

UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Hairstreak

ISSUE 125 | SPRING 2025

On the wing soon...



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

**Upper Thames
Branch**



www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

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Cover images (from top left, clockwise):

- Holly Blue (Mapledurham, Oxon, 14th April 2024, ©John Kearns)
- Green Hairstreak (Hartslock, Oxon, 30th April 2024, ©Denise Harper)
- Clouded Drab (Milton Keynes, Bucks, March 2024, ©Janice Robertson)
- Duke of Burgundy (Ivinghoe Hills, Bucks, 18th April 2024, ©Rikki Harrington)

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First Thoughts



We welcome you to this spring issue of *Hairstreak*.

Many phrases and idioms come to mind in spring, some of which, perhaps even sub-consciously, relate directly or indirectly to many of us....

such as *spring* clean, which doesn't necessarily imply a physical deed, but can signal a bright and fresh state of mind – with preparing for the season's butterfly and moth exploits *springing* to mind. Hopefully, we all have a *spring* in our step (sorry!).

Before we look anticipatively to good things to come our way in 2025, let's take a moment to applaud all those who have spent many a winter's day doing their very best to help our threatened species. As usual, Nick Bowles has been at the heart of most if not all of our tasks... so thanks to Nick and every one of you who has turned out to help; our species (and the rest of us humans) are most grateful for your efforts.



Volunteers hard at work for Black Hairstreak in north Bucks ©Nick Bowles

For myriad reasons, many (perhaps most) charities are struggling to

survive due to increased financial challenges – and Butterfly Conservation (BC) is no exception. One of the many consequences of these pressures has caused BC to review its operations, resulting in changes to some aspects of its working practices – such as a reduction in Head Office staff. This in turn has inevitably led to delays in its performing some of its administrative processes, including the sending of emails to members (such as those that bring this digital newsletter to your attention). As a Branch, we are not permitted to communicate directly with members (as a whole or individually unless they have contacted us first), so it is with regret that material the Branch wishes to distribute to its members from time to time is likely to be 'less timely' than of late. We ask for your understanding.

Those of you who tried out the 'If Truth be Told' challenge in the last issue of *Hairstreak* may have concluded that **all** the statements were indeed true (facts courtesy of the Natural History Museum).

The first non-hibernator butterfly sighting of 2025 reported to UTB was by Wayne Bull on 18th February – a Small White in Oxon. So early! Perhaps more intriguing was the sighting of a fresh-looking Painted Lady on 28th February by Maggie and Tony Simons in Flackwell Heath. Theories abound!

Enjoy the awaited spring sunshine.

Derek Haynes
Editor

Please send contributions for future issues of the newsletter to newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk, with supporting images sent separately (or as attachments) in order to maintain quality. **NEXT COPY DEADLINE IS THURSDAY 29th MAY 2025.**

View from the Chair

As I sit here writing this, it is cold, damp and grey outside. However, signs of spring are now appearing, from the delicate beauty of the dainty snowdrops to the ethereal delights of our songbirds 'revving up' for the dawn chorus. By the time you read this, we will be looking forward to splashes of bright yellow and orange as our early spring butterflies join the few we have already seen this year.



Looking forward to spring, there are lots of things to do. Many of us will be dusting off our notebooks and getting ready to help survey and monitor our butterflies and moths: transects, WCBS, moth trapping, etc. Others will be joining our guided walks or training events to enjoy our butterflies and moths and learn more about them and how we survey them. Hopefully, others will be joining our newly formed 'engagement team', spreading our conservation messages at festivals, shows and other local events. Thanks to all those who get involved.

Reflecting back on the winter and my first few months as Branch Chairman, I am proud of the work we do 'in the field', carrying out conservation management for some of our threatened butterflies and moths. I must make a special mention of all the work parties that Nick Bowles organises and runs in Buckinghamshire, helping to improve things for the Duke of Burgundy, Striped

Lychnis moth and other key species. They are often assisted by the Chiltern Rangers and children from local schools. In Oxfordshire, Jim Asher's Aston Upthorpe Downs group deserve a mention, too. The group is thriving and carrying out good work for species like the Small Blue.



Work Party at Aston Upthorpe, 16th February 2025

There have been fewer Branch work parties in Berkshire this year, but some of our dedicated volunteers have joined work parties of other groups, carrying out work to help wildlife, including for key butterfly and moth species.

A huge thank you to all those involved. If you have not yet been involved, perhaps you will join a future work party? They are great fun; you get out into the countryside, get some fresh air and exercise, and the warm feeling from knowing you have made a valuable contribution.

Elsewhere, I was very pleased to see that BBOWT has got funding for the early phase of their RBOR project (Reconnecting Bernwood, Otmoor and the River Ray catchment). This covers a huge area from Oxford to Bicester and the villages to the south and east.

The plan is to make 'landscape-scale' improvements to the management of these areas and encourage wildlife to thrive. Over 30 farmers and other landowners have already signed up for this. Our Branch is contributing by carrying out much of the surveying and monitoring of the Hairstreak butterflies, the area being one of the few in the UK to have all five Hairstreak species. Our surveyors have already found Brown Hairstreak eggs on several estates where they were not previously known to exist.



One of our rarer species: Black Hairstreak ©Iain Leach/BC

Likewise, I was delighted to see the NT taking a much more proactive approach to nature conservation on their land and surrounding areas. I help out in the wild west of Oxfordshire by undertaking surveys and helping with training at their Coleshill and Buscott sites, where they recently held an event to get the local community involved in nature conservation, to which over 40 people turned up. Well done, BBOWT & NT, keep up the good work.

It seems to me that this is the best way for us to make real progress: by working together with like-minded organisations and individuals to achieve outcomes we could not manage on our own.

However, it's sad to say that I do not believe we will make significant progress in our quest to address the twin crises of global warming and biodiversity loss until our politicians, big businesses, and the rich and powerful accept what is obvious to most of us, that the health and wellbeing of our planet is far, far, far more important than the rich getting richer and the powerful becoming more powerful, and act accordingly.

This is a battle that all conservation and environmental organisations, groups and individuals must fight together. Make no mistake, it will be a massive challenge, for the rich and powerful will not give up their privileges easily. They will fight tooth and nail, lie and cheat, use every trick in the book, together with their wealth and power, the media and the law (most of which they own or control) in order to maintain the status quo. They appear happy to compromise the future of their children, grandchildren and future generations for the sake of a few more luxuries and privileges for themselves, now!

This is not just a biodiversity crisis; this is our planet saying enough is enough. We must stop over-exploiting limited resources, disposing of our waste recklessly and poisoning our planet with noxious chemicals. If we do not, it won't just be the wildlife in trouble, it will be the whole planet, including its human population.

Birdlife International provides me with the inspiration that we can actually make significant inroads toward redressing this balance. Their 'Flyways' initiatives are a shining example of what is possible

with a little effort. Their East Asian-Australasian Flyway initiative will mobilise \$3 billion for nature conservation by partnering with the Asian Development Bank. It will protect 50 priority wetland sites across 37 countries that are home to over 2 billion people and 600 priority bird species. It will also engage the local communities, including nearly 200 million people who rely on the ecosystems for their livelihoods.

I make no apologies for voicing my opinion on these important areas, even if they are uncomfortable. As I alluded to in the last issue of *Hairstreak*, the difficult state of the economy is having a major effect on businesses - and charities in particular. Some charities have had to stop operating entirely whilst others have had to reduce staff and spending drastically. Fortunately, Butterfly Conservation has got off a little more lightly. However, we have to make some redundancies and reduce outgoings in some areas. Exactly who and what is still sensitive and cannot yet be shared.

Some changes have already been made. These include the way Branches are funded. However, this is unlikely to change what **we actually do** in any significant way. Other potential changes are currently being discussed by staff, trustees and Branches – including the future structure and functioning of the latter, which have remained unchanged since the very beginning. It also includes preparing a new organisational strategy for when the current one expires next year. This will need to address how we deliver effective conservation in an increasingly challenging economic climate.

Another change that has already been made is the introduction of a brand-new volunteer portal: Assemble (which I have described in more detail elsewhere in this newsletter). Several existing and potential volunteers have been put off by what they see as the unnecessary and bureaucratic hurdle to their volunteering with Butterfly Conservation. Some are talking of leaving; others have already done so.

The screenshot shows the Butterfly Conservation website. At the top, it says "Welcome to Butterfly Conservation". Below that is a "News" section with a featured article titled "First Minister of Wales visits Butterfly Conservation project" dated 10 February 2025. The article describes the visit of the First Minister of Wales to a project in South Wales aimed at saving the UK's most endangered butterfly, the High Brown Freckler. Other news items include "Eluned Morgan visited the site near Bridgend in South Wales where Butterfly Conservation officers are working with dedicated volunteers to rescue the High Brown Freckler" and "The project is a part of Wales' flagship species recovery partnership, Nature an Byth (NaB), and aims to work with farmers to boost the insect's natural habitat." There is a "Read more" link.

Below the news section is a "What are your experiences with Assemble?" article dated 13 February 2025. It describes Assemble as a business management software company that provides software to over 100,000 organisations across the UK, including Butterfly Conservation's volunteer management system. It mentions that Butterfly Conservation is interested in learning about users' experiences and is looking for more people to get a variety of viewpoints, including super tech-confident users.

At the bottom of the screenshot is a "Latest opportunities" section with three cards:

- Events Volunteer (Upper Thames - Oxfordshire)**: Organising. Description: "At Butterfly Conservation, we want to create a world where butterflies and moths are enjoyed by everyone. We need volunteers to help run events so we can get even more people involved in our work."
- Engagement Events Co-ordinator (Upper Thames - Oxfordshire)**: Organising. Description: "Our Engagement Events Co-ordinators help to connect people to their local wildlife by co-ordinating an annual programme of engagement events in their area."
- Events Volunteer (Upper Thames - Berkshire)**: Organising. Description: "At Butterfly Conservation, we want to create a world where butterflies and moths are enjoyed by everyone. We need volunteers to help run events so we can get even more people involved in our work."

