

Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH

NEWSLETTER ISSUE **69**

Autumn 2014

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Chairman's Report - Andrew Wood

As this year's butterfly season draws to a rather slow close, it is worth reflecting on the contrasts between 2013 and 2014. Last year saw a dreadful first 6 months followed by an incredible July and good August, this year saw nature rebalancing things with a mild first half of the year, a good July followed by a rather anti-climactic quiet August as the weather dipped away after the first week. Put the two years together and we get something approaching an average.

What this shows is that we should never look at any one year in isolation but look at trends over a longer period. Despite all the research, active management of sites etc., there remains the one great uncontrollable variable – the weather that seems to have a greater influence than anything else.

One intervention that, unfortunately, seems to be increasingly common is the release of butterflies to commemorate weddings, funerals and other significant events. In England this goes back as early as 1969 when the Rolling Stones released a box of Large Whites in Hyde Park in commemoration of Brian Jones, many of them were already dead on release by all accounts. Things have got more sophisticated in more recent years and particularly in the USA has become common practice often involving large colourful species such as Painted Ladies, Swallowtails or Monarchs.

But this year we seem to be seeing it more than ever in the UK. In our area we have had several reports of unusual species, for instance in the Ruislip area not far from a crematorium. Such releases do nothing for conservation as they distort records of natural occurrences of butterflies and may well be inbred and genetically alien compared to the naturally occurring British examples.

Although these releases are unlikely to create environmental problems like the Harlequin ladybird or the Oak Processionary Moth, they are undesirable and I would urge members of Butterfly Conservation not to become involved with such releases.

NOTICES

Our Branch is sponsoring the creation of an improved British butterfly garden at Butterfly World in St Albans. Work needs to start imminently, so if you are green-fingered and live locally, then please consider volunteering to help - details below:

A very
BRITISH BUTTERFLY GARDEN
Volunteers required!

Butterfly World is creating a beautiful new British Butterfly Garden for Spring 2015. This garden will attract our native butterflies and become the inspiration for thousands of visitors each year to create butterfly havens in their own gardens.

Free 2015 seasonal membership*
Make new friends
Create butterfly habitat
Help wildlife
Learn new skills

To apply email info@butterflyworldproject.com
or call 01727 869203
www.butterflyworldproject.com

*Subject to volunteer commitment

 Butterfly Conservation
Supporting the UK's butterfly conservation

Supported by Butterfly Conservation
Herts & Middx Branch

Butterfly World Autumn Lecture Series

Butterfly World are hosting a series of interesting lectures this Autumn:

- 8 October (Wednesday), 19.30
Great British Insects
by Dr Luke Tilley (Outreach Director, Royal Entomological Society)
- 15 October (Wednesday), 19.30
Butterflies that Live with Ants
by Professor Jeremy Thomas (President, Royal Entomological Society, and best known for his work on the Large Blue)
- 22 October (Wednesday), 19.30
The Rothschilds: Nature Conservation & Butterflies
by Mick Jones MBE (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust)

Full details are at: <http://www.butterflyworldproject.com/media/news/articles/the-2014-butterfly-world-lectures/?id=0000000067>

All talks are £3. Pre-booking is advisable to avoid disappointment. To book a place, please telephone 01727 869203 or e-mail info@butterflyworldproject.com

Date for your Diary:

Our 2015 Members' Day and AGM will take place on Saturday, 28th March 2015, at Welwyn Civic Centre, Old Welwyn, Herts. (This is the same location that we used for this year's very successful 20th anniversary event.)

Reminder

Don't forget to submit all your 2014 butterfly records to Andrew Wood as soon as possible, (and by 9th November) to facilitate preparation of the Annual Report. Contact details are on the back of this newsletter.

New Members' Day, 26th July 2014, by Malcolm Hull

Our first ever New Members Day was held at Butterfly World in St. Albans and was well attended. 35 people joined to see John Murray display a fine array of moths trapped over the previous night. During the morning, several committee members spoke on different aspects of the Branch's work and how new members could become involved.

After lunch, I led a walk round the grounds, following much of the transect route. Small Blues were out in good numbers with around 15 seen. Common Blues are just out and we saw around 40, plus a couple of Brown Argus. Liz Goodyear achieved the best sightings of the day, firstly a male Chalkhill Blue, which posed obligingly for photos for several minutes while nectaring on Marjoram. It appeared in good condition, so had probably emerged quite recently, an indication that the species may be breeding at the site. Two individuals (both male) were spotted here last year and the larval food-plant, Horseshoe Vetch, is thriving at this site. A possible second Chalkhill Blue could not be confirmed.

