

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 13

MARCH 1998



**BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATION**

**A Busy Year Ahead
by Gavin Vicary**

The first sunny days of spring are now with us and I am sure many of you will be seeing the first Brimstones, Small Tortoiseshells, Commas and Peacocks of the year.

The start of the butterfly season is a good time to remind people to record what they see and to send the results to John Murray later in the year. These observations will then contribute to our annual report and help us build up an even better picture of the distributions of each of the different species which is obviously essential as a basis for

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conservation. We are liaising closely with the Herts. & Middx. Wildlife Trust and it has become apparent that there are still very few butterfly or moth records for many (including the more important) of their reserves. Members could help by visiting these sites, or



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preferably, by beginning a transect walk on their nearest site - I can supply a list of those near you on request (SAE please). Among those sites in need of greater records are Therfield Heath, High Down near Pirton, Standalone Farm, Letchworth, the Lee Valley Park, Aldbury Nowers near Tring and much of south west Middx.

The 1997 butterfly report will be sent to all of you in the next few weeks. An enormous number of records are now received each year giving comprehensive coverage across Hertfordshire and Middlesex. The field trip programme is given in this issue and I hope that members will continue to support these events. Now that the branch has its own generator and moth traps, several mothing events are included which I hope will also be well attended. Some of the moths are quite spectacular and the best way to learn about them is in the presence of people who are used to identifying the different species.

The branch is also taking over the Butterfly Conservation stand at the Chelsea Flower Show for the first time as this year. Those of you that have been involved in the past will know that this is an enjoyable day out and if anyone wishes to help out this year then please contact John Stevens (see back page). To celebrate the launch of the Society's "Gardens for Butterflies" project, the Society is also having a prestigious butterfly garden at the Chelsea show (see the special insert in this magazine).

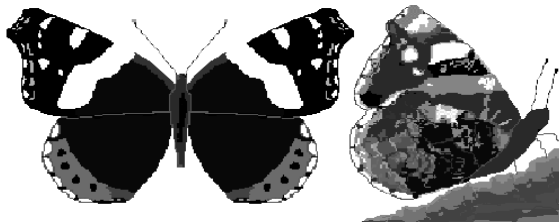
In the last issue I wrote about the possibility of the branch managing a reserve in Hertfordshire or Middlesex. We have been actively pursuing this on several fronts and I hope to have more details in the next issue.

A Word from the Editor, by Ian Small

In the last issue of the newsletter I made a plea for contributions from you, together with some feedback on the sorts of articles you wanted to see in this publication. I am very pleased with the response I got, and there is not space to include all submitted material in this edition. However, please do not sit back on your laurels, thinking that others have let you off the hook - I want to hear from a lot more of you. It takes a lot of articles to fill the newsletter, and the more source material I have, the better chance I have of being able to cover a wide range of subjects within each issue.

One very worthwhile suggestion I have received is to run a series of articles where you write about the site you most frequently visit. Most of us tend to visit a small number of sites regularly throughout the year, rather than perhaps being more adventurous, and this is often the result of not being aware of other suitable places to visit. Therefore, I invite all of you to write me an article about your favourite haunts, giving others details of where they are and how to get there, together with relevant information about its butterflies, flowers, etc.

I must also acknowledge the response of Charles Smith to my request for line drawings to brighten up the newsletter. Charles has produced a large number of drawings of a variety of species (one of which is shown below), which I will be including on a regular basis.



The copy deadline for the next edition of this newsletter is Friday 29 May (to allow for inclusion of feedback on the

Butterflies – Looking Back at 1997 in Hertfordshire, by Christine Shepperson

I always feel sad when the summer months have passed and the season of mellow fruitfulness has declined from warm and golden into the grey drizzle and dark damp of November. For then I know the time for going out and observing butterflies is truly over for another season and the time for making sense of the records has arrived.

Once I have got started this is an exciting journey of discovery in its own right; a time to see if impressions gained in the field actually tally with the facts. Was it really a good year for Commas? Did everybody have as much difficulty as I did in finding even one Painted Lady? Are Meadow Browns really suffering a major decline in Hertfordshire or just on the sites I monitor? Have other people found that White Admirals and Brown Argus are really more widespread in the county than hitherto? Some of these questions I can address from my records; others will have to wait until John Murray (butterfly recorder for Herts. & Middx.) produces his comprehensive report in the Spring. In the meantime these notes look back on some of the trends my records show.

