Priority moths. The plan includes many other butterflies and moths of conservation concern.

The focus areas for conservation action have been identified based upon current range, areas of conservation concern and areas of potential. Sometimes this means that the priority area is not in the species stronghold but in an area where the species is struggling. These maps also show where developments can do the most damage to our rare and threatened species, e.g. HS2.

Wherever you live within the Branch area there will be a top priority species for conservation action. I'm planning to share lots more detail about species and actions over the coming 12 months and I'm sure you'll find the information fascinating. Hopefully it will inspire you to act.

A key ingredient to spotting the trends and the species of great conservation importance is the superb butterfly and moth recording carried out around the Branch and around the UK. Of all recorders, the transect recorders are some of the very best and most valuable butterfly counters. Their outstanding commitment to record butterflies every week of the summer and submit the data to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme has helped to produce one of the most accurate and valuable butterfly conservation tools anywhere in the world. Thank you to everyone who records butterflies and moths and submits their records to Butterfly Conservation or the County Recorder. This new Action Plan is turning your data into action in a new and powerful way.

We must now communicate our plan and priorities with others – individuals and organisations who can do good work with us or for us – Butterfly Conservation members, our conservation partners, local authorities including rail and highways; Parish Councils; even Members of Parliament should be made aware of what is most in need of conservation action in their constituencies. Butterfly Conservation has limited resources but, by sharing what's important and working with others, we can achieve a vast amount. The key is in getting our message out there.

It is going to be an important and interesting year where we inspire new and greater conservation around the Branch. Please do keep recording the butterflies you see as this will help us to feed back successes to everyone that helps in conserving

butterflies and moths.

The Action Plan's Highest priority Species for Conservation Action in Upper Thames area are:

Wood White
Marsh Fritillary
Duke of Burgundy
Brown Hairstreak
White-letter Hairstreak
Black Hairstreak
Silver-studded Blue

Forester
Drab Looper
Barberry Carpet
Sloe Carpet
Four-spotted
Striped Lychnis
Heart Moth
Pale Shining Brown
Silvery Arches



The Wood White is a species in serious trouble. 20 years ago it seemed to be expanding.

Nick Bowles



Paired Silver-studded Blues

Nick Bowles



Forester

Dave Wilton

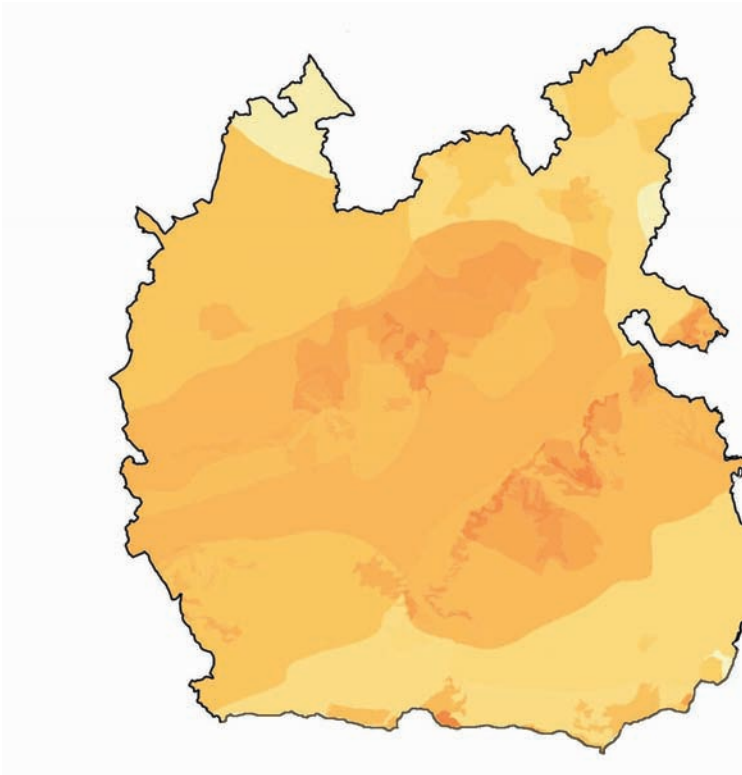


Four-spotted

David Ferguson

Comment by Nick Bowles:

Steve has created a plethora of maps showing to the smallest detail the distribution of these key species and pinpointing the priority species for all land managed with some wildlife objective. They also indicate which parcels of land surrounding those places could also support the species (given sympathetic management).



A map of our area shows (in dark colours the regions with the greatest concentrations of key butterfly species and in paler colours, those with least).

As in the recently published Atlas (Butterflies of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire) it is the members' recording of the populations of butterflies and moths that makes such work both possible and accurate.

It doesn't automatically follow that an area that is pale is less valuable. The heathland supporting Silver-studded Blue ranks highly in our conservation planning but holds few other priority species – see article on page 21.

