

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Small Blue Report 2015

Karen Saxl



Photo © David Hastings

Looking through and comparing records for 2015 and records for 2014, the number of sightings was slightly down. The largest number of sightings on a single day remained Bradenham - 300 in 2014 and 200 in 2015. Most other recordings are much smaller - generally down in single figures but it continues to be spotted in many locations, mainly from areas along the chalk ridges running through the counties, such as the Ridgeway. First sightings (mid-May) and peak (end May/start June) were pretty similar.

The main difference for me between 2014 and 2015 was the amount of wind that we had to contend with during the summer months. One result was a sighting from a garden near Pitstone, as wind helps to disperse the butterflies.

Second brood sightings remain much scarcer than first brood sightings. I didn't see any adults from the second brood in 2014 or 2015 - but in 2015, with much smaller amounts of kidney vetch around on the Sustrans route from Didcot to Upton during the second brood I switched to searching through heads with great success. Choosing to inspect those heads that looked fresh, almost every head revealed eggs, showing that the adults were around just not evident. I borrowed one head with 6 eggs to bring home to take a closer look and took the opportunity to get some pictures before taking the eggs back and placing them on viable heads without any eggs. A few days later I realised that there had actually been 7 eggs on the head I'd brought home when I noticed a caterpillar crawling over the original head. I wasn't very successful in photographing it but did get a picture before taking it out to find a suitable home.



Kidney Vetch flower head with eggs



Magnified eggs (green discs)



Larva

With thanks to Phil Penson and Malcolm Brownsword for their help with the photography.

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