My husband Denis and I have kept records of field trips in Hertfordshire since 1985. Every trip has been logged together with date, place, time, butterfly species and their numbers. The field trips are not consistent repetitions year on year; the number varies from year to year as does the length of time spent at each place and the locations visited. These factors are influenced by our availability, inclination and the weather. The data collected in any one year are therefore not strictly comparable with any other year. However, trends in our field trip pattern do have some degree of consistency. We have tended to visit a central core of sites every year (Colney Heath Common, Smallford Lake, Bricket Wood etc.) frequently taking the same general route and spending roughly the same amount of time. We have generally gone out on field trips whenever time and weather permit and over the years our time limiting factors have not altered drastically.

I could improve the ‘comparability’ of my year on year data if I

worked out how many butterflies of any particular species were seen in any single month per field trip. So far the immensity of that task has daunted me so I have stuck to the 'raw' data of overall figures and this is what I rely on below.

It is my impression that both the White Admiral and Brown Argus are becoming more widespread in Herts. Before 1996, I had only found the White Admiral at Balls Wood, Bricket Wood and Broxbourne Wood; in 1996-97 I was thrilled to find them at Bayfordbury, Berrygrove Wood and Symondshyde Wood – all sites frequently visited before this when not a White Admiral was to be seen.

I am not so sure about the Brown Argus. We have seen this delightful little chocolate brown butterfly at four new sites this year (Smallford Lake, Colney Heath Lakes, Frogmore Gravel Pits, The Commons at Welwyn Garden City) all but one of which we have visited regularly in the past, but I fear recorder negligence could be the reason why I have not recorded them at any of these sites before. Common Blues are to be found at all four sites and until 1996's Butterfly Report alerted me to the fact that Brown Argus appear to be spreading, I never gave the very brown specimens more than a cursory glance and listed them as female Common Blues without another thought. This year, we spent more time crawling about in the undergrowth, peering at the underside of their wings and discovered Brown Argus as well. So that is an important lesson 1997 had taught me – don't assume – check !

I shall move on speedily to safer ground: the Painted Lady. 1996 was spent falling over Painted Ladies at every site in copious numbers. Its beautiful subtle pinkish orange colours greeted me from every hedgerow and buddleia bush but in 1997 a complete collapse. We spotted only one all season (at Amwell Quarry on 31st August). As this species is a migrant the reasons should probably be sought in mainland Europe but its absence from Herts. this year seems to support the idea that it is not capable of overwintering here under present climatic conditions.

My husband walks three butterfly transects at sites close to home. When writing up the records I was struck by the decline in numbers

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of the Meadow Brown on two of the sites. At The Warren (Colney Heath) in particular, the numbers have dropped steadily since 1997. The figures are noted below:

In the years 1992-95, some estimated figures are included for the weeks when the transect was not walked; nevertheless, the 1997 figure is less than 1/3 of that for 1991. I shall await with interest John Murray's report to see if this decline is reflected at other Herts sites. If not, then perhaps I should investigate further to see of the current management plan at The Warren is affecting numbers.

During March 1997, it struck me that we were seeing more

1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
936	536	556	508	490	282	237

butterflies than usual for early Spring. I took a look at my 'raw' data for previous years to see if my records bore out this assumption – and they did, as the figures in Table 1 show.

In the 13 years covered by the records, there were 5 years when we saw no butterflies in March (1987, 88, 92, 95 and 96). Of the 8 years for which there are records the most consistent species was the Small Tortoiseshell, which was seen in all of the 8 years. The Peacock and Brimstone were joint runners up, being seen in 6 years. Of the three species that only made a March appearance once each during the past 13 years, two did so this year (Orange Tip and Holly Blue).

As far as overall figures are concerned, 1997 is by far the winner.
Table 1: Comparison of Records for March in Herts. (1985 – 1997)

Table 2 shows the total numbers of butterflies seen in March of each year and the 1997 total of 203 exceeds all those in the previous 12 years added together.

It would be premature to draw any firm conclusions about possible climate change from such raw data on one order of fauna over a

short

period of years. However, the data does seem to suggest that more

SPECIES	Number of years in which the species was seen in March	Total numbers of butterflies of that species seen in March (1985-97)	Year in which the peak number was seen (peak number)
Small Tortoiseshell	8	158	1997 (94)
Brimstone	6	18	1997 (8)
Peacock	6	71	1997 (38)
Comma	4	73	1997 (59)
Small White	1	1	1990 (1)
Orange Tip	1	3	1997 (3)
Holly Blue	1	1	1997 (1)

species and more actual numbers of butterflies are appearing in early spring in Hertfordshire.