A View from the Bridge

David Dennis reflects on his time on Council as trustee and Chair of BC

I didn't join BC over 20 years ago in order to become a trustee, let alone Chair – that was the last thing on my mind – and anyway I still had a pretty demanding full time job in HR management. No, I joined in order to find out where I could see butterflies at the weekend – in particular the rarer species that I never saw in my garden or local area. I had recently become a bit obsessed with photography, and that, combined with my childhood love of butterflies, led to an obvious hobby. One day, a 'eureka' moment arrived, and I suddenly knew that I wanted to photograph all of the British list, but I had no idea where most of them could be found! So £30 p.a. or so seemed a small price to pay for all that vital information.

As I started to get more involved, Nick Bowles assisted hugely with my butterfly education – he trained me in transect work and then encouraged me when I walked my own patches for several years. But it was only when I took early retirement in 2000 that I thought about giving something back for all the pleasure I had had from watching and photographing butterflies. I met Martin Warren, BC's Chief Executive at a meeting, told him of my work background and asked if I could be of any help. Before I knew it I was on my way to Lulworth to meet Julie Williams and other members of the team at Manor Yard.

What struck me there was exactly the same impression that I had gained from Nick and his colleagues in Upper Thames Branch. People who are interested in butterflies, either professionally or as volunteers, do seem to be very pleasant people to deal with! They're positive, friendly, not over-competitive, and, by and large, their egos are well under control!

So I was delighted to find that these very pleasant people also needed help in areas that I knew a bit about – personnel management, communication, policy development. I embarked upon a series of projects for Martin and Julie, and shortly afterwards they asked me to stand for election as a trustee.

At this point things got a bit more serious. Trustees are legally responsible for implementing all aspects of the charity's stated objects, for its fundraising policy – an area that has become a political hot potato in the last couple of years – and for the conduct of its staff and volunteers. But all this has to be achieved with co-operation, good humour and without looking or sounding too much like 'Big Brother'.

The trustees normally meet four times each year with the senior staff to decide on a whole range of strategic issues and to monitor BC's performance against its objectives. Raising the money we need has become more difficult than ever, as the economic recession and waves of government cuts have taken effect. A number of charities have gone to the wall, and the importance of good governance was highlighted last year with the sad, and sadly predictable demise of Kids Company.

In stark contrast, BC has managed, each year, to maintain and usually to increase its income, and therefore, its expenditure on conservation. Against the background of a long term decline of wildlife in the UK, BC's methods have been

stunningly successful for some of our rarest species. First of all, we've been meticulous in getting the science right, and then we've been very effective in persuading funders – including government – that we're worth supporting. This is all because BC is so well served by its conservation staff, who really do a fantastic job.

So in 2005, as a new trustee, I joined BC's Council, then chaired by Dudley Cheesman, also Chair of BC's Somerset Branch, who had a business as well as a conservation background. On his retirement, I became Vice-Chair and subsequently spent three years as Chair myself. I never sought the position, and Jim Asher, the present post-holder, will confirm that it is not a role for the faint-hearted. But there was a need for someone to hold the fort before Jim had the time to take over, and I hoped by then that I had something to contribute.

BC is unusual in having volunteer branches that operate independently in many ways, but that for financial and other reasons are all part of one charity. So all of us need to be governed by BC's Articles of Association and the Charity Commission's standards. Most of the time this operates seamlessly, because we all share the common goal of conserving butterflies and moths – staff value the huge contribution made by volunteers, and branches appreciate the professional help and support they get from staff.

But I did say, 'most of the time'. I don't think any organization with a central hub and a scattered network of local groups ever works without the wheels needing some oil from time to time. Staff and volunteers are equally responsible for doing their share of oiling, and the trustees have an important role here too.

Trustees also need to check that robust systems are in place to ensure financial stability and agree a succession plan for senior staff and trustees. The adoption of a nine year tenure limit for trustees has meant that Council has recently benefitted from new ideas and experience. And about half of our 15 trustees are BC volunteers, often Branch Chairs, so the volunteer perspective is well represented.

Looking back on my own nine years, I can't believe it went by so quickly, or that so much was achieved by BC in that time. Our membership more than doubled and continues to grow – it's now over 28,000 – and the Big Butterfly Count **has involved over 125,000 people, including many families, in recording butterflies and moths over the last five years.**

No Chair or trustee of BC can claim much credit for this. We may steer the ship, but the boilers are continually being stoked by an impressive combination of hard working staff and dedicated volunteers. Neither group has exclusive ownership of what we achieve as a charity, but together, in partnership, it's full steam ahead, as long as there's a drop of oil around!



A Heath Fritillary in Somerset, a species benefiting from the work of BC.

