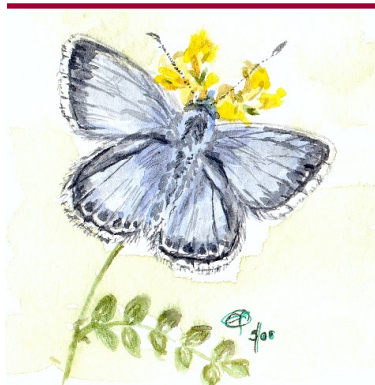




Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats



HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE **55**

Spring 2009

First flight of 2009 – a New Year Visit to Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula.

by David Chandler

After the Christmas festivities had subsided, but before the year had turned, Kathryn and I went on a short break holiday to Cape Town in South Africa. Even though I have made December holiday trips to South Africa before, it was still a strange, but nice experience to be taken, literally overnight, from midwinter to midsummer.

We did all the touristy things that people on holiday do, like watch Southern Right Whales at Hermanus, see the famous African Penguins at Boulders Beach, go up Table Mountain, visit Cape Point and nearby Cape of Good Hope, see the botanical gardens at Kirstenbosch and tour the wine-growing regions of Paarl and Stellenbosch. Of course, being the height of summer, there were butterflies to be seen but getting a break to go “butterflying” from Kathryn’s packed schedule

of “must do’s” was tricky.

Another problem was, surprisingly, there were not that many butterflies to be seen in the Cape Peninsula’s unique fynbos environment, despite there being a profusion of multi-colourful wildflowers and flowering shrubs in this habitat. Strangely, in my experience, butterflies were more commonly found in the gardens, parks and where those fragments of rough grassland occurred towards the lower slopes of the mountains.

One of the first butterflies I was able to recognise was the Geranium Bronze, this particularly lovely “blue” is commonly found around Pelargonium and, as its name suggests, Geraniums, which in the mild Mediterranean climate grow all year around. The Geranium Bronze has established a foothold in Spain, Gibraltar and the Balearic Islands having been given a lift to Europe on imported Geraniums. It is regarded as a pest in Iberia, which is a shame because I think it is a particularly pretty butterfly.

On the top of Table Mountain, some 3000 meters up, I found the African Greybottom Brown. The top of Table Mountain is a flat cap of sandstone overlying granite.

Table Mountain is one of the oldest mountains on earth. The mountain’s history begins eight hundred million years ago when sandstone, a relatively soft rock, began to form underwater, but it was given strength by magma rising from the earth’s core. When magma reaches the surface it often forms a volcano, but in Table Mountain’s case it stopped underground, cooled and formed hard granite. It was windy and quite inhospitable for butterflies up on Table Mountain. Highly fragrant plants grew in the sheltered shallow ridges in the rocks on the surprisingly flat top of the mountain. It was not a place where I would expect to find a butterfly clinging on in such a difficult and hostile environment, but apparently, the butterflies of the Greybottom Brown’s family are adapted to habitats of high altitude (montane) rain-prone grassland on mountain tops that are often shrouded by mists; this, of course, fits the ecology of Table Mountain to a tee.

In Kirstenbosch botanical gardens, which are situated at the southern end of Table Mountain, there were many more butterflies than in the natural fynbos habitat that surrounds the gardens. I suspect this is because of the large number of nectar sources. In Kirstenbosch there

were Garden Acreas, Geranium Bronzes, Long tailed Pea Blues, Common Dotted Border Whites and Citrus Swallowtails. The Citrus Swallowtails were numerous, unusually docile and so easy to approach as they feasted on the agapanthus' nectar. I was able to get one of my finest Swallowtail photographs taken in South Africa, and being early January, a best first flight sighting of the new year!

All too soon it was time to fly back to a frozen London, and what a contrast in temperatures that was. Never-the-less my mid-winter taste of summer broke the northern winter's spell and the butterflies gave me a lift for the cold days ahead.



Citrus Swallowtail
© David Chandler

Report on AGM, 24th January 2009, by Ian Small

Our AGM was held this year in Harrow Weald, and was attended by 23 members. Our Chairman, David Chandler, was unable to attend following the death of his

father. We extend to David and his family our sincere condolences. In his absence, the meeting was ably chaired by our Vice-Chair, Margaret Noakes.

The AGM proper was preceded by an excellent presentation given by Andrew Palmer on the work to restore the chalk grassland at Aldbury Nowers to its former glories. Sixty years ago, it would have been possible to see 40 butterfly species here over the year, but sadly that has fallen to about 30, in a good year. The series of species losses is depressing - Adonis Blue in 1952, both the Pearl- and Small-pearl bordered Fritillaries during the 1950's, Marsh Fritillary in 1965, Small Blue in 1984, Duke of Burgundy in 1998 and Wall Brown in 1999 - all as mainly a consequence of habitat degradation. Soil enrichment has led to the deposition of 15-30 cm (1 foot) of organic matter on top of the chalk.

Andrew gave us a fascinating and well illustrated overview of the restoration programme and its long-term aims to restore habitat and enable the re-colonisation of the site by key priority species, such as

the Small Blue, the nearest colony of which is only 1 km away, and the Duke of Burgundy, whose nearest remaining colony is 3 km away. The scale of the work involved was very impressive, but for many in the audience, the highlight of the presentation was some video footage of a 13-tonne mechanical digger, balancing precariously on the steep slope, effortlessly removing large trees. Space here doesn't permit a detailed description of the habitat restoration work, but hopefully the results will be there for us all to see over the coming years. The first signs are already there and very positive, with cleared and sculpted chalk areas already colonising with a good assemblage of chalk flora.