Each card has a small image and a "View more opportunities" link at the bottom.

However, I have a very different perspective on Assemble. I believe it offers us the opportunity of much better engagement, communication and support for our highly valued volunteers. If engaged with and used regularly, I believe it can lead to a much more rewarding volunteering experience and to the recruitment of many more volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds. Just email or phone our volunteering

team (volunteering@butterfly-conservation.org or 01929 400 209), tell them you are (or want to become) a volunteer for the Upper Thames Branch and what you will be doing. They will do the rest.

I think that is probably more than enough of me blathering on, so I will finish by wishing you all a peaceful and rewarding spring, full of butterflies, moths and other wildlife, in environments that are increasingly sustainably managed.



Holly Blue (female) ©Derek Haynes

**Peter Philp
Branch Chairman**

Orange Crush

Yes, I do have a bit of a crush – and in the realm of UK butterflies, the Orange-tip is it: my favourite species. And whilst orange is indeed my favourite colour, it's more the case that seeing the first male Orange-tip of the year is surely a sign of better things to come. Readers are doubtless aware that the female of the species bears no orange (shown alongside, lower), so is sometimes more difficult to identify when in flight; but when at rest...

Please don't forget to submit your sightings; every single one counts!

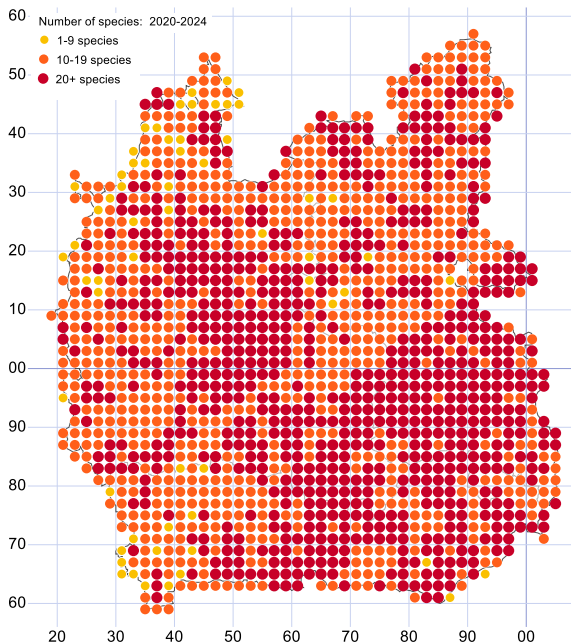
Derek Haynes



Butterfly Recording Across Upper Thames Branch

As many of you are aware, we record butterflies across the whole of our three-county Branch area on a five-year cycle. We ask you to record butterflies with OS grid references of 1km (4-figure) or finer resolution. We look at the data at a resolution of 2km x 2km grid squares as a means of assessing the extent to which we have covered the area.

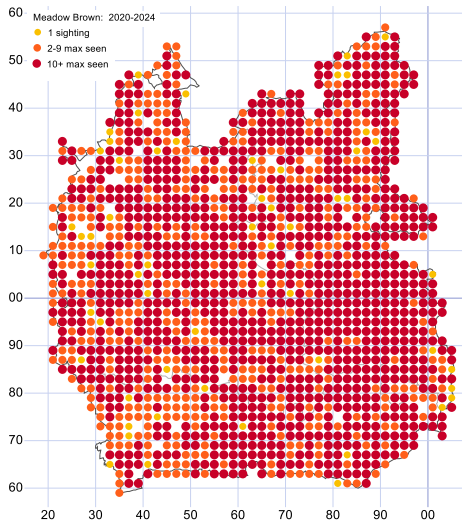
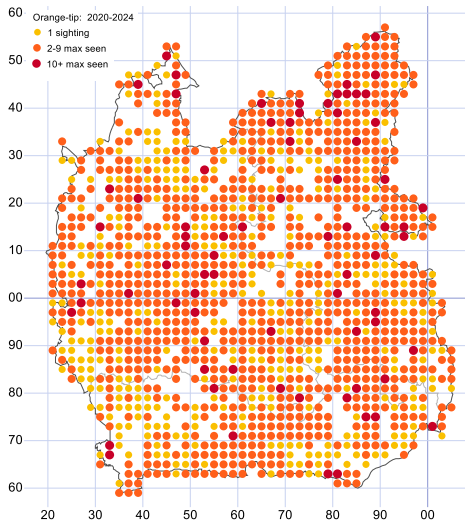
In 2024, we completed the fifth year of the last recording cycle, which started in 2020. We have organised recording in these 5-year cycles since 1995, when the Butterflies for the New Millennium project was started, although we had been recording with increasing intensity since 1987. During last year, we provided feedback to our keen recorders with updated maps to highlight gaps in coverage, and an appeal to help fill them in 2024. You responded! As you can see from the map below, of records for all species accumulated over 2020-24, we achieved very impressive coverage, so thank you hugely for your efforts last year and in previous years.



The map shows no gaps inside the branch boundary and almost none at edges overlapping adjacent counties. A large part of our area has 2km squares with 20 or more species recorded, and only a scatter with fewer than 10. You should all be proud of your part in achieving this great result.

When we look more closely, there are coverage gaps for some of our common species, such as Orange-tip (OT) and Meadow Brown (MB). Both species should occur across most of our countryside and in urban green spaces, but there are a few gaps in the MB map

and more in the OT map (both maps on the next page). OT misses out if visits are not made in the spring months.



We are aiming for a new digital atlas of our butterfly distributions in UTB, highlighting changes. We hope to provide it via online access – details are being worked out by the small team involved. Please watch this space for developments.

So, where next with our recording efforts? It is vital to continue as the pace of land development and climate change accelerates and butterflies are forced to respond. We need to keep a watch on these responses. The next recording cycle is already underway, with early records of 2025 butterflies already starting to fill a blank map. Please do what you have so helpfully done before and return to the various spots you have been to, especially any that you have not visited since 2020. We can provide more detailed information to help you locate spots and priorities for recording in your area – please contact us for more information and tools to guide you. If you have not previously recorded butterflies, please give it a go!

We also would like to extend our efforts to cover those 1km squares within 2km squares from which we have no recent records at all, because they have not been visited. These may contain important habitat we should survey. Although some may not be accessible, many are. Please see Andy Spragg's following article for details of these overlooked 1km squares and how we can enrich our knowledge of our three counties.

Jim Asher
utb_records_officer@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Upper Thames Branch (UTB) at 1km Resolution

A new butterfly season is already upon us! Not only that, 2025 marks the start of a new 5-year period for butterfly recording, providing a good opportunity for a fresh 'call to arms'. Thanks to the dedication of 40 or so '10k champions' (who endeavour to ensure adequate recording coverage for a specific 10km square), and the support of many other people who contributed records, we finished the 2020-2024 period with our best ever recording result, with at least some records from the period 2020-2024 for every UTB 2km square¹. The question thus arises, how best to consolidate that success going forward?

Historically, and for good historical reasons, UTB butterfly recording has been organised in terms of 10km squares and reported at the finest scale in terms of 2km squares. However, 2km x 2km is really a rather large area; many important sites occupy much less than this, and although old records often specified a grid reference only to this resolution, most records from recent years provide a more precise grid reference, certainly in recent years with the advent of GPS software and smart mobile phones. Typically, a recent record

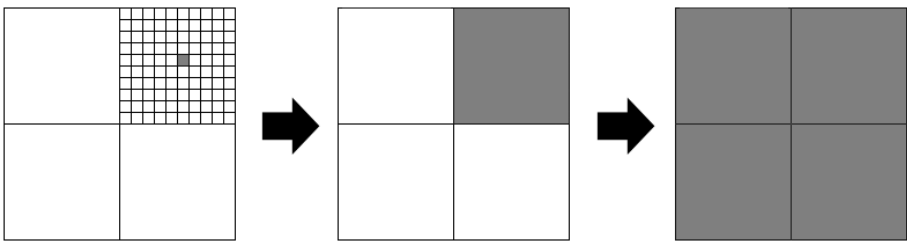


Figure 1: A 100m square within a 1km square within a 2km square

will specify a '6-figure grid reference', representing a 100m square. This is an area *four hundred times smaller* in area than a 2km square. Sometimes an 8-figure or even a 10-figure grid reference is recorded, with the assistance of, for example, iRecord, respectively specifying (in theory) a 10m square or a 1m square! However, anyone who has tried, in the field, to extract a stable value for even an 8-figure grid reference from a live GPS display will be sceptical about how trustworthy such apparently high precision actually is. Figure 1 shows, to scale, a 100m square within a 1km square, and the same 1km square within a 2km square. On this scale, an 8-figure grid reference would be a speck, and a 10-figure grid reference would be invisible.

A 4-figure grid reference representing a 1km square seems to be a worthwhile step forward from 2km squares, and a 6-figure grid reference, representing a 100m square, seems to be good enough for all but the most specialist

¹ For brevity, squares are differentiated by their side length, in kilometres (km) or metres (m)

purposes. A 1km square is a thoroughly practical area; at a typical walking speed of 5 kilometres per hour, it would take only 12 minutes to walk across it and less than an hour to walk all the way around its boundary.

So, even though the existence of records for every UTB 2km square for 2020-2024 is undoubtedly a cause for celebration, there are bound to be gaps in the data at the scale of 1km squares. In the worst-case scenario, the 2020-2024 records for every UTB 2km square could be confined to just one of the four 1km squares that comprise it, which would leave approximately 75% of UTB territory with no records at the scale of 1km squares. I thought it would be interesting to find out how well records covered UTB territory at 1km, rather than 2km, scale, not only for 2020-2024 but also further back in time.