David Ferguson

Peacocks and Sunbitterns

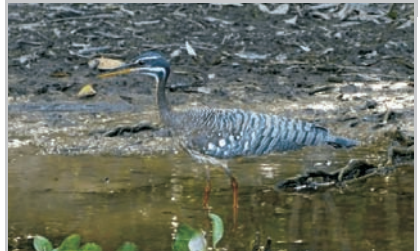
David Ferguson

With its startling eyes and maroon colour the Peacock butterfly is one of our most spectacular insects. Yet its underside is coal black. Why? Because it spends much of its adult life hibernating in dark corners where the black underside provides an almost perfect camouflage.

Not quite perfect though. Predators, such as mice, can find them, which is when the Peacock's eyes come in to play. A hibernating Peacock is in a kind of stand-by mode where its senses are not quite shut down. On the approach of a predator it flicks open its wings to reveal the brilliant eyes. This sudden change from potential meal to alarming owl-like threat is enough to send the predator into immediate retreat.

The Sunbittern is a small heron-like bird of Central and South America where it lives by rivers and lakes. This chosen habitat is often inhabited by dangerous predators such as caymans and crocodiles. There is also the matter of rivals, such as the larger herons. The Sunbittern is camouflaged in an intricate pattern of brown and cream and presents a rather inoffensive demeanour. However, the presence of food combined with a rival or a predator, produces a remarkable change in the bird's appearance. It does what the Peacock does. It flicks open its wings, which are much broader than you might think. On each wing is a large bright orange 'eye'. This sudden change from nothing very much to unimaginable horror is enough to put off even a crocodile.

Thus an insect and a bird have adopted the same tactic to ward off the unwelcome.



Rob Andrews

On the Trail of the Monarch

Chris Woodrow



I imagine that many of you will have seen films on TV of the annual migration of the Monarch butterflies from Canada to Mexico, and the incredible spectacle that produces.

A few years ago my wife and I endeavoured to witness this migration for ourselves, whilst on a visit to Canada. Having visited Niagara Falls, we headed south through Ontario Province to Point Pelee National Park, which is the southernmost point of mainland Canada, where it juts out into Lake Erie.

The Monarch uses Point Pelee as a staging post on its flight south, as a chance to refuel before making the lengthy flight across Lake Erie. We arrived at the National Park during the last week in September to be told by the Interpretation Centre staff that the Monarchs had just started to arrive. We set off along trails in the Park searching for butterflies, and it wasn't long before we saw any number of insects, but not the Monarch. However, further exploration brought us to a wide glade with lots of Michaelmas Daisy-like plants and nectaring on these flowers were Monarchs!



In this glade alone we counted 40 of these butterflies, admittedly not the vast numbers depicted in the TV films but many more than we had ever seen before. Much photography ensued as the Monarchs were engrossed in feeding and seemingly not bothered by my attempts at photographing them.

In the same glade were several other butterflies all busy nectaring, including a number of Sulphurs including at least one Pink-edged Sulphur (*Colias interior*). Whilst watching all this activity another butterfly flew past me and landed on a nearby conifer. I quickly brought the camera to bear on this insect which I did not

recognise, before it disappeared into the conifer foliage.

On our return to the Interpretation Centre later in the day, I showed my photo to the resident expert, who told me it was a Question Mark butterfly of the Angle Wing family, and that I had been very lucky to get a photograph as they are very elusive.

It had been a good day at Point Pelee, and we had seen a total of 60 Monarchs, but that was not the end of our sightings. Leaving Point Pelee we headed north along the coast to Hawk Cliff which is a regular haunt of birdwatchers looking for migrating birds. We were of course looking for migrating Monarchs, and we were not disappointed. While standing on the cliff edge at Hawk Cliff, we witnessed several Monarchs flying south with incredibly strong wing beats. Now, I have successfully photographed birds in flight but never before had the opportunity to photograph a butterfly flying overhead, but nevertheless I could not pass up the opportunity, and it proved successful even if the image was quite small due to the height at which the butterflies were flying. The whole day was a magical experience and one we hope to repeat one day.



Pink-edged Sulphur



Rare Admiral

On 12th July, Paul Lacey, a member of UTB, spotted an unusual butterfly flying in a ravine just below the road he was walking on. He was on a butterfly tour in the Spanish Pyrenees so there were plenty of options to choose from but these were quickly reduced by members of the tour to the emperor/admiral group and eventually to Southern White Admiral. It differed from a normal individual by having no white bands on the upperside and just a single broad white band on the underside of the hindwing close to the body. A trawl through the internet found it was the form *pytonisa* (Millière, 1859) which was first recorded in Spain in 1998. It is the equivalent to the aberration *nigrina* of the White Admiral and *iole* of the Purple Emperor.