Following very welcome refreshments, we resumed with the AGM proper. All reports were included with the Annual Review, circulated with the last newsletter.

The meeting concluded with a wide and varied selection of butterfly and moth photographs taken by members.

A very enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

Spring Meeting at St.John's Church Hall March 14th 2009, by Ann Piper

Our first visit to this venue attracted 17 members in total. We continue the practice of alternating our meetings between Middlesex and Herts. The facilities at the hall were excellent but my apologies to those who found the parking a little difficult!

The plan was to have a relaxed meeting and share some of our images and experiences together. We began with a most interesting talk by Liz Goodyear of her time in Florida last year. There were lovely shots of exotic butterflies but also other creatures encountered on the trip including alligators and a sea crocodile! Her Images of Florida transported us all to warmer climes.

Roger Gibbons followed this with more exotic butterflies from France. What superb photos!

He also alerted us to the possible development of up to 15000 houses on the Commons Nature Reserve between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City and brought along petitions for people to sign. This led to a number of discussions during the refreshment break.

Following the interval in which Liz provided her usual luscious cakes we learned about the Wider Countryside Monitoring Scheme. Liz was standing in for Andrew Wood and gave a succinct explanation of how the system will work. This provoked a lively debate among the audience. We wondered whether the choice of squares was entirely random as they seemed to veer towards the east of the county with very little near the area of Hemel Hempstead where we were! It was hoped to encourage some volunteers for the project. Liz said that further squares might be added to the list in future.

The last presentation was a showing of Clive Burrows DVD of the wonderful flora and fauna of Europe. We sat back and just relaxed as we travelled across fields, valleys, rivers, enjoying not just butterflies but many other beautiful sights. This turned into an impromptu quiz! There was no commentary to the film just music. So we had to guess what we were seeing! First prize definitely went to Roger Gibbons. Many thanks for identifying so much!

Our sales stall attracted interest as usual. I was very pleased to meet and chat with Charles Smith. For those of you who may not know, he is the gentleman who designed the lovely notelets of butterflies on food plants which have proved so popular on the sales stand. He had brought his large size originals and explained how he had devised them. He won't mind me saying so, I hope, but he is no spring chicken and he did all the work on the computer with digital images cutting and pasting till he was satisfied! You put most of us to shame, Charles!!

A thoroughly entertaining time was had by all. We now look forward to a year full of butterflies for us to enjoy!

White-letter Hairstreak Project Update, by Andrew Middleton and Liz Goodyear

Well, the White-letter Hairstreak project (see branch newsletter no. 49 March 2007) has entered its third and likely final year, we continue with the work. With honourable mentions for several observers across the UK, in particular, Martin Greenland mostly in Yorkshire, and Gavin Woodman in the north-west Midlands, others have also made valuable local contributions, such as Helen Bantock in the Harlech area, Alan Cooper in east Kent and Chris Iles in the south-west. Whilst the original idea was to encourage local observers across the UK to survey targets in their own areas, we have found that, despite efforts to

promote the project in some regions, giving talks, emailing BC branches and natural history groups, Liz and I will need to take the project forward to completion ourselves. We have been fortunate to this end, in that funding for our costs, such as travel, is now being met by grants from the Hertfordshire & Middlesex Branch, Butterfly Conservation at a national level, and the Robert Kiln Trust.

Back to the project itself, and has it been pitched at the right level? Is it likely to provide useful information regarding the project's objectives:

Given an adequate level of targeted surveying for both elms and White-letter Hairstreaks in a number of random sample areas, the project aims to provide enough information to create a reasonable model for estimating the likely spatial distribution and occurrence of White-letter Hairstreaks at a landscape level. The project also hopes to establish the likely present range of the species, and to what degree elms may be used as a proxy for White-letter Hairstreak distribution.



White-letter Hairstreak
© Lee Browne

We are very pleased with progress. The total of reasonable targets has been reduced to 214, with 17 targets in Scotland deemed to be well beyond any present potential for the presence of, or colonisation by, White-letter Hairstreaks. Of these 214 targets, only five targets remain uncompleted in terms of elm surveys, two of which are on Scottish borders and unlikely to presently hold White-letter hairstreaks, one remains in Cumbria, we have yet to find any elm in one 10km square in Dorset (although there is a recent record), and one is on the Isle of Wight, where we have recently found a local recorder who we hope will complete this target. White-letter Hairstreaks have been found in 156 of the targets, so the project is closing in on a finish.

The White-letter Hairstreak does appear to be under-recorded nationally. At least thirty 10km targets, or 19% of positive targets, have been new 10km records. In addition, the strike rate at 1km is tolerably high at 38% of positives. So we are pleased that the 1km, 2km & 10km strategy has been pitched at a useful national level.

Are we finding out anything useful about the national range? There are many individual situations which will be included in the final report, but here we will have a look region by region, and give a few examples that may be of particular interest.