Ten minutes later Liz spotted a Clouded Yellow, nectaring on Birds-foot Trefoil. Small Copper, Marbled White, Small and Essex Skipper, Large, Small & Green-veined White, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper were also seen in the meadows, plus very many 6-spot Burnet moths. In the gardens, Peacocks were numerous on the Buddleias, with Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Brimstone and Red Admirals also seen. This site is maturing well and certainly living up to its early promise.



Some new members on the afternoon walk.

Field Trip Reports

Moth night at Gilbert's Orchard, Harrow, 21st May, by John Hollingdale

The weather forecast was awful; heavy rain predicted just at lighting-up time. The moral of that is don't always go by what the 'experts' say. Actually apart from a smidgen of drizzle the evening was dry, cloudy and warm; ideal conditions.

There were 8 of us; four from Harrow Natural History Society and Helenka the head gardener. Dick Middleton and Rob Payne; Butterfly Conservation members did most of the identifications.

Twenty-nine species of moth were recorded; five micros, the rest macros. Amongst those were Pebble Hook-tip, Sandy Carpet, Brindled White-spot, Orange Footman and Green Silver-lines. We called it a night at midnight.

If anyone would like the full list please contact me.

National Moth Night, Stanmore Country Park, Friday 4th July 2014, by John Hollingdale

Four of us arrived at the Stanmore Country Park car park with persistent rain falling. As a couple of us were not 100% fit and as we waited the rain got heavier and heavier we decided not to go ahead with the event. On the plus side a Pipistrelle bat frequented the car park and the local foxes were in fine voice; one seen.

Ruislip Woods NNR, 9th July, by Dick Middleton

This was a joint meeting between the Branch and the Ruislip and District Natural History Society. The route taken was the same as that followed a week later in 2013 but the weather was not as hot and, in more exposed areas, it was quite breezy.

Twelve of us assembled at the end of Reservoir Road, near the Waters Edge pub and then set off for the unkempt field on the southern edge of Copse Wood. Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Small/Essex Skippers

(examples of both the latter were netted for confirmation of presence) were much in evidence. Ched George then netted and boxed a Marbled White so that the group could have a close view of this beautifully marked butterfly; Small Tortoiseshell and Gatekeeper were also given the same treatment. The butterfly list for this area was completed by the addition of a Large Skipper and a Green-veined White. Moths were not neglected and Silver Y, Six-spot Burnet, Shaded Broad-bar and the larvae of Cinnabar and Buff Ermine were recorded and a Roesel's Bush-cricket was also noted.

We then entered Copse Wood and the tracks followed en route to Poor's Field yielded Speckled Woods, a couple of White Admirals, a Red Admiral which perched obligingly on the trunk of a nearby Hornbeam and a Comma. Poor's Field only yielded more Meadow Browns and skippers, the strength of the breeze meant that they were keeping their heads down. However, a slight diversion so that the group could admire a nice clump of Harebells resulted in a Blood-vein moth being found lurking in the long grass.

It was now time to climb up to the top of the hill in Park Wood to the point near St Vincents Nursing Home where it was hoped Purple Emperor would be seen; there had already been reports from here recently. No luck for most of us but a couple of brief glimpses for some of a large butterfly passing over at treetop height was almost certainly our quarry. Perhaps we were not patient enough but the breeze mentioned earlier was making the tree tops sway quite violently so the chances of finding a perched Purple Emperor were slim, so while Purple Hairstreak and a Holly Blue had showed themselves in the more sheltered parts, it was decided to move on. At Ched's suggestion, based on his previous experience, we moved down to the area known locally as Grub Ground. It is here that the sallows that the female Purple Emperor is likely to be found on are present. En route we chanced upon a Silver-washed Fritillary, a nice male which posed long enough on bramble for everyone to get a good view; a couple of Commas present gave a useful size comparison. This was to prove to be the Grand Finale.