David Ferguson



David Ferguson

Chiltern Rangers and UTB Butterfly Conservation

Alex Harley and John Shaw

We have been working with Nick Bowles, Ched George, Tony Gillie, Brenda Mobbs and others in the UTB team since we emerged from our Wycombe District Council chrysalis in Sept 2013 as a beautiful (?) Chiltern Rangers butterfly!

We have helped in a range of ways; firstly at the Holtspur Bottom reserve – with tasks such as creating a scrape, helping put down the mesh for vehicle access, brush cutting & scrub bashing on Triangle Bank, planting Dark Mullein, cutting the perimeter paths and a personal favourite - controlling Ragwort! We were delighted to discover some magnificent Bee Orchids in summer 2014 during some of this work – the perfect reward.

We have brought well over 100 volunteers along to help us, giving in excess of 600 hours of input to the site. I'm sure you'll agree the site is going from strength to strength and we are proud of the small part we have played in that. We have also helped on a number of other BC projects, notably to help the Duke of Burgundy in the Chilterns at several sites in the Radnage/Bledlow/Saunderton area – again getting a number of volunteers and businesses to help us. We have also had students from Berkshire College of Agriculture's conservation course along too – it's so important that we give them opportunities to make a difference and get inspired first hand.

We often liaise with Nick and others for input & advice on specific projects we are involved with and also make sure we join up where possible, for example planting Dark Mullein on one of our reserves in High Wycombe. Recently we enjoyed a busy afternoon at Highcrest Academy's careers fair where we were fortunately next to Dennis Dell and we were able to talk to the pupils about the Purple Emperor as well as careers in chemistry and the outdoors!

Chiltern Rangers are involved in the management of over 40 sites in the Chilterns including Penn Wood with the Woodland Trust and with UTB BC. We always have an eye on improving the sites for butterflies wherever possible. Often the work we do is of real significance for butterflies and moths: coppicing, scrub bashing, tackling invasives, thinning, path and glade widening/improvements – often the bits that Forestry operations can miss or are not economically viable but are still really important for a range of wildlife.

We are about to do some replanting in the edge of Keep Hill Wood in Wycombe and we're planting a number of Wych Elm with the Hazel to help improve the fortunes of White-letter Hairstreak. As this coppice coupe or area grows up it will become great for nesting birds before we coppice it again in about 8 – 10 years time. We will be planting more Wych Elm in the area as appropriate in the coming years.

We are always keen for extra helpers on our Green Thursday Conservation volunteer team as well as other events, so if you have a few hours please join us. Much of the work we do will be helping butterflies and moths in the area. We meet at 10am each week in the Rye Car Park in High Wycombe – free return minibus

transport provided from the Rye. Check out our Facebook, Twitter or website for more details.

The best bit about the work we do with UTB is the fact that it is a genuine two – way partnership. We really enjoy working with UTB volunteers at whichever site to help increase our joint impact – we are delighted to share, like and re-tweet info and articles on social media and that effort is reciprocated by Tony Gillie so we help each other in a virtual world too. This is so important in our busy modern lives and a key way to engage young people. So a BIG thank you to all those mentioned and those inevitably I have missed – apologies. We look forward to working with you helping butterflies, moths, and the habitats which support them throughout the Chilterns.



Working at Wardrobes, near Princes Risborough, Bucks

Use of alternative foodplants by the Brown Hairstreak

Dave Wilton

Unlike in Europe where various species of *Prunus* are employed, in Britain the adult female Brown Hairstreak is understood to lay her eggs almost exclusively on **Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)** although Thomas and Lewington in “*The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland*” acknowledge that very occasionally **Bullace (*Prunus domestica insititia* var. *nigra*)** may also be used.

Our local Brown Hairstreak colony seems to thrive just as well in the urban areas of Bicester and Oxford as it does in the wider countryside. In built-up areas there is often significantly less Blackthorn available and there have often been suggestions that it may be using other cultivated varieties of *Prunus* which are more likely to be found in gardens. During October and November 2015 an opportunity arose to put this to the test because Steve Woolliams, an Oxford resident and one of our small band of regular winter egg searchers, also runs his own horticultural business. Steve looked at any *Prunus* species which he found while working in gardens in east Oxford. This resulted in Brown Hairstreak eggs being discovered on the following in addition to Blackthorn:

Apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*)

Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*)

Plum (*Prunus domestica domestica*)

Damson (*Prunus domestica insititia*)

Greengage (*Prunus domestica italica*)

Spurred on by these discoveries, on 26th November Wendy Wilson and Becky Woodell found eggs on **Almond (*Prunus dulcis*)** at Waterperry Gardens, which lies between Oxford and Thame. The Apricot and Almond discoveries were on trees which had been fan-trained against a south-facing wall. Fan-training aims to provide a continuous supply of new stems to replace older ones, something which would be quite attractive to the butterfly as it prefers young growth.