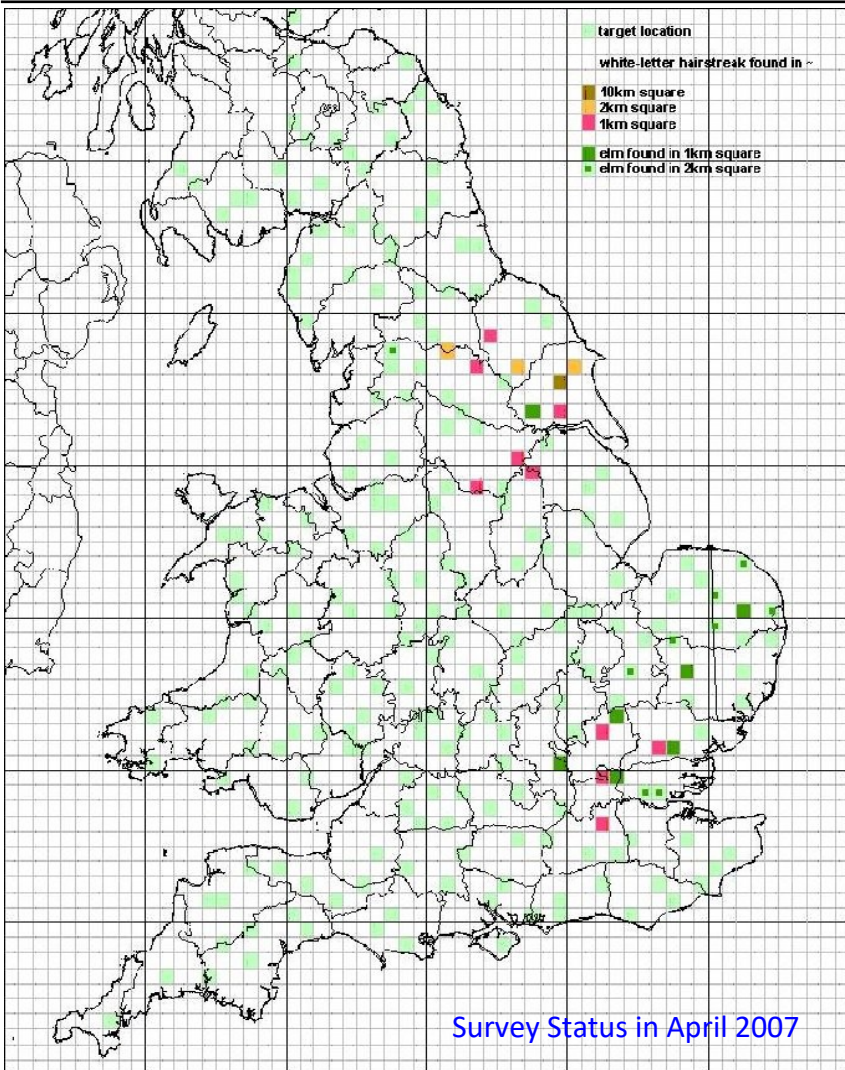
In the north-east, Martin Greenland has tracked the species' range into the eastern valleys of the Pennines, and found the most northerly record ever at NU065017 (although a non-project record). Cumbria is on the edge of the range, with the species recorded on the southern flanks. Our surveys show a lower level of elm than exists in the north-east. As per other areas on edge of range, we have adjusted our approach, in that we have identified any elm-rich areas which we feel should be monitored in the future, not all of which are in our random targets.

There appears to be a large area north of a line from the Thames to the Severn, and northward to Yorkshire, where White-letter Hairstreaks can usually be expected if some elm is found, and where conditions of climate and habitat are adequate for this undemanding species. The situation appears fairly positive, in that many 1km squares in this area have been found to hold suitable elms that support colonies. However, as one drives across the landscape, elm does wax and wane, with some areas more affected than others by Dutch Elm Disease, or with simply less elm.

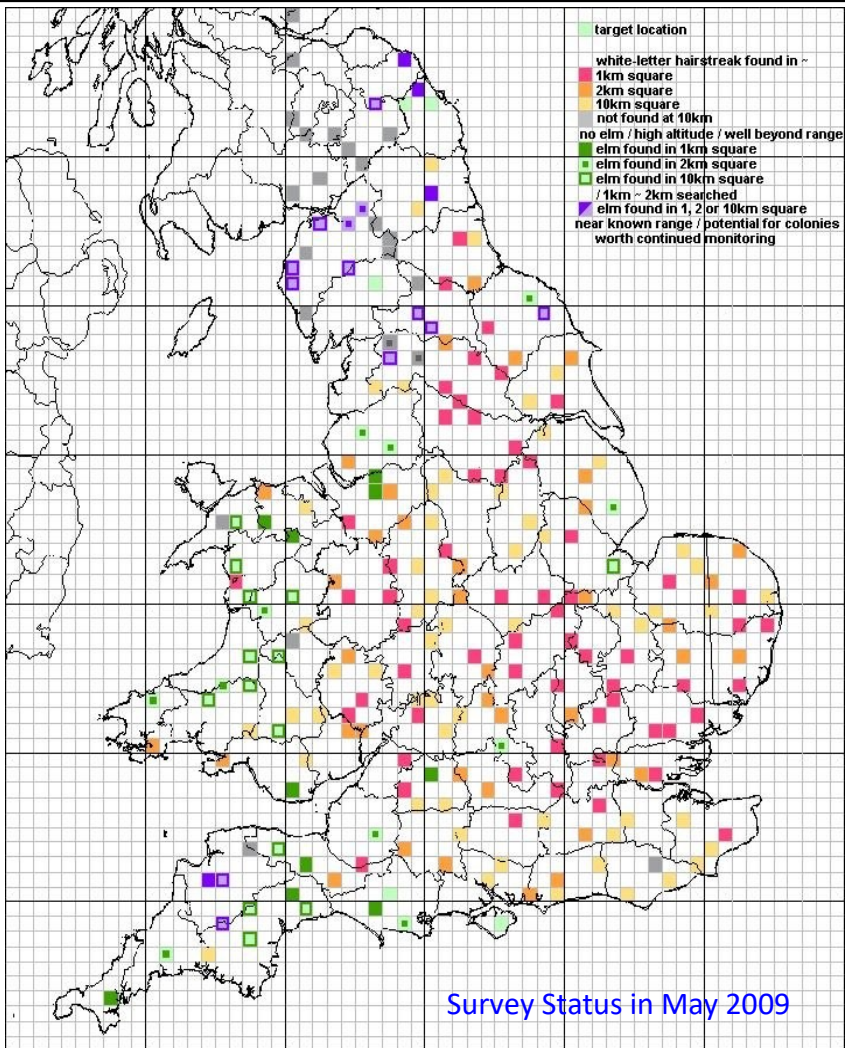
Moving south of this area, it seems that there is a wide swathe of land across southern England where elm is no longer abundant, perhaps because elm growth may have been dominated by English Elm, which is more susceptible to Dutch Elm Disease. However, White-letter Hairstreak is still present and can be found in most 10km squares.