To do so, I needed access to all historical UTB records for all species (for which I am grateful to Jim Asher), including those for 2024 which had just become available a few days ago before the deadline for submission of articles. I also needed a '1km directory', which I compiled with the invaluable assistance of Peter Sage, who used the software QGIS to extract the relevant data from a colossal Ordnance Survey data set. The resulting directory lists all 6,067 1km squares that include any UTB territory (the modern counties of Berks, Bucks and Oxon). For each of those squares, it gives the area that is UTB territory, and the total length of public right of way (footpath, bridleway, byway and restricted byway) in that area. The area and length measurements are also broken down into separate values for Berks, Bucks and Oxon.

Even allowing for the fact that I thought it would be interesting to investigate, I was quite surprised at what I found! The good news is that only 948 1km squares out of 6,067 have no records for the period 2020-2024: approximately 16% of all UTB territory, which is quite reassuring when compared to the 75% worst case scenario. On the other hand, I found that the lack of records goes back a lot further in time for many of these 1km squares.

In fact, 170 of these 1km squares have been without a single record *since the dawn of the new millennium in the year 2000*. That's not just five years, it's five complete recording periods of five years - effectively forever – and it's enough 1km squares to be assembled into most of two whole 10km squares. Of course, some of these squares will have no records because they have no public right of way (a feature that is at least amenable to analysis using the new 1km directory). On the other hand, many squares with no public right of way nonetheless do have records, because of the existence of other ways the territory can be legitimately accessed (roads, paths in an open access area, occasional access negotiated with the landowner).

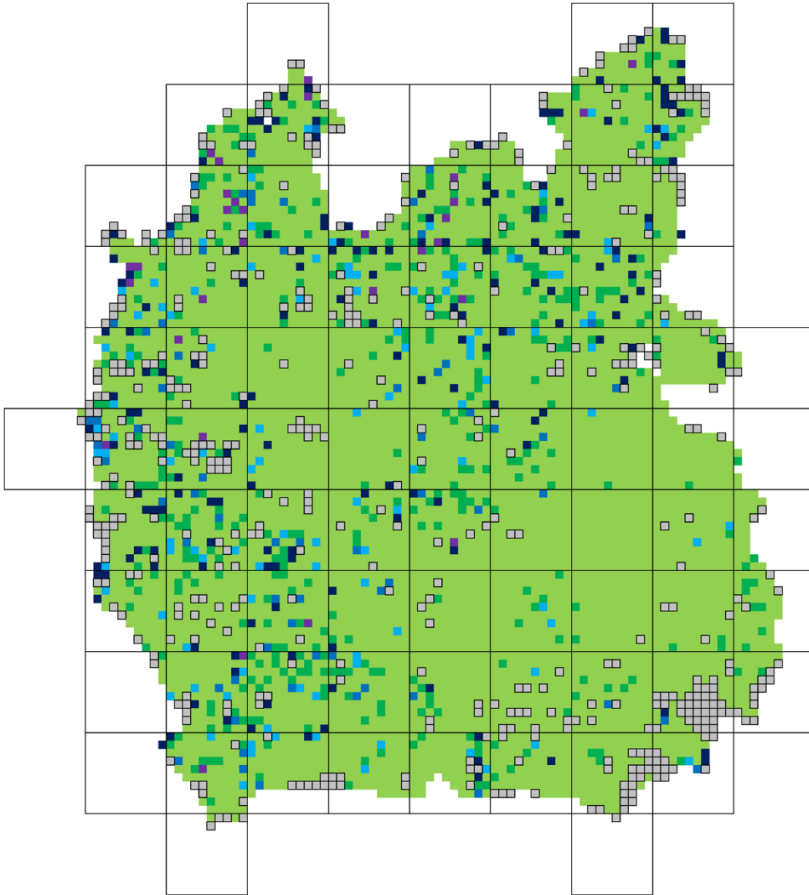


Figure 2: UTB's 170 'black holes of ignorance'

In order to proceed on an objective basis, I confined my attention to squares with public right of way access as defined above. Figure 2 shows the result, a map of UTB territory as filled-in 1km squares, against a white background including 10km square grid lines.

Key	Category	Squares
Grey	No public right of way	488
Light Green	Has records from 2020-2024	4812
Green	Last records from 2015-2019	384
Light Blue	Last records from 2010-2014	111
Blue	Last records from 2005-2009	72
Purple	Last records from 2000-2004	30
Dark Blue	No records since 2000	170

Table 1 provides the colour key, and the counts of how many UTB 1km squares fall into each category. Squares with no public right of way are shown in grey, with the borders outlined in black for clarity. For all the remaining 1km squares with public right of way as previously defined,

Table 1: 1km square counts and key for Figure 2

six increasingly cold and dark colours are used to show how many complete recording periods of five years have elapsed since the most recent records in the square (if any). A very dark blue represents the 170 1km 'black holes of ignorance' with no records since 2000 - that is, five complete recording periods with no records.

Notice that the number of 1km squares with no up-to-date records decreases steadily and significantly as we go back in time from one to four complete recording periods, which is reassuring. However, that number jumps back up for the final category, which covers all squares that have no records at all.

Careful scrutiny of Figure 2 indicates that one 10k square stands out as a unique beacon of excellence. A couple of others come close, but only one 10k square has all one hundred of its 1k squares coloured bright green, indicating records from 2020-2024. That square is championed by Ben Paternoster, who took over from Peter Ogden in 2021-2022. Between them they have done a phenomenal job and it is my pleasure to recognise that achievement here.

It seems to me that as the new recording period begins, an important recording objective we can aspire to as a Branch is to remove these 170 'black holes of ignorance' from the database by finally providing at least some records for each of them. There are bound to be some valuable discoveries to be made in 170 km² of territory about which we currently know absolutely nothing! Please, every one of you, take the time to check whether you live near to, or even within, one of these 1km squares, and consider spending a little time looking for butterflies there now and again. It might be as simple as recording what you see in your garden! Here's how to go about it.

There are various ways to find the 1km square you live in; I recommend visiting <https://gridreferencefinder.com/> and entering your postcode. Click on the red 'pin' in the resulting map to find the 6-figure grid reference (100m square) for your postcode. You will need to convert it to a 4-figure grid reference (1km square), which is very easy! Simply remove the third and last digits ... so for example, SP733165 (the 6-figure grid reference for Waddesdon Manor) becomes SP733165 = SP7316. Then just email me or phone me for a 'no obligation chat' about the state of recording play in your 1km square and nearby 1km squares! I will be delighted to get you started as a '1km black hole champion' if you've never recorded before and I've enthused you about the possibility.

Andy Spragg
spargeus.maximus@gmail.com
07947 399605

2024 Members' Day Photo Competition: The Runners-up

In the last *Hairstreak*, we were delighted to announce the winning entries from our Members' Day photo competition.

We are now pleased to share with you the runners-up entries, and also announce that David Hastings and John Hemmings were highly commended for their entries to the competition.

Firstly, the runner-up in the **UK Butterflies** category was David Hastings, with this stunning image of a Swallowtail:



In the **UK Moths** category, John Hemmings submitted the following fabulous image of a Great Prominent:



In the **Immature Stages** category, Graham Breadmore (having taken the 'top accolade' in the UK Moths category with his Gypsy Moth image) took second spot here with his impressive photo of a larva of the same species.



Finally, in the **Overseas Lepidoptera** category, Graham Parkinson with this gorgeous photo of Lang's Short-tailed Blue.



We'd like to thank the 24 members for their total of 137 entries, which was a magnificent effort. I know that picking the winners was a tricky task! Thanks to Peter Thompson for organising the event. Here's hoping that entries for the 2025 event will be equally striking, where doubtless the panel of judges (including some 'proper lepidopterists'!) will have another difficult job on their hands. Get snapping!

Alive and Well

In recent years, Marsh Fritillary has been recorded at various sites in the UTB region (after many years of absence) – but it's hard to determine their origin. Possibly the presence of larvae after a winter in hibernation is more likely evidence of on-site breeding than adults flying in May.



Aided by sharp-sighted Sue Taylor, we searched the NT's Ivinghoe Hills for larvae and found about 50 in early March.

Nick Bowles

Champion of Champions

I thank you, Nick, for being Chair.
You're here, you're there, you're everywhere
To help our brightly coloured gems
Adorn the realm of Upper Thames.

The Chalk Hill Blues you love to bits,
But also skippers, coppers, frits,
And hairstreaks, admirals, whites and browns
In woodlands, meadows, gardens, downs.

On public land and our reserves,
Your awesome dedication serves
As proof of what we can achieve
If living by what we believe.

I hope that now you'll have more time
To roam our country lanes and climb
The Chiltern hillsides just for fun.
Enjoy the fruits of all you've done.

Rikki Harrington



We are delighted that several of you have now 'put pen to paper' to express how you feel about our Branch and our species - through rhyme.

We welcome contributions from anyone with likewise poetic inclinations.

Thanks, Ed.

ID and Butterfly Survey Technique Training

The following in-field sessions have been arranged to help those who wish to learn more about identifying species and how to use best-practice surveying techniques.

Saturday 22nd March 2025 (10.00-13.00)
NT Coleshill, Faringdon, Oxon, SN6 7PT



NT car park, south of A4019, Coleshill, SU235936
///hurls.train.imprinted
Meet in 'Wood store' by Café

Peter Philp volunteer-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk
[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/-NT Coleshill](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/-NT_Coleshill)

Saturday 29th March 2025 (10.00-13.00)
Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, MK4 3GG



Chaffron Way H7, MK parking at SP830344
///permanent.lighter.bond
Meet in the Education Centre by Grounds Café

Email: nick.bowles@ntlworld.com
[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/- Howe Park Wd](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/-Howe_Park_Wd)

Saturday 29th March 2025 (10.30-13.00)
Long Mead, Eynesham/Swinford, Oxon, OX29 4DU



Parking west of B4044, north of R. Thames SP440088
///buzzards.soonest.simmer
Meet at Long Mead Local Wildlife Centre

Peter Philp volunteer-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk
[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/- Long Mead](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/-Long_Mead)

Saturday 3rd May 2025 (10.00 -13.00 + possible 2nd session pm)
Incombe Hole near Ivinghoe, Bucks

This and the next session (10th May) will probably find similar species.