Norton Green, 17th July, by Peter Clark

Seven of us in all turned up for the field trip to Norton Green although I arrived earlier at 0930 to put some crab paste (no shrimp paste at Asda!) on some low-lying leaves around the open area in the hope of attracting the Purple Emperor. No luck there or anywhere else this morning but we had a satisfying day with the warmth, light winds and intermittent sunshine. The highlights were some fresh looking Silver-washed Fritillaries (male and female) on the common and Purple Hairstreaks on the south eastern edge of Watery Grove. A fellow butterfly enthusiast, Lee, carried out an experiment (which he also attempted the day before) by spraying some diluted honey solution on some of the lower leaves of the tall and nearest oak tree to the opening to the big open field, to tempt the Purple Hairstreaks down because of the apparent absence of honeydew on the tree leaves. Within minutes of meeting Lee at about 1130am, we were treated with a beautiful male Purple Hairstreak opening its wings on an oak leaf just above eye-level. Overall, between 1030 and 1300, we saw 19 species: 30+ Gatekeepers, 30+ Ringlets, 5+ Large Whites, 5+ Small Whites, 2 Green-veined Whites, 30+ Meadow Browns, 10+ Marbled Whites, 5+ Small Skippers, 2+ Essex Skippers, 50+ Small/Essex Skippers, 1 Large Skipper, 2 Common Blues, 1 Small Copper (very fresh), 5+ Silver-washed Fritillaries, 5+ Purple Hairstreaks, 3+ Peacocks, 2 Red Admirals, 5 Commas, 2 Small Tortoiseshells and a Brimstone.

Heartwood, 20th July, by Andrew Steele

Nineteen people turned up at Heartwood to enjoy a pleasant walk with 16 species seen. Highlights were 3 Small Coppers, Brown Argus, Red Admiral, all 3 Skippers, Common Blues, Speckled Wood, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacocks, Marbled Whites, Large White, Green-veined White, Small White and big numbers of Meadow Brown and Ringlets.



The Rothamsted Insect Survey’s Golden Years of Moth Monitoring, by Richard Harrington

In the northwest of the branch’s territory lies the town of Harpenden, home to the oldest and most famous agricultural research institute in

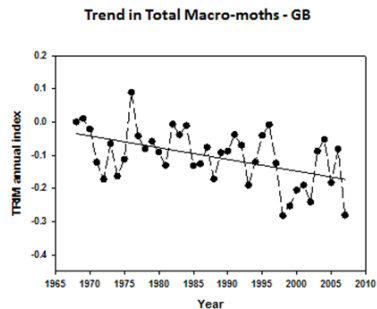
the world, Rothamsted Research. Founded in 1843 by Sir John Bennet Lawes, its work centres on improving crop yield and quality in a sustainable manner. It is famous for, amongst other things, its long-term field experiments. The “Broadbalk Experiment” was the first and has been in winter wheat since 1843, the different plots showing the impact of fertiliser use and modern agricultural practice on yields. “Park Grass” looks at the impacts of acidity and fertilisation on plant community structure. There are similar experiments involving other crops.

Following in the tradition of long-term experimentation, the Rothamsted Insect Survey was established 50 years ago by the great ecologist L.R. (Roy) Taylor, building on work of C.B. Williams and C.G. Johnson, pioneers in the study of insect migration. Roy’s main interest was in the spatial and temporal dynamics of insects and he needed data with which to develop his ideas. Two complementary trap networks resulted. Suction-traps 12.2 metres tall were designed primarily to sample aphids, one of the UK’s most important agricultural pest groups. Roy realised that if he could understand the factors influencing where and when they were likely to be a problem, it would be possible to rationalise insecticide usage. The timing could not have been better. Rachel Carson’s landmark book “Silent Spring” had just been published and, in the face of the resulting massive public concern over the environmental impact of pesticides, the Government enthusiastically supported projects addressing the issue. Perhaps of more interest to BC members is the network of light-traps. Roy saw his chance following a request from the Association of School Natural History Societies for suggestions of projects to engage young people in natural science. He resurrected the light-trap designed by Williams in the 1930s and before long they were operating in schools throughout the UK.

Today 15 suction-traps are used in a range of projects spanning the full fundamental to applied science spectrum. As Roy predicted, they support growers week-in week-out to in making decisions as to whether the use of insecticides is worthwhile. Aphids are identified professionally (amateur aphidologists are hard to come by!) with the remainder of the sample stored for possible future investigation. The light-traps, on the other hand, are an early example of “citizen

science”, relying very much on the generosity of volunteers to operate them and, in many cases, identify the samples. No longer operated by schools, 84 light-traps are currently operated in the UK, with five in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Over the past 50 years, at least 500 have come and gone, with a total of 56 in Hertfordshire (many of these at Rothamsted) and four in Middlesex.