The south-west has provided a multitude of problems for the survey. Records have never been that common across the area, and large areas such as Dartmoor are unsuitable due to a combination of climate, soil type and lack of elm. We had imagined that the flight period here may be relatively early, but we mis-timed our first visit, and soon realised that, whilst its climate may be mild in winter, it is not especially warm or sunny in the remainder of the year (well certainly not when we visited!). In addition, the once abundant Cornish Elm seems especially susceptible to Dutch Elm Disease, and to our surprise there seems to be only a limited presence of Wych Elm. We did find an egg in a new 10km target, on some kind of smooth-leaved elm, on the Devon side of the Tamar, but haven't yet cracked Cornwall where

Hertfordshire and Middlesex



there hasn't been a record since the 1980s. Again, we have identified a few elm-rich areas in the south-west, not all in random targets, which deserve monitoring. On the north coast, Diane Andrews found an adult White-letter hairstreak at Porlock, a fantastic find of a species not recorded here since 1954. We could not resist visiting the site, and



found a hatched egg, and also found some prospective Wych Elm in a gorge behind Lynton and Lynmouth, where there are some historical White-letter Hairstreak records.

We have worked diligently across Wales, and were pleased to find eggs on several targets on the fringes of the Brecon Beacons in

addition to coastal sites, so the species is getting about in this landscape. Helen Bantock discovered the species on elm in the Barmouth area, and the project has also provided records along the north Wales coastal strip. More work is needed in central Wales, to establish to what extent White-letter Hairstreaks have populated the valleys. Negative factors here are the generally acidic soils which do not encourage elm growth, and the rather wet and dull climate, not experienced on the coastal strip.

So there are areas where we are yet to be convinced whether the species is or isn't present, these being parts of Lancashire, central Wales and the south-west. Negative factors appear to be the obvious ones, such as limited amounts of elm through Dutch Elm Disease and soil type, and the poor climate of moor and mountain, which in any case is mostly associated with acidic soils. One oddity is the Weald of Kent, where there are few historic records and few elms, and despite lowland broadleaved woodland in abundance, we recorded one negative 10km, where we found but a few elm twigs after several hours searching over three visits and contacting the County Biodiversity Officer for elm records!

As to the location of elms, roadside is our favoured starting place, especially old roads or lay-bys created by bypasses or road straightening. Scruffy neglected areas, with small spinneys, often hold an elm or two. Towns and villages can be as rewarding as the wider, often over-managed 'countryside'. Embankments, such as dips into towns or on motorways, also seem to provide favourable conditions for elm. From our sightings nationally of a certain kind of 'droopy' hybrid elm tree on various roundabouts, parks, golf courses, gardens and schools, there was an obvious initiative to plant disease resistant elms probably in the 1970s, which has been successful although these trees are not suitable for hedging. And they hold white-letters, although the eggs are hard to find amongst the very tight buds. Our descriptions of elms may not be of the classic style, but having seen literally thousands of elms at close quarters, we have come to realise there is an almost limitless variation in leaf shape, twig and bud structure, and size, and all the rest, that are beyond our abilities to describe. Certainly there's Wych, English, Smooth-leaved and Cornish, and probably a whole lot more as well. And, learning that all mature Cornish Elm has been killed by Dutch Elm Disease, we did find a mature and obvious specimen, just outside Cornwall, which we

hope will hold the beloved species.

Whilst we were disappointed that volunteers didn't materialise from all branches, we have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to visit so many different areas of England and Wales. Seeing so many different landscapes, habitat types and such a great variety in elm and still finding White-letter Hairstreak has been a great eye-opener and very rewarding. It has also allowed for a more uniform approach to the survey, whereas too many individuals might have had many different opinions on the quality and quantity of elm and their ability to support White-letter Hairstreaks. However, survey help is still welcome, were anyone able to visit a target in need of surveying for elms or white-letter hairstreaks.