Spring Butterflies of the Chilterns (session 1).
///blurred.escapades.starfish
Meet south of the main National Trust car park
at the small parking area on Steps Hill LU6 2EG

A pair of close-focusing binoculars and a butterfly net would be useful if you have them.

Email: nick.bowles@ntlworld.com **No Eventbrite link yet established.**

Saturday 10th May 2025 (10.00-1300)
NT Small Dean Lane, near Saunderton

Spring Butterflies of the Chilterns (session 2).
///punctual.quack.flamingo
Meet in NT depot car park at HP14 4UE

Email: nick.bowles@ntlworld.com
No Eventbrite link yet established

A pair of close-focusing binoculars and a butterfly net would be useful if you have them.

A step-by-step guide to recording butterflies and moths through standardised surveys is available to view at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/78lhk4ijl9cp3ehhvlhx1/Recording-B-M-2025edit.pptx?rlkey=j0b4z2r67gxzzkn790k74e4ae&e=1&st=w300dwlc&dl=0>

Lightweight, portable, tested, approved...

Butterfly Conservation has tested and approved the updated lightweight and portable NHBS moth trap, for which they receive £10 from each purchase.



The trap container is constructed from lightweight plastic panels covered with a light-coloured nylon material and it is easily assembled using velcro. It has two panels (that help prevent moths escaping) which rest on a single stainless steel frame that is attached to the container wall on one side (which also supports the trap electrics). This mains-powered trap runs a single 20W blacklight bulb (included with the trap) and comes supplied with a 4.5m power lead wired to a standard UK plug. A benefit of these bulbs is that

they will not shatter in contact with rain; however, like with every moth trap, we would advise against using it in adverse weather. When fully assembled the trap measures approximately 30cm wide x 30cm deep x 50cm tall and only weighs around 2kg - much lighter than the typical solid plastic assemblies of other Skinner traps.

The trap comes supplied with a carry bag that you can use to transport and store it when not in use. This bag measures approximately 30cm wide and 45cm tall when all trap components are included. Options include starter and inverter kits.

Full details at: <https://www.nhbs.com/nhbs-moth-trap>

Guided Walks 2025



Our guided walks are aimed at everyone – not just branch / BC members.



You do not need to be an expert to come on one of our walks. Anyone can enjoy our guided walks, regardless of their level of knowledge (even those with none!). First-time participants, children (with adult supervision), photographers ... **you are ALL welcome.**

PLEASE BOOK if you are planning to attend one of our walks (and, please, **don't forget to cancel if you can no longer attend**). Guided Walks are subject to amendment, particularly due to poor weather. **Please consult the BC events pages for any last-minute changes** (updated regularly and can be accessed from the 'Further details' link for each event below).

Please see the Branch Guided Walks web page for guidance on how to get the most out of our guided walks, including meeting points, etc.

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

We have assembled an extensive programme of guided walks to allow you to see some of our beautiful Lepidoptera species. Walks are scattered across all three counties, so there should be something of interest close to you. The programme gives you the chance to enjoy each of the regularly occurring butterfly species of our region, most of our rarer species, and some of our day-flying moths.

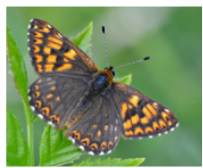
However, we *cannot guarantee* to see a particular butterfly species (or, indeed, any!), but our walks are in some beautiful countryside and there will always be something of interest to see.

Later walks will be in the next issue of *Hairstreak*, but you can always check ahead on either the UTB website or Butterfly Conservation's 'Events' pages.

Please enjoy!



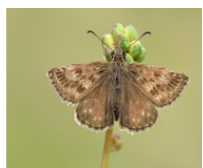
If the **'Booking & Details'** button does not work: please go to the **Butterfly Conservation website**, click on the **'Events'** tab (at the top or in the menu), choose **'Upper Thames'** from the **'Search by Branch'** menu, click **'Search'** and **scroll down** until you find the walk you are looking for.



Saturday 17th May at 10:30am
Incombe Hole

[Booking & details](#)

We will explore this steep downland site, looking for spring butterflies. We hope to find the **Duke of Burgundy**.



Saturday 17th May at 10am
Paices Wood Country Parkland, Berks

[Booking & details](#)

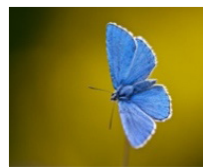
A gentle stroll to enjoy spring butterflies, including **Dingy Skipper** and **Grizzled Skipper**.



Sunday 18th May at 10:30am
Aston Upthorpe Downs, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

A walk to enjoy the spring butterflies of this open-access downland site. We hope to see **Green Hairstreak** and both **Dingy & Grizzled Skipper**.



Tuesday 20th May at 10:30am
Yoesden Bank BBOWT, Bucks

[Booking & details](#)

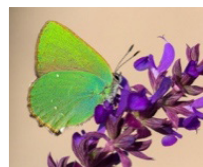
We will explore this steep downland site, looking for spring butterflies. We hope to find **Adonis Blue**.



Saturday 24th May at 10:30am
Lardon Chase NT, Berks

[Booking & details](#)

A stroll to enjoy a variety of spring downland butterflies including a chance to see **Adonis Blue**.

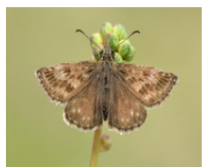


Saturday 24th May at 10:30am
Wytham Woods, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

A gentle stroll around this Oxford University site, focusing on reinforcing the spring butterfly identification course. We hope we may find the **Green Hairstreak**.

If the **'Booking & Details'** button does not work: please go to the **Butterfly Conservation website**, click on the **'Events'** tab (at the top or in the menu), choose **'Upper Thames'** from the **'Search by Branch'** menu, click **'Search'** and **scroll down** until you find the walk you are looking for.

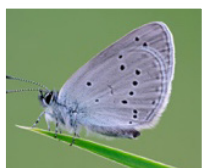


Sunday 25th May at 10:30am

Pitstone Quarry, Bucks

[Booking & details](#)

A relaxed walk around this disused quarry to enjoy its spring butterflies. We hope to see **Small Blue**, **Dingy Skipper**, and day-flying moths such as **Burnet Companion**.

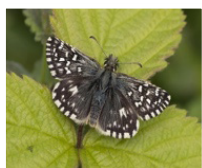


Sunday 25th May at 10:30am

Seven Barrows and Crog Hill, Oxon/Berks

[Booking & details](#)

A gentle amble around this grassland site to enjoy spring butterflies. Time permitting, we will also visit a private site at Crog Hill. We hope to find **Small Blue**, **Dingy Skipper** and **Duke of Burgundy**.



Tuesday 27th May at 10:30am

Hartslock, Goring, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

We will explore this downland reserve, looking for spring butterflies and day-flying moths. We hope to find **Dingy Skipper**, **Grizzled Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**.

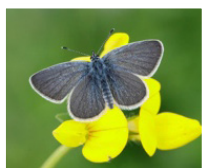


Saturday 31st May leaving *circa* 8am

Fineshade Wood FE, near Corby, Northants

[Booking & details](#)

An 'out of county' field trip to try to see the re-introduced **Chequered Skipper**. We may have time to stop, on our return, to try to see **Wood White** in Hazelborough Forest.

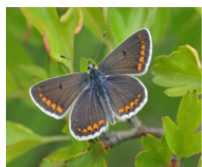


Saturday 31st May at 11am

Bradenham NT, Bucks

[Booking & details](#)

We will wander the grassland slopes in search of early-summer butterflies and day-flying moths. We hope to see the **Small Blue**, amongst other species.



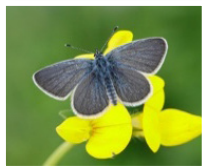
Saturday 31st May at 11am

Ashbury, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

We will explore this private area of grassland, looking for early-summer butterflies and moths. We hope to see some of our **Blues** and **Skippers**.

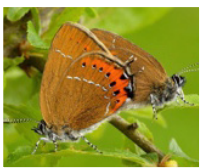
If the **'Booking & Details'** button does not work: please go to the **Butterfly Conservation website**, click on the **'Events'** tab (at the top or in the menu), choose **'Upper Thames'** from the **'Search by Branch'** menu, click **'Search'** and **scroll down** until you find the walk you are looking for.



Thursday 5th June at 10:30am Stonepit Field, Milton Keynes

[Booking & details](#)

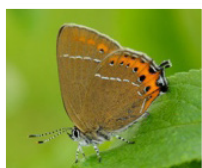
We will wander this small meadow and pond, looking for early-summer butterflies. We hope to find **Small Blue** and other early-summer species.



Tuesday 10th June at 10:30am Whitecross Green Wood, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

A gentle amble around this nature reserve looking for early-summer butterflies. We will spend some time searching for the rare **Black Hairstreak**.



Saturday 14th June at 10:30am Bernwood Meadows, Bucks

[Booking & details](#)

A walk to search for **Black Hairstreak** and other early-summer butterflies of woodland and meadows.



Tuesday 17th June at 10:30am Wildmoor Heath, Berks

[Booking & details](#)

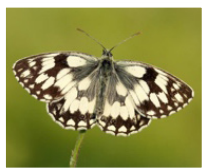
A relaxed walk around this heathland nature reserve, looking for early-summer butterflies. Recent visits have failed to turn up the restricted-range **Silver-studded Blue**, but we have found some nice dragonflies.