Steve points out that it can occasionally be difficult to differentiate between the various *Prunus* species and in some cases he found eggs on suckers which may actually have been from a rootstock different to the fruiting tree onto which it will have been grafted. However, it does appear that the butterfly will readily accept almost any available *Prunus* species wherever suitable Blackthorn is in short supply, especially in built-up areas. The find at Waterperry Gardens is interesting in that it is well away from the urban environment but, unlike its immediate surroundings, this fairly extensive site contains little, if any, Blackthorn.



Becky pointing to an egg

Heathland Management and Conservation in SE Berkshire Des Sussex

The maps for the Grayling and Silver-studded Blue in the UTB Atlas show a very limited distribution for these two species in our three counties. The south-east corner of Berkshire (generally south of Ascot, Bracknell and Crowthorne) has some of the larger heathy sites that support the species, or have the potential to be restored and re-colonised. As with many of our specialist butterflies, these two do have rather exacting requirements and have suffered habitat losses for various well documented reasons. However there is a lot of positive habitat management, restoration and re-creation going on which should benefit these and other threatened insects.

One of the threats to both species is a lack of habitat management – they both thrive where the heath land vegetation is fairly short and open. The focus of much heathland management used to just rely on scrub removal – pine and birch grow like ‘mustard and cress’ on many sites and it is an important and ongoing requirement to control the scrub. In recent years there has been an increased effort by many land managers to add structural diversity to the heathland, creating a mosaic of short, medium and tall stands of heather. This is very important for our priority butterflies which depend on the pioneer (about ankle height) phases of the heathland habitat.

Some of the management now being routinely used to create and maintain a regular supply of bare ground and pioneer vegetation are:

- Grazing – usually by traditional breeds of cattle like Dexter, Highland and Belted Galloway. Goats and ponies are sometimes used, and just over the border in Surrey, Red Deer are being trialed at a large site with very promising early results.
- Mowing – preferably with collection of the cuttings. This can be very effective but is labour intensive. Tractors and strimmers are used to create mown patches of various sizes. Firebreaks, mown every year or two, are important at some sites and are often used by specialist insects like the Silver-studded Blue.
- Turf stripping – this removes the top skin of vegetation and leaves bare sandy ground. This is of great value to the Grayling, especially if colonised by the fine leaved grasses that they depend on. The bare patches are used by many uncommon burrowing insects such as beetles, solitary wasps and bees – many of these predate or parasitize our moth caterpillars, but that’s biodiversity for you! Fires can sometimes revert the vegetation back to a pioneer phase of benefit to



Male Silver-studded Blue on
Cross-leaved Heath at the
damp heath in Wildmoor
Heath NR.

Silver-studded Blues, but sadly most fires in the area are wildfires during the Spring and Summer, and are usually damaging to much wildlife. Not many managers use controlled winter burning as a management tool nowadays, and it is unlikely to be adopted as a deliberate management tool at many sites.

Some of the major landowners and habitat managers in SE Berkshire include the MoD, Forestry Commission, Crown Estate, BBOWT and Surrey Wildlife Trust. The MoD have 'Conservation Groups' with representatives of nature conservation groups, and this helps to ensure that our rarer flora and fauna are considered in the site management plans. Butterfly Conservation and its local branches like UTB have a vital role to play. As well as providing advice, volunteer recording and monitoring (as detailed in the UTB atlas) it helps to inform the responses of the species to management, and the excellent species factsheets produced by BC nationally are invaluable in helping to inform site managers about the requirements of these species.

Here are a few other examples of work that has been of benefit to heathland butterflies:

- Heathland restoration at Caesar's Camp south of Bracknell. The mature crop of pine trees were harvested in the 90's, and instead of re-planting timber trees, the area was reverted to semi-natural habitats and has become a very useful heathland habitat. This is a good site for Grayling.
- Creation of wide sunny habitat corridors through forestry plantations. Many of the rides have heathers and heathy grasses and flowers; they provide habitat suitable for colonisation, and also serve as corridors for dispersal through the extensive forests. Improved ride mowing regimes will provide increased flowers in the summer, and areas will be left uncut for winter cover and hibernation. A new water main has recently been put through one area of commercial forestry. The restored ground has been sown with heathers and fine grasses – the seed was taken from a nearby SSSI which supports Grayling and Silver-studded Blue. This will create a wide habitat corridor through about 4km of forestry, and it will be interesting to see if it is used by key species.

Much of the habitat work receives a lot of public funding through grants such as the Environmental Stewardship scheme. The habitats support many rare and special wildlife species. Common Heath moths are often abundant, and other day flying moths you may see include Clouded Buff, Orange Underwing, Emperor and Fox Moth – the caterpillars of the last two are often seen marching across the paths.