Anyone interested in learning more about the project and following its progress should visit:

<http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/w-album/index.php>

Butterfly Time Team, by Nigel Agar

Have we all been born in the wrong century? If we had been nineteenth century butterfly people, we would I suppose have had nets and killing bottles, setting boards and cabinets instead of digital cameras but there might have been far more butterflies around for us to look at.. According to a copy of British Butterflies by WS Coleman (1860), there were rather more around then than now.

Perhaps the Glanville Fritillary is the biggest surprise. We are used to it being strictly a creature of the Isle of Wight. It comes as a surprise to find that it was abundant around Folkestone and Dover but also reported at Stapleford in Cambridgeshire, near Peterborough and even found as far north as Fife, Scotland. The Marsh Fritillary was frequent in the south, but (rather apologetically) the nearest to London were populations at Hornsey and on the top of Muswell Hill.



Marsh Fritillary
© Ian Small

Among the nymphalids, the White Admiral, that I was brought up to believe only existed in the New Forest, was found in Epping Forest; near Colchester and was abundant in several places in Kent. The Purple Emperor was described as abundant around Colchester; in Clapham Park wood near Bedford and Barnwell Wold near Oundle. The Large Tortoiseshell was described as ‘uncertain in appearance’ but abounding in most southern counties. The Comma, more or less confined to the Welsh marches in the 1920s was found as far north as Carlisle in 1860.

Among the hairstreaks, the Black Hairstreak had more or less the same east midland distribution as today but actually ‘swarmed’ in Barnwell and Ashton Wold, Northants keeping company with the Chequered Skipper which then reached as far south as Luton and as far east as Stowmarket, Suffolk. The Chalkhill Blue had more or less the same distribution as today i.e. on chalk hills but occasionally also occurred on the northern limestone as well as being abundant on the Carboniferous limestone at Grange-over-Sands on the north shore of Morecambe Bay in (then) Lancashire. The Scotch Argus was also

common in the gardens of Grange. (They still exist across the bay at Arnside Knott.)

The Black- veined White was abundant on Thanet and in parts of Kent but then spread as far north as Huntingdon.

As far as can be seen, there was no butterfly that was actually worse placed in 1860 than now. It is not easy to see why. I think we can basically believe Coleman's reports. He had no censuses or transects to work on but presumably relied on correspondence with other enthusiasts. The reference to Barnwell and Ashton Wold, for example, probably came from the local vicar, the Rev William Bree who was a well known entomologist. His parish appears to have had a large range of butterflies including the largest known colony of Large Blues.

The climate was generally colder than at present. Those stage coaches in the snow on Victorian Christmas cards were not far from the truth at the time. There may have been less air pollution then than now but, with every house heated by smoky coal fires, factories powered by steam and London noted for pea -soup fogs, it is difficult to believe that the atmosphere was any more congenial then than now.

The rural habitat might have been a different matter. Broad-leaf woodlands were regularly coppiced rather than being neglected thickets as most of them are now. Heath lands were more widespread. Victorian mixed farming produced a rich tapestry of weedy arable lands, sun-lit hay meadows and well-cropped but flower- rich pastures that, it would seem, suited butterflies very well.

Close Encounters of the Brimstone Kind, by Diane Andrews

Back in Summer 2007, Andrew Middleton kindly gave me a young alder buckthorn, foodplant of the Brimstone butterfly, which he had grown from a berry. The little sapling was in a small pot and was three years old and less than two feet high. In previous years I had seen Brimstones several times in Alexandra Palace park, only a couple of streets away from my home, and very occasionally one had fluttered through our garden. I had read that female Brimstones have an extraordinary ability to find even the most isolated of buckthorn bushes, so I transferred my little plant to a larger pot and hoped it

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

might eventually grow big enough to maybe attract a passing wanderer. During that Summer, the tiny tree grew a few inches and managed to produce a total of just seventeen leaves before shedding them in Autumn. In Spring 2008 I inspected it regularly, wondering when/if its tiny pointed buds would sprout, other species in the garden being more forward in development, and was very pleased when the first leaves eventually appeared and, later on, some small, pale flowers, with everything seemingly healthy. By May 2008, the tree reached nearly to my waist, with the trunk not much thicker than a pencil and with seventeen twig-like branches each supporting little sprays of leaves. "Near other, larger bushes and not very noticeable", I thought, but then, I'm not a Brimstone and I was soon to receive a crash course in butterfly education!

May 10th. A hot sunny day with the tree in full sunshine. At 11:30, to my delight, a female Brimstone flew into the garden, fluttered around the buckthorn and then landed and proceeded to lay eggs on the leaves. Until 12:10 it sometimes flew away as if to inspect nearby honeysuckle, holly and convolvulus, but repeatedly returned to lay more eggs on the buckthorn. It (or others ?) visited again several times in the afternoon and was last seen at 18:25. I counted 104 eggs, some just a single egg on a leaf, up to 12 on others and 8 on a very small shoot, most under the leaves but a few on the surface.

May 11th. A butterfly at 10:15 and twice later on. Total eggs now 132.

May 12th. Another visit at 9:55 and 5 more eggs. The original eggs were bottle-shaped and pale green/blue, but by now some had turned to pale green like the leaves and some to pale orange.



Brimstone
© Ian Small

May 15th. All eggs orange in colour.