Wednesday 18th June at 10am Warburg BBOWT, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

A gentle walk around this delightful nature reserve, looking for early-summer butterflies, birds and other wildlife. We may be lucky enough to find some **Purple Hairstreaks**.



Wednesday 18th June at 6:30pm East Hagbourne, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

An evening stroll along the Sustrans track to see what butterflies do outside 'normal transect' hours. We hope to see **Marbled White** and maybe **Small Blue**.



Saturday 21st June at 10:30am

Holtspur Bottom BC, Beaconsfield, Bucks

[Booking & details](#)

A stroll around BC's only local nature reserve, looking for early-summer butterflies and day-flying moths. We hope to see **Small Blue**.

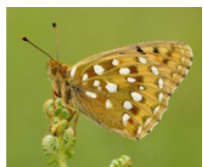


Saturday 21st June at 10:30am

Pamber Forest & Silchester Common, Hants

[Booking & details](#)

We will explore the woodland in the morning and the heathland after a short lunch break. We will be looking for early-summer butterflies and hope to find both **White Admiral** and **Silver-studded Blue**.

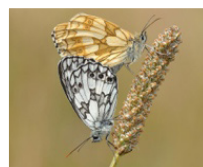


Sunday 22nd June at 10:30am

Butler's Hangings SSSI, West Wycombe, Bucks

[Booking & details](#)

An energetic stroll to this steep downland site, looking for summer butterflies. We hope to find both **Marbled White** and **Dark Green Fritillary**.

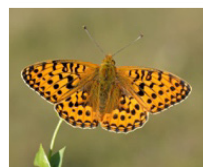


Tuesday 24th June at 11am

Blenheim Farm BBOWT, Charlbury, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

A gentle stroll around this nature reserve and the adjacent Millenium Wood, looking for summer butterflies. We hope to find both **Marbled White** and **Small Blue**.



Sunday 29th June at 11am

Hackpen Hill, Sparsholt Firs, Oxon

[Booking & details](#)

An energetic walk to this steep, open-access downland in search of summer butterflies. We hope to find **Dark Green Fritillary** as well as some of our day-flying moths.

We are always looking for new Leaders to join our team. If you have the enthusiasm, knowledge and skills to lead one of our guided walks – and would be happy to help out – **please get in touch**. Perhaps you may prefer to join one of our existing walks to 'learn the ropes' for next year? It is a great way of getting out in the fresh air and getting some exercise, whilst helping like-minded individuals learn more and enjoy our butterfly and moth species. If you have a current First Aid certificate and would be willing to undertake a small amount of online training, that would be a bonus.

Many thanks

Peter Philp, Field Trip Organiser
guided-walks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

The Kids are All Right!

We recently heard from Claire Garnett, Headteacher of Juniper Hill School in Flackwell Heath (Bucks), whose year 6 pupils recently joined UTB and two of its partner organisations on a conservation task to clear scrub.

This is how one area (of 3) looked before they started work.



Below is a charming collaborative report written by three of those pupils:

“On Monday 3rd February, 10 year 6 students (Mia, Hazel, Henry, Finn, Lois, George, Amber, Zoe, Jack and Theo) went to a conservation site. Whilst we were there, we helped the Chiltern Rangers, the Butterfly Conservation Trust and Network Rail create glades or little clearings for the butterflies – that we had been learning about over a few weeks – so that it can roam safely and expand their habitat. The butterfly we have been learning about is called the Duke of Burgundy: it is rare and also very beautiful. It looks a little like a hairy, tiger-eyed butterfly! Unfortunately, due to the decline of its natural habitat and the decline in maintaining its environment, it has become vulnerable and endangered.

We helped coppice and clear land to plant seeds for other wildlife to grow. To remove the Hawthorn trees we used bow saws, pull saws, loppers and tree poppers (they are tools that are used for the removal of small thin trees from the ground). We arrived at the site at 11am,

later than we were supposed to because Mrs Garnett, our Headteacher, got us lost in the minibus. We left the site at 2:30pm. It was a great day and we enjoyed sawing down the many trees – but it was really exhausting having to pull the logs through the wooded area. Around halfway through the day, we had lunch where we were offered hot chocolate and biscuits.

After lunch we continued to cut down the trees but as we were out in the wilderness all day, some of us quickly found ourselves needing to pee! There are no toilets in the woods and so some of us experienced ‘wild wees’ for the first time. I (Amber) made sure to walk as far down the woods as I could! It was such a great experience and we loved having the opportunity to put our Forest School skills to good use and loved learning how to use a tree popper and a pull saw, whilst knowing we were helping an endangered butterfly! We were also introduced to some power tools which was really exciting – and obviously very safe because Mrs Garnett was also with us!

Thank you for reading.”

By Lois, Henry and Amber S



And this is what the area looked like when they’d finished work.

Well done to all those hard-working pupils – and special thanks for writing your most informative article. Thanks also, of course, to Mrs Garnett and the other adults involved!

All Things Bright and Beautiful (Great expectations)

Despite umpteen failed attempts to sow wildflowers up at my allotment, I have now sown a new pollinator-attracting border.... with hope in my heart.



There are many sources from where you can purchase pollinator-rich wildflower seeds, and you will probably have your own preferences. Having scoured the market, I have decided upon Landlife Wildflowers' **All Things Bright and Beautiful Bee & Butterfly Wildflower Seeds** - and not just because of the product's appealing name!

This mix comprises of 26 British wildflower species, including 81% of those recommended by the RHS as being 'perfect for pollinators'. What I also like is the comprehensive information provided for each species:

Common Name	Latin Name	Quantity	Flowers	Height	Type
1 Agrimony, Common	Agrimonia eupatoria	1%	Jun - Sep	50 - 150cm	Perennial
2 Borage	Borago officinalis	7%	Aug-Sep	60 - 80cm	Annual
3 Clary, Wild	Salvia verbenaca	4%	May - Aug	30 - 40cm	Perennial
4 Clover, Red	Trifolium pratense	3%	May - Sep	20 - 60cm	Perennial
5 Clover, White	Trifolium repens	1%	Jun - Sep	15 - 20cm	Perennial
6 Corn Cockle	Agrostemma githago	8%	May - Aug	50 - 70cm	Annual
7 Cornflower	Centaurea cyanus	6%	Jun - Oct	20 - 80cm	Annual
8 Daisy, Ox-eye	Leucanthemum vulgare	5%	May - Sep	20 - 100cm	Perennial
9 Foxglove, Wild	Digitalis purpurea	3%	Jun - Aug	50 - 100cm	Biennial
10 Knapweed, Common	Centaurea nigra	6%	Jun - Sep	30 - 80cm	Perennial
11 Knapweed, Greater	Centaurea scabiosa	5%	Jun - Sep	50 - 90cm	Perennial
12 Loosestrife, Purple	Lythrum salicaria	1%	Jun - Sep	100 - 200cm	Perennial
13 Marjoram, Wild	Origanum vulgare	1%	Jul - Oct	20 - 50cm	Perennial
14 Meadow Cranesbil	Geranium pratense	1%	May-Aug	40 - 60cm	Perennial
15 Musk Mallow	Malva moschata	5%	May - Sep	20 - 150cm	Perennial
16 Poppy, Common	Papaver rhoeas	5%	May - Jul	50 - 70cm	Annual
17 Ragged Robin	Lychnis flos-cuculi	2%	May - Aug	30 - 90cm	Perennial
18 Sainfoin	Onobrychis vicifolia	7%	Jul - Sep	30 - 40cm	Perennial
19 Scabious, Field	Knautia arvensis	7%	Jul - Sep	30 - 200cm	Perennial
20 Scabious, Small	Scabiosa columbaria	3%	Jul - Aug	20 - 60cm	Perennial
21 Teasel	Dipsacus fullonum	1%	Jul - Aug	100 - 200cm	Biennial
22 Trefoil, Bird's-foot	Lotus corniculatus	2%	Jun - Aug	10 - 40cm	Perennial
23 Vetch, Kidney	Anthyllis vulneraria	2%	May - Oct	15 - 50cm	Perennial
24 Viper's Bugloss	Echium vulgare	2%	May - Oct	50 - 100cm	Biennial
25 Yarrow	Achillea millefolium	5%	Jun - Oct	20 - 100cm	Perennial
26 Yellow Rattle	Rhinanthus minor	7%	Jun - Sep	20 - 50cm	Annual



Also included are detailed instructions about ground preparation, sowing, and first-year and ongoing maintenance. Now is a good time to get started!



Landlife Wildflowers works in conjunction with Buglife, the wildlife charity.

Great Expectations is the 13th novel by Charles Dickens. I am just hoping that 'unlucky 13' doesn't play any part in the great expectations I have this time around for my mini wildflower meadows. I may keep you updated...

Here's hoping you have good luck with yours, too.

Derek Haynes

UTB Conservation Work 2024/25

The conservation work we do as a Branch expands slightly every year, which probably helps to explain why, when butterfly and moth numbers are falling so dramatically right across the UK and especially in SE England, the number of species recorded in our area remains high, with no species of butterfly lost from the UTB region for decades.

Some of the credit for that goes to organisations like BBOWT and NT who manage their land for wildlife, but many private owners would be unable to do so without our help.

It is hard to show how work alters the sites we work on through pictures taken in the winter, when vegetation has died back. At that time of year everything seems to be shades of khaki in rather indistinct photographs.



Before (above) and after (right) at a key site for Duke of Burgundy. If you look hard, you can see a difference. Last summer you'd have found the scrub almost impassable. This summer we hope that surveyors and Dukes will be able to move around in it easily and that Dukes will breed where it may otherwise have become too shady and cold.

Conservation work to control advancing, encroaching scrub and bramble really is responsible for many wonderful sites in the UTB area staying open and graced by colourful wildflowers and associated invertebrates. Without our volunteers and the assistance of the CIC group Chiltern Rangers, we would have lost many flowery grasslands to scrub and secondary woodland.