UTB members were granted access permission to survey the MoD Danger Area at Broadmoor Bottom in early July this year to target the flight season of the Silver-studded Blue. In the event the access was cancelled due to military training, but three of us met (Grahame Hawker our Silver-studded Blue champion, John Lerpiniere and me) with Steve Wheatley (BC SE region conservation officer) and site managers from BBOWT and Surrey Wildlife Trust to do surveys at parts of Wishmoor Bottom and Wildmoor Heath. The weather was reasonable and we did

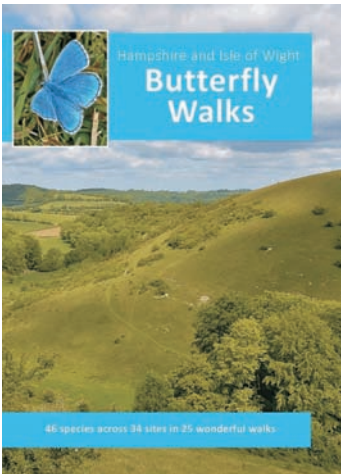
find 50+ Silver-studded Blues across a number of sub sites at Wishmoor, and found at least 14 at Wildmoor Heath. We will try again in 2017 to see if we can access the danger area during the flight season to keep improving our local knowledge and ensure the conservation of these delightful little butterflies.



Open heath at Wishmoor Bottom, part of an MoD training area. Grahame Hawker notes a grid ref while Steve Wheatley discusses habitat management with Ben Habgood, a Surrey Wildlife Trust ranger.



Mown firebreaks and ride verges are useful for the Silver-studded Blue. Grahame and Steve study a male while John Lerpiniere continues to search.



New publication
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Butterfly Walks

Published by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight branch this 64 pp book details 34 walks in the area, which has 46 species of butterfly including the rare Glanville Fritillary.

To order your copy send a cheque for £7.25 (£6.00 for the guide and £1.25 for postage and packing) made payable to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch Butterfly Conservation, together with your name and postal address to:

Kevin Freeborn, c/o Butterfly Conservation, Unit 2, Bull Pens, Manor Farm, Itchen Stoke, Alresford, Hampshire, SO24 0QT

All profits go to Butterfly Conservation

Butterfly Conservation: Upper Thames Branch

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2016

INCOME	2016			2015		
Membership						
Subscriptions	5877.00			5292.00		
Legacies/donations (inc. Gift Aid)	1074.00			633.00		
Events/fundraising	895.00			172.00		
Publications	0.00			0.00		
Restricted Donation						
Stock sales	0.00			105.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		7846.00			6202.00	
Conservation						
Holtspur Bottom Reserve	790.62			1828.04		
Atlas	0.00			0.00		
Holtspur Legacy	0.00			0.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		790.62			1828.04	
Finance/Admin						
Bank Interest	0.00			0.00		
VAT Refund	362.05			121.60		
Bank Charges refunded	0.00			22.74		
Holtspur Bank HLS	987.38			1484.99		
<i>Sub-total</i>		1349.43			1629.33	
Total income			9986.05			9659.37
EXPENDITURE						
Membership						
Newsletter	3986.79			3255.02		
Survey Forms	0.00			149.00		
Events/fundraising	461.44			135.41		
Stock purchases	231.00			231.00		
Other	0.00			0.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		4679.23			3770.43	
Conservation						
Holtspur Bottom Reserve	775.18			4373.00		
Holtspur Legacy	0.00			0.00		
Atlas Update	4895.25			0.00		

Equipment/other	0.00			115.21		
HLS re Holtspur Bank	987.38			1484.99		
Other Projects	375.00			1037.60		
Subs/donations	926.00			1696.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>		7958.81			<i>8706.80</i>	
Finance/Admin						
Admin/Insurance	119.65			162.81		
VAT	135.00			958.52		
<i>Sub-total</i>		254.65			<i>1121.33</i>	
Total expenditure			12892.69			13598.56
Net income/expenditure			-2906.64			-3939.19
Cash b/f			15092.13			19031.32
Total cash available for future activities			12185.49			15092.13
STATEMENT OF NET ASSETS AT 31 MARCH 2015						
NET ASSETS						
Fixed assets (after depreciation)		0.00			0.00	
Stock, debtors & creditors (net)		0.00			0.00	
Cash		12185.49			15092.13	
Total			12185.49			15092.13
ALLOCATION OF NET ASSETS						
Endowment		0.00			0.00	
Restricted		447.50			1950.00	
Designated		5454.50			8400.00	
Unallocated		6283.49			4742.13	
Total			12185.49			15092.13

Field Meeting Reports 2016

Aston Upthorpe, 22 May 2016

Gerry Kendall

The trouble with spring butterflies is that they fly when the weather is uncertain. Nevertheless, this year the Spring Aston Upthorpe walk did better than we had been fearing with a reasonable amount of sun and only light winds. A group of eight experienced observers took part (it would have been an ideal occasion for newbies if they had been prepared to chance the weather).