May 22nd. 16 tiny pale yellow/green caterpillars were eating small holes in the leaves.

May 25th. Despite heavy rain there were now 85 caterpillars, mostly on the young leaves at the branch tips, the largest number on one leaf being eleven (leaf 2 cm long). I removed a Harlequin ladybird which

had joined them but was not eating any (as yet ?).

May 30th. 68 caterpillars, mostly now lined up along the ribs of the leaves and nearly all underneath them, changing to a deeper green colour.

June 3rd. A few now on the upper surfaces of the leaves. I removed two Harlequin larvae and another on the 4th.

June 5th. Several caterpillars on the upper surfaces, darker-green in colour, beautifully camouflaged lying along the central ribs of the leaves.

June 8th. 52 caterpillars remaining, and unfortunately by this time nearly all the leaves were skeletal from their munching.

June 10th. I phone Andrew with plea for extra fodder and he allowed me to transfer about 40 caterpillars to his trees, leaving the remainder on my own, where they continued to munch and grow before all disappearing - I found no evidence of pupation and suspect they were taken by a pair of Great Tits to feed their garden nestbox brood (four fledglings emerged on July 7th). I heard later than two caterpillars which had been transferred to the recipient of another of Andrew's buckthorns, had pupated and two female Brimstones had emerged on July 4th.

My tree has grown a bit since then. I enjoyed my 2008 learning experience and hope for a repeat performance in 2009. And I've now managed to locate an alder buckthorn in Alexandra Palace in case I run out of fodder again!

Alan Downie

The Branch Committee would like to record its thanks, on behalf of all the members, to Alan Downie, who has decided to step down from the Committee after 12 years. During that period, Alan has been a stalwart supporter of the Branch sales stall and in that time he has raised tens of thousands of butterfly-attracting plants. These have been sold for modest sums or donated to many hundreds of gardeners, schools and other organisations across our two counties.

Thousands of hours have been devoted to rearing and potting-on seedlings, watering the plants, selling them on Branch stalls and consulting on and planting up butterfly gardens. In addition,

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

many hundreds of packets of seeds were produced each year to be given out to branch members and stall customers.

In addition, he has also led many walks for the Branch and other organisations and been invited to give numerous talks by other groups where he has also sold plants etc. These groups have often been gardening clubs, woman's group such as the WI and many more.

While Alan will continue to support the Branch in many of these ways, it will no longer be as a member of the Committee.

Sales and Publicity, by Malcolm Hull

During the butterfly season our sales and publicity stall will be visiting a number of shows and events. The aims are to promote Butterfly Conservation, raise awareness of butterflies, provide advice on butterfly gardening and to recruit new members. A selection of seeds for growing butterfly attracting plants is available by means of a donation and there are other butterfly related items for sale to help raise branch funds.

A list of events we plan to attend this year is set out below. All members are welcome to come along to either just to see the stall or to help if you wish. For those who can't make a show, all the sales goods and seeds are available by mail order. A full list of seeds and goods which are for sale is kept on the sales page of the Branch website.

This year we are hoping to arrange a special event at Butterfly World in St Albans, which opens on 5 June. Keep an eye on the Branch website for details.

Saturday 4 – Sunday 5 April – Capel Manor Festival of Gardening and Food 10am – 5 pm each day, Bullsmoor Lane Enfield.

Admission tbc www.capel.ac.uk

Saturday 16 & Sunday 17 May – The Rickmansworth Festival

10.30am – 5.00pm each day, The Aquadrome, Harefield Road, Rickmansworth. This event combines the traditional Canal Festival with the Environmental Fair. Admission charge.

Saturday 23 May & Sunday 24 May – Herts County Show

The Showground, Dunstable Rd Redbourn. 9.00 am – 5.30 pm each day. Admission charges apply www.hertsshow.com

Saturday 20 June & Sunday 21 June – Middlesex County Show

Middlesex Showground, Harvil Rd, Harefield, Uxbridge, off A40, just after Junction 1 of M40. Admission charges apply
www.middlesexshow.co.uk

Sunday 20 September – Chilterns Countryside Festival 11 am – 4 pm National Trust Estate, Ashridge Estate Visitor Centre, near Tring. Admission Free.

An updated list of sales events will be kept on the branch website at <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/> For more information about butterfly sales events, contact Malcolm Hull (details on back cover).

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey 2009, by Andrew Wood

Would you like to help a new butterfly survey scheme?

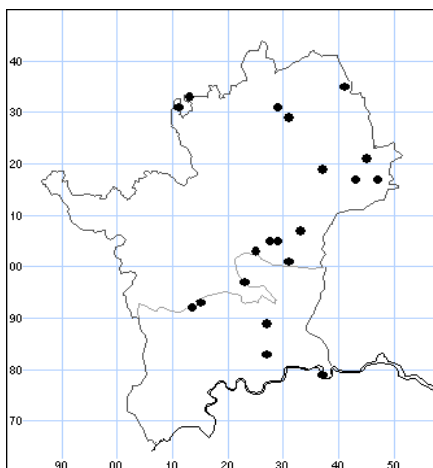
Can you spare time on 2 days in July and August to visit a grid square and do two 1km walks to record butterflies?

Then this is for you.