The great value of both trap networks lies in the fact that they have been operated in a standardised manner over a long time period, facilitating robust analysis of change and the erection of hypotheses as to its cause. Aphids are flying a month earlier than they did half a century ago and their abundance shows no signs of abating. Sadly, two thirds of our commonest moths are in decline. Our data formed the central plank of the report “The State of Britain’s Larger Moths 2013” published jointly with Butterfly Conservation detailing the population changes of our common moths.



The data support the widely held feeling that insects we don’t want are doing very nicely, whereas those that we do want are suffering. Why should this be? Most pests, inevitably, are highly fecund and highly mobile. These characteristics make them adaptable to changes in land-use and climate, for example. Many insects of conservation concern are far less fecund and mobile and may thus be less able to cope with change. That, at least, is the hypothesis which some of our analyses and experiments at Rothamsted are testing.

The longer the run of standardised data the more valuable it becomes and the Insect Survey will continue to contribute hugely to solving pest control and conservation issues. Our work is supported by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) as a “National Capability”.



Rothamsted Light Trap



The Rothamsted Insect Survey at Work



50th Anniversary Birthday Cake

Chicago Butterflies, by Andrew Wood

This summer I visited Chicago for 10 days and you might well wonder, “What does the 3rd largest city in the USA have to offer in terms of butterflies?”. Chicago’s motto is Urbs in Horto, meaning City in a Garden and although there is much high rise downtown surrounded by urban sprawl there are several good parks where sympathetic landscaping and planting have created wildlife friendly habitats. Twenty miles north of downtown is the Chicago Botanic Gardens and these include several acres of recreated prairie habitat. To me a prairie was just a windswept wide open are of wild grass but it would seem that prairies were rather more like vast wild flower meadows, and their loss in the USA has been as grievous as our loss of meadows in the UK.

So what can you see in urban Chicago? Well the most common species by far is only too familiar to us as it is the Small White, and not too far behind is the Red Admiral. However next most frequent is the Monarch and to see these huge stately butterflies drifting around and over flower beds is a fine site. They do land to feed on coneflowers and can then be approached and photographed quite willingly. Also present is a mimic species The Viceroy which is very similar but, unlike the Monarch, is not poisonous to birds. It behaves similarly but has a line of veins across the upper hindwing that distinguishes it from the Monarch.

Also much evidence are the Sulphur butterflies that are closely related to the Clouded Yellow. They rarely settle for long and there was certainly more than one species by the Clouded Sulphur seemed the most frequent.. Larger than its British namesake was the Comma which enjoys basking in the sun and has a dark grey hindwing and is a bit larger. Also common was what looks like a miniature Holly Blue, the Summer Azure, it is closely related to our species and seems to be found around various evergreen shrubs.

The most curious species is the Snout Butterfly, which has no UK relation, it feeds with its wings closed and is distinguished by its long palps which do not seem to have a known function. (*This species is closely related to the European Nettle Tree butterfly - editor.*)

The Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Black Swallowtail were also around, particularly in the wetland areas of Lincoln Park but never really came close enough to get good views or photographs

What about the moths? Well we only saw two species neither of which you need to travel for! One Large Yellow Underwing siting onthe wall of a bank in the Financial District and lage numbers of the migrant species nomophilla noctuella – the Rush veneer on some of the lawn area in the parks.

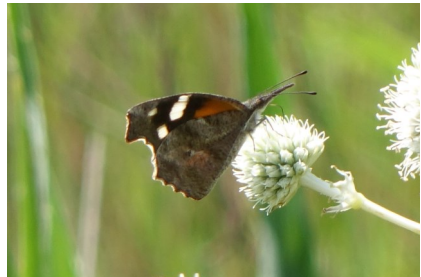
This wasn't a wildlife holiday and nothing we saw is rare but it's well worth keeping your eyes open in even a big city.

Monarch.
Photo © Andrew Wood



Summary Azure
Photo © Andrew Wood

Snout Butterfly
Photo © Andrew Wood



Return to Mudchute in The Isle of Dogs, by David Chandler

In 2006 I wrote about the Mudchute Local Nature Reserve in the magazine. I used to visit the site in my lunch-hour when I worked in Canary Wharf. The site is a green space near the City Farm in London's Isle of Dogs – you may recall it once featured on the map in the opening credits of the serial Eastenders as the green bit just before the bend of the Thames above Greenwich; and being situated in the most southern-eastern corner of the vice county of Middlesex, is also just over on the north-west bank of the River Thames from The O2.