This area (left) was cleared last summer to erect a fence. It shows how the uncleared area to the left and right of the image is impenetrable scrub, though this was previously a hay meadow. Barely profitable grazing was abandoned when dog walkers on the footpath allowed their dogs off-lead, and the sheep were injured repeatedly. With no grazing livestock to control the scrub, within 12 years it is over head height. Only manual labour can restore areas like this to flower-rich meadows again.

Our work is usually in meadows that have not quite lost all their grassland, and we gradually enlarge the clearings in the scrub so that the flowers have space and light again. Once the flowering plants increase in numbers, so do the invertebrates that feed on them, including butterflies and moths.

While the majority of tasks are about maintaining grassland swards, we also plant larval food plants, and this winter even scrub! One great thing about our work is that

landowners hear of our efforts nearby and contact us for advice. At one Chilterns site, near a Duke colony, the landowner hoped she might add Duke. Years of observation suggested that they were not present despite hundreds of cowslips (the Duke's larval foodplant). We identified the problem as the site's being too open to the sun and wind, so the solution was to plant scrubby patches along the margins. Once it grows thick enough, it should allow the Duke to breed in its shelter, and the middle of the meadow can still be mowed for hay.



The arrow shows one small patch of cowslip. It is too exposed to entice the Duke to lay eggs. Several winter work parties were organised, and the right-hand picture shows the same meadow with clumps of scrub planted to protect the cowslips from both sun and wind. Scrub and additional cowslip plugs were purchased with a grant from Farming in Protected Landscapes.

Although a great deal of work goes into stabilising our remaining Duke colonies and prepping land for expansion, in the Chilterns we work for many other scarce butterflies and moths too, on private land and in other areas also, as the images below show.



This ex-rail track bed in the Aylesbury Vale has Dingy & Grizzled Skipper, Dark Green Fritillary & Small Heath breeding in the short turf and all five Hairstreaks in the scrub on the line-side banks. We keep patches open.



A privately-owned scrub block in north Bucks has a very good colony of Black Hairstreak. Blackthorn (its larval foodplant) is becoming too dense, so we are making clearings to encourage vigorous re-growth.



A site in south Oxon with amazing flora that's being lost under scrub. Adonis Blue, Dingy, Grizzled and Silver-spotted Skipper are all recorded here but could be lost without our work to keep the grassland open to the sun.

If you have ever helped with one of these work parties, either with us or one of our partner organisations, you should feel very proud to have secured a future for butterflies and moths that are disappearing at an alarming rate when no one bothers.

During this past winter we provided 1186 hours of adult and 897 hours of school-child work to conserve the UTB's butterflies and moths. This winter isn't finished at the time of writing, but we know we have visited more sites and run more tasks than ever before.

Butterfly Conservation is its members.

Nick Bowles

A Butterfly-Hunting Holiday (Part 1)

The idea for this 2025 holiday was sparked when I cruised to the Canary Islands. I literally chased a Monarch and thought to myself 'wouldn't it be lovely to spend a week here and actually get the b****r in my camera lens'. After a high-level 300mm long-distance fuzzy shot (they all count), the idea was born.

Whilst my partner will have a relaxing holiday in the Cretan sun with her mother, I have decided I would like to try a butterfly-hunting holiday in the UK, something I've always wanted to do... but life got in the way. Having spoken to our Nick Bowles, I have settled on Norfolk with the wonderful Swallowtail as the Hero species – but all species are welcome.

We all know from personal experience that hunting for a species is about **preparation, preparation...** and goddam pure luck. In planning my trip, my first step was to identify – through research – the places that Swallowtails and other species CAN be seen. Nick gave me a few suggestions, and I opted for Strumpshaw Fen (which was also recommended by your editor), How Hill and Holt, and then searched for a suitable 'home base'. Booking 9 months ahead and knowing the consistency of British Summertime, I have opted for 2 weeks alone in a lodge at Yaxham Waters Holiday Park (Hoseasons) – a decision made as I enjoy butterflies, fishing and proximity to military museums. Booking ahead does reduce costs.



I plan to visit an identified butterfly-rich site every day without fail, and the Butterfly Conservation Norfolk Branch website is a very good source of locations, species and dates. I decided to create a working plan of all sites, locations and distances from home base, and attempt a schedule for each day. I would not attempt too much in one day, maybe 2 sites, and allow a few days for potential revisits.

The beauty of Norfolk is that it is a lovely county with plenty to see and do. The 2-week stay was chosen so that wet days could be compensated for. Using the source data from the Norfolk Branch website, I identified the species' 'First Seen Dates' and 'Last Seen Dates', obviously eliminating those species not in flight at the time of my visit.

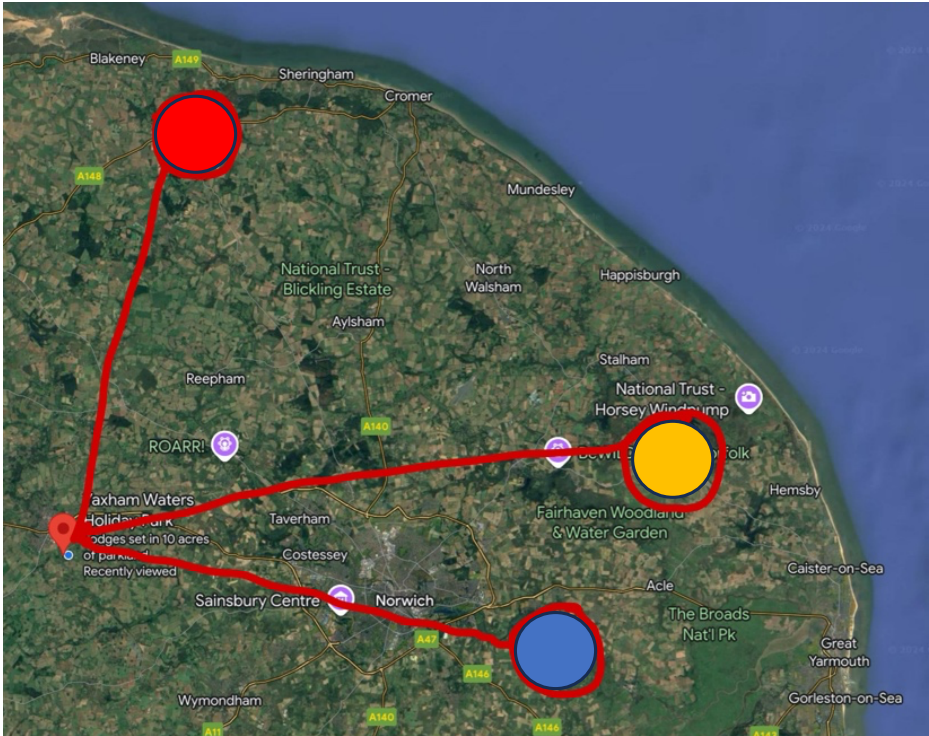
Target species found around Norfolk (from the Norfolk Branch website) are grouped into similar areas (overleaf), by colour (as depicted on the map).



- **Strumpshaw Fen**
 - Swallowtail
- **Ted Ellis Nature Reserve**
 - Swallowtail
- **How Hill Environmental Centre**
 - Swallowtail
- **Catfield Fen**
 - Swallowtail
- **Hickling Broad**
 - Swallowtail
- **Holt Country Park and Holt Lowes (NR25 6ES)**
 - White Admiral
 - Silver-washed Fritillary (including Valezina form)
- **Holkham Woods**
 - White-letter Hairstreak
 - Brown Argus
 - Dark Green Fritillary
- **Buxton Heath**
 - Silver-studded Blue
 - White Admiral

There are other species at many of these sites, but those shown are my targets. Any others will be a nice bonus. Some of these areas are rich in other species in July/August, which unfortunately is outside the scope of my holiday.

All the main areas are within 1 hour of home base, allowing much flexibility and the ease with which to revisit.



The first/last sighting dates shown below (source Norfolk Branch) reflect those species likely to be seen during my holiday window.

	First Seen 2017	First Seen 2018	First Seen 2019	Last Seen 2017	Last Seen 2018	Last Seen 2019
Brown Argus	28-Apr	07-May	21-Apr			
Clouded Yellow	29-May	07-Jul	06-Jun			
Common Blue	09-Apr	06-May	18-Apr	15-Oct	31-Oct	20-Sep
Dark Green Fritillary	14-Jun	18-Jun	17-Jun	20-Aug	15-Aug	30-Aug
Essex Skipper	19-Jun	24-Jun	06-Jun	26-Aug	30-Aug	12-Aug
Grayling	16-Jun	01-Jul	09-Jul	04-Sep	28-Sep	04-Sep
Green-veined White	09-Apr	16-Apr	24-Mar	09-Oct	12-Oct	28-Sep
Holly Blue	24-Mar	01-Apr	24-Feb	16-Oct	24-Oct	21-Sep
Large Skipper	31-May	25-May	25-May	28-Aug	30-Aug	08-Sep
Meadow Brown	18-May	28-May	23-May	25-Oct	11-Sep	14-Sep
Purple Hairstreak	19-Jun	19-Jun	25-Jun	02-Sep	28-Aug	18-Sep
Ringlet	06-Jun	06-Jun	18-Jun	01-Sep	19-Aug	20-Aug
Silver-studded Blue	03-Jun	11-Jun	06-Jun	18-Jul	17-Jul	19-Jul
Silver-washed Fritillary	15-Jun	22-Jun	02-Jun	23-Aug	02-Sep	26-Aug
Small Cooper	08-Apr	08-Mar	05-Mar	06-Nov	19-Nov	06-Nov
Small Heath	15-Apr	27-Mar	23-Apr	05-Oct	31-Oct	21-Sep
Small Skipper	14-Jun	13-Jun	16-Jun	27-Aug	19-Aug	28-Aug
Swallowtail	10-May	15-May	02-May	20-Aug	10-Sep	17-Aug
Wall Brown	05-May	22-Apr	30-Mar	27-Oct	25-Oct	20-Oct
White Admiral	13-Jun	17-Jun	22-Jun	24-Oct	15-Sep	30-Sep
White-letter Hairstreak	17-Jun	18-Jun	23-Jun	05-Aug	30-Aug	07-Aug

This data is not current, but so what... it's just an indication of flight window which we all know will vary year to year, with peaks differing from one species to another. The Hero species of Swallowtail is highlighted, and my choice of 16th June 2025 for 2 weeks is near the peak flight times of the first brood (assuming the weather holds).