From 2006-2008 a few BC branches took part in a pilot scheme to test a method of sampling butterfly populations in the wider countryside. This method is intended to complement, not replace transects, and enable records from a wide variety of habitats to be collected. The areas to be surveyed have been randomly picked by BC headquarters to give a good spread in each branch area. Some squares will be rich in butterflies, others less so, but all results will be important.

Where are we surveying?

How to plan the survey



TL1031	north of Hexton (part in Beds)
TL1232	Apsley End (part in Beds)
TL2502	Swanley Bar/Little Heath
TL2804	Northaw Great Wood
TL2831	between Clothall and Rushden
TL2904	Cuffley Camp
TL3000	west of Crews Hill
TL3128	south of Cottered
TL3207	Broxbourne Wood (south of Brickendon)
TL3618	High Cross
TL4135	North east of Nuthampstead
TL4216	North of Widford
TL4421	west of Bury Green near Little Hadham
TL4717	Trims Green west of Spellbrook, south of Bishops Stortford
TQ1492	Harrow Weald Common southern half
TQ1593	Bentley priory/Stanmore Common
TQ2397	London Shire golf course west of Monken Hadley
TQ2688	east side of Hampstead Garden Suburb
TQ2782	Baker Street/Regents Park
TQ3778	Isle of Dogs west of Mudchute City Farm

If you are surveying a square that has been allocated to you, it will be necessary to establish a fixed survey route through the square. The survey route is two parallel 1-km long survey lines across your square (running N-S or E-W), that are subdivided into ten continuous 200m sections numbered 1-10.

- Ideally, survey lines should be around 500m apart and 250m in from the edge of the square.
- Because these squares may be re-surveyed in future years, it is important to note the starting points of each section either with the help of permanent landmarks (trees, hedges, boulders, houses etc) or by using temporary markers (coloured tape or cord etc).
- In practice, your survey lines are likely to deviate from the 'ideal' because of problems with access, or barriers such as roads, rivers, and canals. In cases where the survey lines deviate considerably from the 'ideal', at no point should the two lines be closer together than 100m.
- For each of the two survey lines, only record 1-km even if it means not reaching the edge of the square
- Minor intrusions into adjacent squares are perfectly acceptable and may provide the only practical way to carry out the survey. Indeed the route will be acceptable as long as more of the survey line falls within the square rather than outside.
- It is advisable to make an initial visit to your 1-km square to familiarise yourself with the route.

Obtaining access to the survey route within squares

A large number of 1-km squares have paths, roads, bridleways or open access across them. This information can be gathered from an OS map and the open access website (<http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/>). Unless there is open access to your whole square then it is important that you contact the landowner to gain permission to carry out the survey visits. We advise contacting the nearest dwelling to your square either by telephoning to arrange a visit or by sending them a letter. A letter template is available which outlines the reasons why the surveys are being carried out and what they entail.

How to survey

- For each square record butterflies along the two 1-km survey lines on the same day.
- Walk each section at a slow, steady pace counting all butterflies seen within 2.5m either side of the survey line, 5m ahead and 5m from ground level up.
- Try to avoid double counting where possible e.g. when an individual butterfly repeatedly flies in and out of your recording box. However, if

you lose sight of an individual, and later regain sight of the same species do not assume this is the same individual.

- Do not count butterflies behind you.

When to survey and recording criteria

- A minimum of two visits to each square are required to take part in this survey and these should take place in July and August, with at least 10 days between the two visits.
- In addition, one or two further visits can be made to the square during May, June, July or August with at least 10 days between visits.
- If possible return visits to squares should be made at the same time of day.
- Record the time at which you start and end each survey line (1-km) on the survey recording form.
- Survey lines should generally be walked between 10.45am and 15.45pm and only when weather conditions are suitable for butterfly activity: dry conditions, wind speed less than Beaufort Scale 5 and temperature 13°C or greater if there is at least 60% sunshine, or more than 17°C if overcast.
- If a distinct shadow is cast (bright cloud) then conditions may be classed as sunny.
- If possible, sunshine should be estimated for *each* section to the nearest 10% of the time it was sunny while you were walking that section (shade cast by features such as trees does not count).
- At the end of each survey visit, record shade temperature (e.g. with a portable thermometer placed in a shaded position at the beginning of the first survey line before you start), estimate average sunshine (based on section data), and average windspeed, using the following Beaufort Scale (see Table 1).

Exceptions to general recording rules:

- It is also permissible to record from 09:30-10:45 and 15:45-16:30, if at these times the majority (>75%) of the survey area is unshaded and the standard (described above) weather criteria have been met.

Species identification

Try to identify and separate all species you encounter, including where

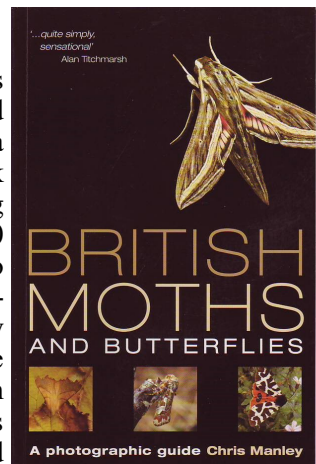
possible similar species such as Small and Essex Skipper, and the 'cabbage' whites.