Our target species were Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and Green Hairstreak with Small Blue on the wish list as well. And while we're wishing, an early Adonis Blue might be possible. We started well, finding Green Hairstreak and Grizzled Skipper on our first chalk bank. A little later, Dingy Skipper completed the three main targets. In fact we did reasonably well with these three species, seeing seven of each over the walk. No doubt there are places where this is very small beer, but we were content.

Over these early stages we were on sections of the transect, where winter work parties had cleared a lot of scrub. It was very gratifying to see that wild strawberry, foodplant of the Grizzled Skipper, was colonising lots of the bare ground. Later on it was nettles that were benefitting from the clearance. Nettles, of course are foodplants of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks. We can only hope that these vanessids attack them hard enough to clear a path for transect walkers.

One of our Grizzled Skippers did not have the typical colouring. Instead of being black or dark charcoal grey with a scattering of small white spots, the ground colour was a much lighter brown – in fact not dissimilar to the colour of a Dingy Skipper. This is presumably the aberration *brunnea* rather than the bleaching of an old individual.

As well as the spring Skippers and Green Hairstreak we saw a steady smattering of species, eventually totalling 14 for the day. However, numbers were low and we totalled only just over 50 individuals.

What about the Small Blue? We went to the Fairmile, where a few years ago they were abundant. Alas, the vegetation was probably now too rampant and 2016 too poor a year. We had one "possible" which flew off and disappeared before it could properly be examined. It was certainly a blue, but opinions were divided on whether it was too large for a Small Blue. In the end we shall never know.

We didn't totally neglect the moths. Cinnabars were a first for the year for many and one of us also saw a first Six-spot Burnet. There was also an early Silver Y (remember the excellent article on moths in the Summer edition of "Hairstreak"). There were also some nice birds including some welcome Corn Buntings, which have been in decline nationally.

Pitstone, Bucks, 21 May 2016

Nick Bowles

Four members turned out to walk around the disused quarry by Pitstone Church. Early rain had given way to thick clouds scuttling past in a strong wind. None the less we set out to see if we could find any roosting butterflies.

After the first 25 minutes we were beginning to think we would draw a blank. However, we started to find small groups of Small Blue butterflies wherever the bushes and longer turf gave shelter. By the end of a walk of just over an hour and a quarter we had seen well over 50 Small Blues, almost all motionless but latterly one actually flying and a few basking with wings apart. The only other Lepidoptera was a Small Purple and Gold (*Pyrausta aurata*).

We left with some light rain beginning to appear in the wind, certain that in better conditions the numbers of sighted Small Blues could number into the hundreds.



Small Blue

Nick Bowles

Bacombe Hill, Wendover, 17 July 2016

Nick Bowles

Four members set out from the Shoulder of Mutton in Wendover (who had kindly agreed to let us park in their car park) and wandered up the hill to one of BBOWT's newest reserves. Cloudy skies gradually cleared and despite the strong wind it became warm. We saw 15 species including the rather wonderful Dark Green and Silver-washed Fritillaries but we didn't see a single one of the Blue family. The information board at the entrance promises glorious views and soaring Red Kites. We couldn't argue with those. However, it also says that, "...on warm sunny days there are Chalkhill Blue butterflies among the colourful wild flowers." There were not! Other summer species, such as Gatekeeper and 'new' Brimstone and Comma, were on the wing, so the lack of all the 'blue' species was both odd and sad, and shows that we were a little unlucky.

It is a lovely hillside and worthy of exploration but the site is slightly later than many others as it faces north and is open to the wind sweeping across the Vale. Parking is awkward but the Shoulder of Mutton does good lunches. Other hostelries are available.



Comma

John Clough

Since the last newsletter 50 new members have joined and the membership is now over 1450. 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 field meetings in the spring and summer and would be more than welcome to join any of our winter work parties and egg hunts. See pages 30-31 for details."

BERKSHIRE

Mrs L Beaven	Windsor
Mrs G Bodman	Woodley, Reading
Dr & Mrs D Casey	Maidenhead
Mrs I Christianus	Reading
Mr & Mrs P Dewar	Lower Earley, Reading
Mr E J Edwards	Hurst, Reading
Mrs K Hayes	Binfield, Bracknell
Mr M Hewes & Ms S Rogers	Thatcham
Mr M Jones	Bracknell
Miss A M Laurie	Woodley, Reading
Mr B Payne & Ms W Page	Lambourn
Mr & Mrs N Pilkington	Caversham, Reading
Dr M Pond & Mr A Haggart	Ascot
Mr & Mrs W Watts	Upper Basildon, Reading
Ms G White	Burghfield Common, Reading
Dr J Williams	Marlborough
Mrs C Wilson	Caversham, Reading