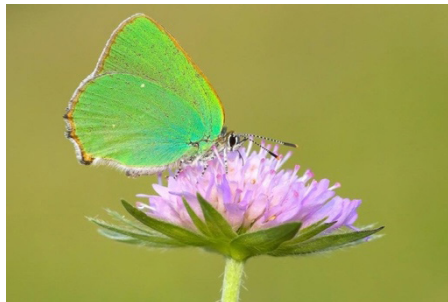
A word of caution. Many of the areas are rich in adders – lovely to see but best avoided. Always remember your tick remover.

My thanks to Butterfly Conservation's Norfolk Branch for their useful source data. This concludes Part 1 of my butterfly-hunting holiday: the idea and the planning. Part 2 will feature in a future edition of Hairstreak, with a detailed summary of successes... or one line saying it rained for two weeks! Wish me luck.

Tom Primett

Volunteer Corner

As you may be aware, our Branch is run entirely by volunteers, ordinary people like you and me, who give of their time to contribute to conserving our butterflies and moths and the habitats they depend upon. Many of our volunteers have been carrying out their roles for quite some time, and, needless to say, as time goes by, some reluctantly have to step down. This, together with the pressure on our Lepidoptera populations, means we are always looking for new volunteers and like-minded people who would like to see our countryside thriving with wildlife, as some of us remember.



Please consider volunteering some of your time to help us with this challenge. It can be great fun! You meet like-minded folk, and you will be getting fresh air and exercise. Not only that, but it gives you a warm feeling that comes from knowing you are making a significant contribution to the conservation of our butterflies and moths. I offer you several opportunities here, with the surveying and monitoring season fast approaching. It's not surprising that many of them are field-based. Also, you can always see the latest vacancies on the Butterfly Conservation website:

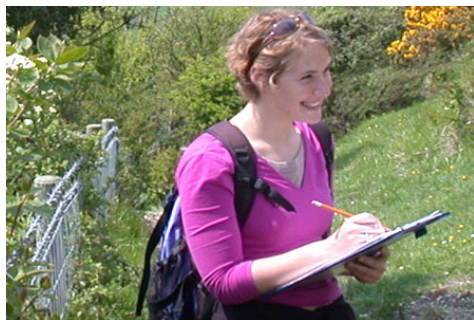
[Search for opportunities.](#)

Did you know that this year celebrates 50 years of the UKBMS – surveying and monitoring our butterflies? Perhaps that is all the incentive you need to get involved.

50
YEARS



United Kingdom
Butterfly Monitoring Scheme



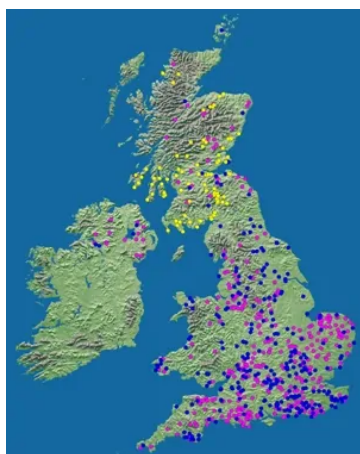
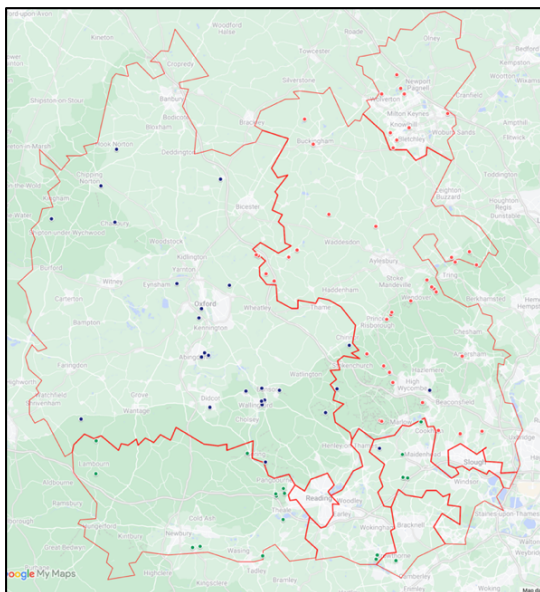
Butterfly Transects

Our Branch has 110 active butterfly transects across the three counties, with at least 150 volunteers helping to survey them each year. For many of these volunteers, it is a highlight of their week: getting out in the warm sunshine in good habitats and enjoying the delicate beauty of our butterfly species.

However, **some of our transects desperately need some new blood**, otherwise they will come to a halt, and the long chain of continuous data will be broken. Maybe one of these sites is on your doorstep? **Please look at the table and map below and offer to help if you possibly can.**

What's involved? Transects are to be surveyed every week from the beginning of April to the end of September; but don't panic – most transects are surveyed by a team of volunteers, so any contribution you can make would be worthwhile. Also, they should only be walked when it's warm and sunny, so that's another bonus.

Transect Name	County
Burnham Beeches	Buckinghamshire
Bushy Bank	Oxfordshire
Buttler's Hanging	Buckinghamshire
Chilswell Valley	Oxfordshire
Finemere Wood	Buckinghamshire
Glyme Valley	Oxfordshire
Kings Barn Rogues	Buckinghamshire
Little Linford Wood	Buckinghamshire
Seven Barrows	Berkshire
Stoke Common	Buckinghamshire
Watts Bank	Berkshire
West Amersham	Buckinghamshire
White Horse Hill	Oxfordshire
Wildmoor Heath	Berkshire



WCBS

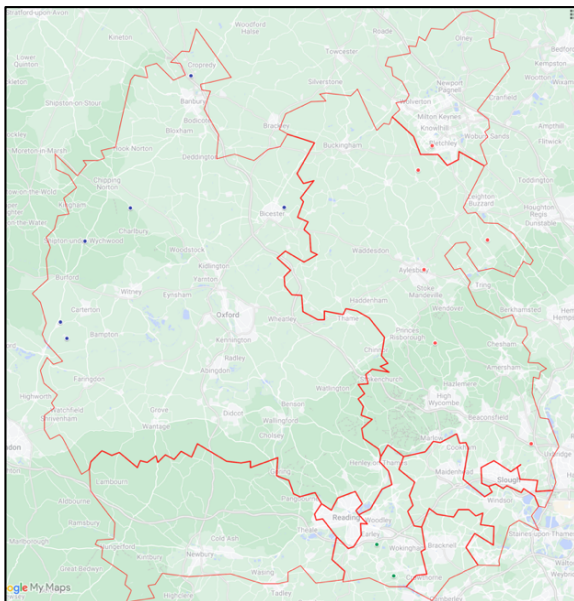
Most of our transects take place on nature reserves or other good sites for butterflies. If we relied on the data from just these, we would get a falsely positive impression of how our butterflies are faring. That is why the **Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey** was set up: it places transects in random 1km squares across the country to help us understand what is happening outside of conservation areas.

This is certainly a less onerous task than the general transects. You only have to walk the transects twice, once in July and again in August. However, you can

do extra months if you wish, and the data will be useful. Most of the transects are already set up with access agreed with the local landowners or managers.

There are 34 WCBS squares across our three counties (though the Tracking the Impact project in the Chilterns runs another 50 or so, that are not part of the National data set). Of our 34 squares we now have about 15 vacancies (see the table and map below for details). Seven are long-term vacancies, whilst the others are where the past surveyors have had to step down for one reason or another. **Please offer to help if you possibly can.**

Square	WCBS-BC Squares
SP2405	Filkins, Carterton
SP2502	Langford
SP2818	Shipton under Wychwood
SP3523	Enstone / Dean
SP4545	Great Bourton, Banbury
SP6124	Stratton Audley / Launton, Bicester
SP8230	Mursley
SP8314	Broughton Crossing, Aylesbury
SP8434	Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes
SP8502	Hampden House, Gt Hampden
SP9319	Horton Wharf, Cheddington
SU4771	Snelsmore, south of Chieveley services
SU7669	Carters Hill, Sindlesham
SU7964	Warren Lodge, Finchampstead
TQ0186	Alderbourne Manor, Gerrards Cross



Event Volunteers

Attending events is an important and proactive way to engage with wildlife enthusiasts, to involve our volunteers and to attract new members to the branch. You may have read in our February Bulletin that we recently appointed two new volunteers to the role of Engagement Events Co-Ordinator – Hayley Waller and Simon Hammett.

They have been working hard to help us expand our reach but can't do it alone. **Could you help** to look after a display at one of the events we attend?

In 2024 we attended Englefield Schools' Days, Imperial College's 'Bugs, Birds and Beasts Day' at Silwood Park, as well as the 'Love Nature Day' with The Parks Trust in Milton Keynes. We also added some successful new events, including Leckhampstead Wood and Benson Big Green Week.

Peter Philp
volunteer-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Poetry in Motion (2)

Like my previous poem about the White-letter Hairstreak, these words are rooted in personal experience. The difference here is that I bring in two moments separated by five decades.