Eight years have passed and I'm a retired Granddad now. In mid-July my daughter Linda, my son-in-law Trevor and my grand-daughter met me for lunch in one of the restaurants in Canary Wharf and, afterwards, when Trevor had gone back to work, Linda, little Maria and I paid a stop-off visit whilst on their way back to their home in south London to Mudchute LNR to see the animals in the City Farm and to look at the reserve's butterflies.

In the 2006 season I found 17 different species over the spring and summer season so we were hopeful of seeing some butterflies in the warm twenty four degree sunshine. We entered the site at the Crossharbour Lane / ASDA end and walked a circular route around the perimeter.

By the entrance there were lots of Meadow Browns dancing in the tall grass. Adjacent to this there is a small copse/hedgerow along the pathway that follows the DLR track and here Large Skippers, Small Skippers, Essex Skippers and Speckled Woods were found. Along the top of the embankment that skirts the perimeter of the site we found numerous Gatekeepers and good numbers of Commas, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells on the many Buddleias' found on the site. Towards the far end of the park near the City Farm a Red Admiral was seen then, Small and Green Veined Whites put in an appearance. Returning to the top end of the park near to ASDA Superstore end is a wild grassland area where we found more Meadow Browns and a final pleasant surprise near the exit gate to Mudchute DLR station, in the spotting of some early second-brood Common Blues.

We were very pleased to find a dozen different butterfly species in

such an urban location, although I could not help but notice that since my last visit the site has become overgrown because nowadays many of the secondary pathways were difficult to navigate. Pushing Maria's buggy Linda struggled in places. Further, and perhaps of greater concern, the large grassy areas at the north eastern end are becoming scrubbed up and so the Small Copper and Common Blue butterflies' food plants, that were easy to find in 2006, may soon be squeezed out by the more aggressive hardier woody plants that have moved in.

People say "you should never go back to old haunts" however it was a pleasure to pay a visit to my past and despite my concern of scrubbing up, it should not take too much effort to bring the park back to its fine bio diverse habitat condition I enjoyed in the early 2000s.

Impact of Weather on the Earliest Emergence Dates of UK Butterflies, by Ian Small

Among the wealth of information presented on the website of the national society (<http://butterfly-conservation.org/>) are the dates of earliest emergence for each of our UK species of butterfly. Data from the current year is the default view, but you can select previous years for reference. Out of interest, I have compared the data from last year and this year. The result is perhaps not too surprising when you think back to how cold the early months of 2013 were, in comparison to the milder start we had to 2014 (*see Andrew's article on page 2*). What did surprise me, however, was just how consistent this difference was, impacting almost all species, regardless of their normal emergence times.



I reproduce the comparison table below, which also includes the geographic location of those earliest sightings. The competitive amongst you will notice that Herts & Middx are largely conspicuous by their absence from these records - perhaps that is a challenge for 2015 !

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

| Name | Date 2014 | Date 2013 | Location (2014) |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Adonis Blue | 04-May | 22-May | Dorset |
| Black Hairstreak | 08-Jun | 21-Jun | Cambridgeshire |
| Brimstone | 2 Jan | 01-Jan | Hants, Somerset, Suffolk & Sussex |
| Brown Argus | 26-Apr | 16-May | Sussex |
| Brown Hairstreak | 12-Jul | 24-Jul | Dorset |
| Chalkhill Blue | 26-Jun | 07-Jul | Kent & Sussex |
| Chequered Skipper | 14-May | 21-May | Argyll |
| Clouded Yellow | 26-Mar | 01-Jun | Devon |
| Comma | 02-Jan | 08-Jan | Sussex |
| Common Blue | 11-Apr | 05-May | Dorset |
| Cryptic Wood White | 06-May | 07-May | Co. Armagh |
| Dark Green Fritillary | 21-May | 10-Jun | Derbyshire |
| Dingy Skipper | 10-Apr | 04-May | Sussex |
| Duke of Burgundy | 09-Apr | 30-Apr | Hampshire |
| Essex Skipper | 14-Jun | 05-Jul | Essex |
| Gatekeeper | 13-Jun | 26-Jun | Derbyshire |
| Glanville Fritillary | 29-Apr | 25-May | Isle of Wight |
| Grayling | 11-Jun | 25-Jun | Caernarvonshire |
| Green Hairstreak | 30-Mar | 11-Apr | Gloucestershire |
| Green-veined White | 15-Mar | 16-Apr | Oxfordshire & Suffolk |
| Grizzled Skipper | 01-Apr | 23-Apr | Kent & Sussex |
| Heath Fritillary | 15-May | 01-Jun | Kent |
| High Brown Fritillary | 09-Jun | 10-Jun | Glamorgan |
| Holly Blue | 08-Mar | 06-Apr | Dorset |
| Large Blue | 01-Jun | 14-Jun | Somerset |