Further Details

Further information will be made available in the coming months but if you are interested (no obligation!) please contact Andrew Wood (details on the back cover of the newsletter)

New Moth Book, by Ian Small

I recently came across this book by Chris Manley in my local bookshop, and unreservedly recommend it as a photographic identification guide. The book includes photos of 1420 species, including 850 macro-moths, 74 butterflies and 500 micro-moths. I have always struggled to find any source to help me identify micro-moths, and so this section alone is probably worth the purchase price. Further, all the photographs are taken of live specimens in natural settings, in contrast to many books which portray them as drawings of pinned specimens. Each of the species photographs is accompanied by a brief, but valuable, description of size, scarcity, flight period, key identification features, distribution, habitat and larval foodplant. If this were not enough, the book also contains photos of 314 species of caterpillars, pupae and eggs.



The book is in paperback format, on good quality paper, and is published by A&C Black. (ISBN 978-0-7136-8636-4), RRP £19.99.

Butterfly DVD - On sale to raise funds for the Hertfordshire & Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation

Sandy Harman has produced a new 90 minute DVD entitled “The Best of Butterfly Days PLUS”

It is compiled from some of the best clips of the past five versions of “Butterfly Days” and much fresh material. The PLUS refers to a new section, showing some of the rarer butterflies that visit this country and/or were once resident here - a further eleven species. This DVD can be likened to a field trip around Britain to see butterflies during the six months from April to September. 58 species (in addition to the 11 in the PLUS section) are identified by discreet captions, as are most of the other subjects. These include caterpillars, dragonflies, moths and wildflowers etc. There is no music, minimal voice-over, and only natural sounds of the countryside. Detailed close-ups abound.

The DVD costs £8.00, including p&p, and of this, at least £6.00 goes to our Branch funds - more if you add something to cover the postage costs, as many members have. To buy, just send a cheque, payable to ‘S Harman’ to 31, Upper Manor Road, Milford, Godalming, GU8 5JW. - and why not get one for a friend as well - Sandy would be happy to send this direct, if you so wished. You can enjoy beautiful views of our wonderful butterflies, and help support this Branch at the same time.



Copy Deadline for the Autumn Newsletter will be

28 August

NB it helps the editor if you can submit an electronic copy of your article (but don't worry if you can't). Files can be on disk or sent by e-mail to ian.small@lineone.net or send an article by post - address on back cover

I look forward to you sending me your articles describing what a wonderful Summer you have had, and all the butterflies and moths you have seen. Happy Butterflying !!



Conservation Dates

Conservation work is one of the most important activities of the Society, as loss or neglect of suitable habitats is one of the major reasons for the decline in many of our butterflies as well as other wildlife.

Below are a series of dates across Herts. and Middlesex where you can help with essential management that aims to maintain the correct conditions on these sites for the wildlife that inhabits them. Several of the dates are run by the HMWT on their nature reserves.

Millhopper's Pasture SP 900149. Contact Jez Perkins on 07967 832627 for details of planned work parties

Therfield Heath, TL 335400 First Sunday of each month from 10.00 a.m. - 1 p.m. Contact Paul Palmer, Clerk to the Conservators, on (01462) 675232

Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve TL 252396 for the entrance off Hinxworth Road. Work parties on the third Sunday of each month starting at 10am. Contact Chris James on (01462) 742684

Hertford Heath TL 354111. For details ring Anthony Oliver on (01992) 583404.

Fryent Country Park - details from Barn Hill Conservation Group on 020 8206 0492, www.bhcg.ik.com

Patmore Heath TL 443257. Meet at 10.00 a.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Further details from Gavin Vicary (01279) 771933

Committee Members

Chairman: David Chandler

110 Norbury Avenue, Watford, Herts. WD24 2PD(01923) 253793
david@mvirtual.net

Branch Organiser / Committee Secretary: Liz Goodyear

7 Chestnut Avenue, Ware, Herts., SG12 7JE (01920) 487066
elizabethgoodyear@talk21.com

Membership Secretary: Margaret Noakes

Old Church Cottage, Chapel Lane, Long Marston, Herts HP23 4QT.....(01296) 660072

Treasurer: John Hollingdale

36 Southfield Park, North Harrow, Middx. HA2 6HE(020) 8863 2077
hollhu@yahoo.co.uk

Newsletter Editor: Ian Small

59 Penn Way, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 2SH.....(01462) 677654
ian.small@lineone.net

Conservation Advisor: Brian Sawford

38 Northfields, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4QX(01462) 639859

Records Collator: John Murray

Field End, Marshalls Heath, Wheathampstead, Herts. AL4 8HS (01582) 833544
J.B.Murray@open.ac.uk

Moth Recorder: Andrew Wood

93 Bengeo Street, Hertford, Herts. SG14 3EL(01992) 503571
zoothorn@ntlworld.com

Sales Officer: Malcolm Hull

11 Abbey View Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL3 4QL.....(01727) 857893
malcolmhull@ntlworld.com

Ann Piper

2 The Hawthorns, Maple Cross, Rickmansworth, WD3 9UH.....(01923) 770220
ann.piper@ukonline.co.uk

Nigel Agar

34 Oakfield Avenue, Hitchin, Herts. SG4 9JB.....(01462) 459870
nigel.agar@hertscc.gov.uk

Millhoppers Reserve Manager: Jez Perkins

43 Kingsley Walk, Tring, Herts.HP23 5DR..... 07967 832627
jez@ashvale.co.uk

The magazine is produced by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex branch of **Butterfly Conservation** (Company limited by guarantee), registered in England (2206468). Registered Office:Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP. Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268). The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Committee or the National Society. Copyright 2009.