I start with an intense memory from my childhood beside the Humber estuary. It feels like yesterday that I was walking through the dunes of Spurn and glimpsed a bright green triangle that looked like nothing I'd seen before. I had no name to give the butterfly, nor any understanding of how it could thrive in what is often a windswept environment.

Over the years I've learnt to appreciate the versatility of Green Hairstreaks. The first sight of one each spring is always a thrill. With their ability to lurk unseen, I wouldn't like to guess how many of them I've walked past in the intervening years – they are among the most enigmatic of butterflies in my experience.



In the final lines I refer to a memory from a much more recent trip to Spurn, when I chanced upon a scaled-up sculpture of the peninsula's 'signature' butterfly. It's made from wire containing enough copper that it should, fittingly, turn from brown to green as the years pass. [The photo above will attest to that fact! Ed.]. Whether any of us will get to see that

change is increasingly open to doubt - Spurn is a constantly eroding place, and may soon become a true island. We could well lose the place that gave me the strongest butterfly memory of my youth.

For now, I'll continue to visit Spurn as often as I can. I've no doubt I'll continue to fail to spot many Green Hairstreaks there, and in many other habitats where they live. But at the far end of the lonely peninsula, I know there'll be one *Callophrys rubi* ('Beautiful eyebrows of the bramble') that will remain unmissable. It's almost as tall as I am.

Callophrys rubi

Spring's herald, named for your eyebrows,
Flukily seen on a '70s morning, late April,
Down at Spurn when a shaft of sunlight
Boosted your sheen against the marram.
You were my first 'interesting' butterfly.

I glimpsed ephemeral emerald glory -
That place's shifting light steals things fast.
Which puts you in my memory now:
Your Ireland rugby shirt green,
Those punctuating white dots.

I didn't know your name that day -
Had no one to ask, thought
Too little of a thumbnail-sized creature.
Did I wonder at all about your ways,
Why you were there, on a spiky perch?

I clocked a mineral iridescence,
Noticed that wings were firmly shut,
Which left your brown unrevealed,
As it always seems to be, except
In well-thumbed books upon my shelf.

Until one day, in a cold December,
Fifty years bridged beside the lighthouse
By a wire-made camera-friendly sculpture.
All as dull as your uppersides:
No chance of walking past this one!

Paul Gamble

Material Change

In addition to Butterfly Conservation (BC)'s almost 40,000 members, there are another 150,000 'supporters' that the organisation knows about through initiatives such as Big Butterfly Count – and it is anticipated that BC will try to 'cultivate' them, thus potentially benefiting UTB by providing it with new members over time. Perhaps you're one of them?

In light of the above, our new Chairman, Peter Philp, believes that it would be useful to include some additional material in *Hairstreak* that would particularly benefit those new to the Branch... and those not as familiar with our species and the workings of the Branch as those of us who have been around the organisation for a while.



If you are 'a newbie' (in any sense of the word), you may wish to tell us the nature of what you would like to see featured in this publication. Some suggestions put forward by Peter are:

- Advice on the identification of some of our 'trickier' (but commonly encountered) butterfly and moth species, particularly those which are hard to differentiate from one another
- Favourite walks of some of our members and volunteers, indicating what they like about it and what they tend to see at different times of the year
- A 'digest' of conservation work recently carried out, and an idea of what's planned for the coming period and why
- Periodic 'spotlight' on a key volunteer and/or a member of the Committee, explaining what they do and why they do it

This is, of course, far from an exhaustive list, and there may be other topics that you would like to see covered in future editions of the newsletter. Of course, you may have something that you wish to contribute yourself. In either case, please do let us know, by contacting the editor at newsletter-editor@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Hairstreak is a 'community resource' that aims to meet the expectations and needs of the members of the Upper Thames Branch. But it does depend on what those expectations and needs are, from time to time, and it does require people to provide the material to satisfy them.

We'd love to hear from you.



ASSEMBLE: BC's Volunteer Management System

Several existing (and perhaps potential) volunteers may have been put off by Butterfly Conservation's requirement for all our volunteers to be registered on **Assemble, the new 'volunteer portal'**.

It would be a huge shame to lose any volunteers because of this directive. The bottom line is that – although all our volunteers must indeed register – they only have to log on once and then never have to use it again if they don't wish to!

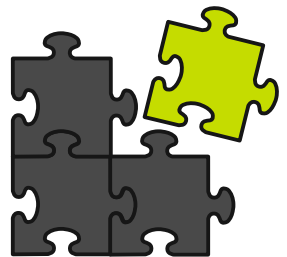
However, I believe Assemble is a huge opportunity and not a bureaucratic burden. It is the UK's leading volunteer portal system and is used successfully by organisations ranging from the NHS and the National Trust to RSPB and BBOWT.

The idea of systems such as Assemble is to help and support you as a volunteer and to allow you to get the most from your volunteering.

The benefits of Assemble:

- It is a much more secure way for our volunteers to keep in touch with staff and each other than through regular emails
- Your personal data is much, much more secure than in systems BC has used previously
- It provides a wide range of information about Butterfly Conservation and our work (in the form of videos as well as text)
- It offers an easy way to find out about events, work parties, etc.
- It provides regular news updates about butterfly and moth conservation
- Registering and completing the basic online training ensures you are covered by BC's insurance.

I am happy to assist anyone to get registered if they find it difficult or a burden.



Peter Philp
chairman@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Don't forget the Caterpillars...

For conservationists lucky enough to have gardens, we have shown our commitment to the cause by endeavouring to include various nectar-rich plants in our planting schemas.

To be sure we can provide a nectar source for our pollinators throughout the year (well, from spring to autumn), we need to plan accordingly.

There are a whole host of suitable plants to meet different expectations and environments, and – if you are still at the planning stage – I suggest you look at the Royal Horticultural Society's recommendations (at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/flowers-for-butterflies>), where they split their suggestions into two groups: spring and early summer, and late summer and autumn nectar plants. They also include useful information on growing conditions, height and spread, position, aspect, and exposure. Of course, there are many other sources of information available.

Now, while some nectar-rich plants may be more attractive to certain species than others (which makes a good mix even more beneficial), what is arguably of equal importance is to grow plants which can sustain the larvae of some of those species which do end up visiting your garden.

Again, there is much choice, but I suggest that you grow plants which some of our more common species are likely to use, as you probably won't attract some of our more specialist species to your garden by growing their larval foodplants (unless you are lucky enough to live close to a known colony of one of those species).

On the next page, I've listed some suggestions for larval foodplants suitable for a domestic setting, along with examples of the species they might attract. Meanwhile, here's a 'teaser':



Elephant Hawk-moth larva ©Heath McDonald/BC

Common Name	Scientific Name	Larvae you might attract
Common honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Elephant Hawk-moth; (White Admiral)
Garlic mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Orange-tip, Green-veined White, Large White
Cuckoo flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	
Alder buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>	Brimstone
Purging blackthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	
Common comfrey	<i>Symphytum officinale</i>	Scarlet Tiger
Bird's-foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common Blue
Honesty	<i>Lunaria annua</i>	Orange-tip, Large & Small White
Garden nasturtium	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>	Large, Small & Green-veined Whites
Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma*, Peacock, Painted Lady
Common holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly Blue (1st Gen. offspring)
Common ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	Angle Shades & Holly Blue (2nd Gen. offspring)

*If you don't want to grow Common nettle, you could always try hops (*Humulus lupulus*) – a perennial climbing plant, which Comma larvae will also eat.

And if you have space for a patch of long grasses, bents (*Agrostis*), couch (*Elytrigia*) and fescues (*Festuca*) – which are among the grasses that make up a typical garden lawn – will benefit a range of grass-feeding species, including Speckled Wood, which overwinters as a larva or pupa.

Happy planting... and good luck! Let us know how you get on.

Derek Haynes



Pollinator Specialists: An Online Presentation

The Biological Recording Company is hosting a **free online presentation on pollination between 12:30 and 14:00 on Tuesday 1st April.**

The session will be jointly presented by Claire Pumfrey from Buglife ('**Beginner's Guide to Planting For Pollinators**') and Dr Miranda Bane from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology ('**Monitoring Pollinators with FIT Counts**').



You can book a place on this free event at:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pollinators-tickets-1255449044889?af=odcleoeventsincollection&fbclid=IwY2xjawlrzqFleHRuA2FibQIxMAABHZmiBB4NAETiQsKLV7vrH-9qoe7u8EB-fmgDxBnZRjs8qhhQnq56_hNChg_aem_8XwtNTjnIwVjF5hS1Jj9A

... where you'll also find further information.

A recording will be made of the presentation (along with a transcript of the 'live audience' Q&As), which will be made available following the event to those who booked a place.

Want to be a Trained Brushcutter Operative (at Our Expense)?

During this past winter a tremendous effort (largely by member Sarah Ronan) raised enough money for two new electric brushcutters. If you've experienced a petrol-driven machine you will appreciate that these new tools are an amazing upgrade; equally powerful but lighter and far quieter (and pumping far less CO2 into the environment).



We hope to see them in regular use on our myriad tasks and are prepared to pay for any member who would like to receive the appropriate training in their safe and effective use.

A course has been arranged for Thursday April 17th in High Wycombe. It would last most of the day and you'd need to provide your own packed lunch. Once completed, the 'ticket' awarded gives you the confidence to use this powerful tool to its best effect, whilst meeting the acknowledged safe operational standards.

These machines can contribute significantly to the success of the essential conservation management of so many grassland and scrub sites across our three counties.

To express an interest (or to learn more) please email: nick.bowles@ntlworld.com

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

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

Upper Thames Branch Website

www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/in-your-area/upper-thames-branch>

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/groups/458565932924345>

Twitter [@UpperThamesBC](https://twitter.com/UpperThamesBC)
Instagram [utb_butterfly_conservation](https://www.instagram.com/utb_butterfly_conservation)

Holtspur Bottom Reserve
upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/holtspur_bottom

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