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Mr C R Austin & Miss S Deane	Bancroft, Milton Keynes
Mrs H Brooks	Great Holm, Milton Keynes
Mr & Mrs J Chapman	Widmer End, High Wycombe
Mr P Chattle	Wendover
Mrs C Gibson	Iver
Mrs R Hennessy	Great Missenden
Dr S King & Family	Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes
Mr T Munday & Mrs L A McWalter	Chesham
Ms S Shand	Loudwater, High Wycombe
Mrs L Wells	Aylesbury

OXFORDSHIRE

Mr & Mrs A Carey & Family
Mrs C Crisp
Miss O Cunningham
Mr J Dunleavy
Dr & Mrs G Mcvean & Family
Ms L Nell
Mr W Parry
Miss H Reynolds
Miss C Richards
Miss V L Rose
Ms R Wade

Harwell
Clanfield, Bampton
Russells Water, Henley
Chipping Norton
Charlton on Otmoor
Merton, Bicester
Headington, Oxford
Didcot
Abingdon
Abingdon
Middle Aston, Bicester

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Conservation Work Parties

Much of our winter effort is at our own Holtspur Bottom reserve near Beaconsfield. You might combine a walk around the site with a brief session of work. Nobody has to work for the entire session but obviously you may. There are a variety of tasks and no great strength is required.

Tools and full instructions are provided. **Please bring a drink and a snack.**

All work parties start at **10.00 a.m.** unless otherwise stated. They usually finish about 13.00 though in good weather conditions they may continue until about 14.00.

PLEASE, **ALWAYS** CONTACT THE TASK LEADER IN ADVANCE.

Details frequently change according to weather, number of volunteers etc.

Holtspur Bottom Meeting point: SU918906 HP9 1BT Contact: Nick Bowles 01442 382276 All on Sunday	
20 Nov 2016	Guided walk, planting & fence repairs
11 Dec 2015	'scrape' weeding & hedging
15 Jan 2017	Scrub removal, hedging & bonfire (if dry)
5 Feb 2017	Scrub removal, hedging & bonfire (if dry)
26 Feb 2017	To be decided (may not run). Please check before attending.

Aston Upthorpe Meeting point: at the grain dryer, SU550844 Contact: Jim Asher 01865 391727 All on Sunday except one	
27 Nov 2016	Scrub removal
17 Dec 2016 - Saturday	Scrub removal
22 Jan 2017	Scrub removal
19 Feb 2017	Scrub removal

Brown Hairstreak winter egg hunts

Because the adult Brown Hairstreak is quite an elusive beast, looking for eggs on blackthorn during the winter months is the best way to map the distribution of the species. A limited number of sites, spread across our local population, are also visited annually by a group of us and searched thoroughly, the results enabling the Branch to monitor the health of the butterfly from year to year.

Anyone is very welcome to join us – no previous experience is required! It would be useful if you could bring a hand lens (x10) or small magnifying glass but otherwise no equipment is needed. Please wear warm clothing and waterproof footwear. It is also a good idea to bring a warm drink to revive you after a couple of hours in the field.

*In the past the weather or other circumstances beyond our control have sometimes caused a search to be postponed or cancelled, occasionally at the last minute, so if you do intend to join us it is important that you **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/>).*

This winter's programme of searches will include the following:

Sunday 13th November 2016: Slade Camp, Shotover, Oxford (10.30am – 1pm)

Meet in the retail car park at grid reference SP555050 on the west side of the A4142 Oxford Eastern By-pass (turn off the A4142 at the Horspath Driftway traffic lights then take the first left into the retail park). The area to be searched is immediately opposite on the east side of the by-pass.

Sunday 18th December 2016: Rushbeds Wood BBOWT (10.30am – 1pm)

Meet in the small BBOWT car park at grid reference SP672154. This is accessed from Kingswood Road via a track across the railway, the entrance to which is about 100 metres north of the junction with the Wotton to Brill road. If the car-park is full then further space for parking is available by the road junction.

Sunday 1st January 2017: Otmoor RSPB Reserve (10.30am – 1pm)

Meet in the RSPB Reserve car park (grid reference SP570127) for our traditional New Year's Day egg search. The car-park is accessed via Otmoor Lane, leading north out of Beckley.

Saturday 25th February 2017: 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!

In Buckinghamshire, the Bucks Invertebrate Group organise a lot of field trips which include studying butterflies and especially moths. Their list of field trips is available on their web site <https://sites.google.com/site/bucksinvertebrategroup/Home>

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

Upper Thames Branch Website

www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

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

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

Upper Thames Branch Moth Sightings Blog

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

Follow us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Butterflies.Berkshire.Buckinghamshire.Oxfordshire>
and Twitter - @UpperThamesBC

Holtspur Bottom Reserve

<http://www.holtspurbottom.info>

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