| Name | Date 2014 | Date 2013 | Location (2014) |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| Large Heath | 06-Jun | 14-Jun | Co. Londonderry |
| Large Skipper | 17-May | 02-Jun | Derbyshire, Devon & Northamptonshire |
| Large White | 7 March | 03-Apr | Dorset |
| Lulworth Skipper | 21-May | 01-Jul | Dorset |
| Marbled White | 05-Jun | 09-Jun | Somerset |
| Marsh Fritillary | 03-May | 18-May | Dorset |
| Meadow Brown | 21-May | 22-May | Derbyshire & Wiltshire |
| Mountain Ringlet | 06-Jun | 10-Jun | Cumbria |
| Northern Brown Argus | 01-Jun | 07-Jun | Lancashire |
| Orange-tip | 16-Mar | 27-Feb | Hampshire |
| Painted Lady | 07-Feb | 01-Jan | Ceredigion |
| Peacock | 02-Jan | 01-Jan | Camb, Devon, Dorset, Glamorgan, Hants, Lincs & Yorkshire |
| Pearl-bordered Fritillary | 15-Apr | 27-Apr | Cornwall & Devon |
| Purple Emperor | 17-Jun | 01-Jul | Surrey |
| Purple Hairstreak | 12-Jun | 29-Jun | Essex |
| Red Admiral | 02-Jan | 01-Jan | Devon, Dorset, Glamorgan, Hants, Kent, Lincs, Middx, Suffolk, Sussex & Wilts |
| Ringlet | 03-Jun | 20-Jun | Gloucestershire |
| Scotch Argus | 11-Jul | 11-Jul | Cumbria |
| Silver-spotted Skipper | 12-Jul | 22-Jul | Oxfordshire |
| Silver-studded Blue | 01-Jun | 04-Jun | Cornwall |
| Silver-washed Fritillary | 08-Jun | 25-Jun | Essex |

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

| Name | Date 2014 | Date 2013 | Location (2014) |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| Small Blue | 13-Apr | 06-May | Hampshire |
| Small Copper | 29-Mar | 05-Mar | Dorset |
| Small Heath | 16-Apr | 02-May | Surrey |
| Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary | 30-Apr | 16-May | Devon |
| Small Skipper | 08-Jun | 27-Jun | Derbyshire |
| Small Tortoiseshell | 02-Jan | 01-Jan | Devon, Kent, Leics, Lincs, Norfolk & Somerset |
| Small White | 25-Feb | 02-Mar | Sussex |
| Speckled Wood | 10-Jan | 01-Jan | Surrey |
| Swallowtail | 13-May | 19-May | Norfolk |
| Wall | 26-Mar | 01-May | Devon |
| White Admiral | 06-Jun | 19-Jun | Essex & Suffolk |
| White-letter Hairstreak | 10-Jun | 27-Jun | Essex |
| Wood White | 13-Apr | 02-May | Surrey |

Mate Selection by Butterflies, by Ian Small

We will all be familiar with the sight of male butterflies of most species chasing ‘anything that moves’ that enters their territory. However, the vast majority of these encounters are very brief, as the male in question quickly realises that the potential mate is from a different species, or is another male of their own species. Even when the new butterfly is an unreceptive female of the same species, these encounters rarely last more than a few seconds, before the male realises he is wasting his time and goes back to a lookout perch.

While on holiday in France this year, I noticed two instances with the same species - Pearly Heath - where the male wouldn’t take no for an answer. The big surprise was that in both cases the unwilling female

was from a different species! The males were very aggressive and were clearly trying to mate with the poor females, who had to vigorously defend themselves. It was as close to attempted lepidopteral rape as you could imagine. Eventually the females escaped.

Has anyone else seen this behaviour in this, or other, butterfly species?

Pearly Heath attempting to mate with Small Heath (left) and Ripart's Anomalous Blue (right). Photos © Ian Small



Copy Deadline for the next Newsletter will be
15 December 2014

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 sent by e-mail to ian-small@virginmedia.com
or send an article by post - address on back cover

I look forward to hearing of all your exciting butterfly or moth observations and anecdotes.

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Branch website: <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/>