I was particularly interested in the number of Commas we saw in March 1997 (59 were seen). It was the frequency of Commas that first alerted me to the unprecedented numbers of butterflies we were recording in March. I continued to look at Comma numbers throughout the season and compared these with previous years. The results are set out in Table 3.

The Comma never looked back after its good start in March and reached a total of 219 for the year which outstrips any other single year in my records. It is hard to put this into context without comparison with data from other recorders. Once again I will wait for John Murray's report to get a wider picture of what is happening in Hertfordshire and gain a better understanding of the trends affecting our butterfly populations and why they are occurring.

I have spent some time in these notes referring to John Murray's reports. For me they are eagerly awaited publications, which put my small world of recording into a wider context. They are

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Table 2: March Butterflies

YEAR	Total Number of	Number of Species Seen
1986	3	3
1987	0	0
1988	0	0
1989	16	4
1990	30	4
1991	6	1
1992	0	0
1993	66	4
1994	4	3
1995	0	0
1996	0	0
1997	203	6

Table 3: Records for Comma seen in Hertfordshire 1985 - 1997

YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER
1986	24	1992	43
1987	18	1993	26
1988	12	1994	8
1989	3	1995	32
1990	12	1996	74
		1997	219

detailed and comprehensive and make a very valuable contribution to knowledge about butterflies in Hertfordshire. For me, this is the whole point of recording. I want to see a solid database available so that it can be used to enable well informed decisions on how to conserve our ever dwindling semi-natural habitats and the wildlife that they support.



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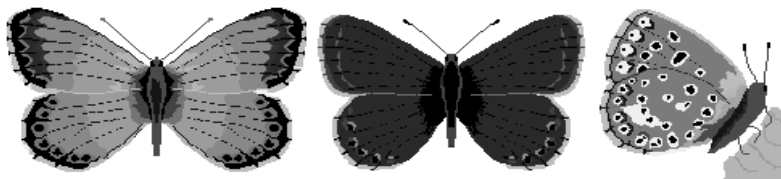
Whenever I use my records to look at a particular question I find that I raise as many questions as I answer and find new things to investigate. Perhaps I should look more closely at the sites where we are recording Commas to see if the range is also expanding; maybe in poor years it is restricted to a 'core' habitat. And then there is the question of why the Meadow Browns are declining at The Warren. Perhaps I should get that management plan out and have a look again. That is what happens with recording; I think I have given myself enough new projects to keep me busy all through the winter right round to the next recording season. Perhaps winter isn't all that dull after all !

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50 Year Vision, by Martin Baker

As part of the Herts. and Middx. Wildlife Trust work on the “50 Year Vision for Hertfordshire’s Wildlife and Natural Habitats”, two butterfly species action plans have been prepared: for the Chalkhill Blue and Grizzled Skipper. These are summarised below and for anyone interested, copies are available from the Wildlife Trust.

Chalkhill Blue The Chalkhill Blue currently breeds on three sites in the county; Therfield Heath, Telegraph Hill and Hexton Chalk Pit. The Therfield Heath colony is the only large colony, though that at Telegraph Hill is linked to Pegsdon Hills in Bedfordshire.



The objectives for this species are to increase the size of the colony at Therfield Heath to at least 500 individuals; to maintain the colonies at Telegraph Hill and Hexton Chalk Pit and to restore the Chalkhill Blue as a breeding species on the chalk grassland around Tring.

Most of the proposed actions involve continuation of appropriate management on the occupied and some former sites and seeking to increase the area of chalk grassland around these sites. Once suitable habitat has been restored on former sites, the need for a re-introduction will be assessed, though natural colonisation is obviously to be preferred.

Grizzled Skipper Before 1997, the species had only been recorded from three sites in the last few years; Waterford Heath, Aldbury Nowers and Frogmore Pit. However, during 1997, the Grizzled Skipper was re-discovered in Broxbourne Woods and also recorded from a new site at Radlett Aerodrome.

The objectives of this action plan are to halt and reverse the decline in this species.

The immediate priority actions are to ensure sensitive management of the known sites and to undertake a survey of former sites to see if the species is still present.

Volunteers needed !

However, to take forward the survey, a volunteer co-ordinator and volunteer surveyors are needed. As well as helping the Grizzled Skipper, the survey will also add to the data being collected as part of the Millenium Butterfly Survey being undertaken by Butterfly Conservation.

The role of the co-ordinator would be to compile the list of survey sites, gain permission from landowners for surveys of private land, allocate survey sites to volunteers and compile the results, as well as surveying if they wish.

Anyone interested in helping out in this survey should contact Martin Baker at the Wildlife Trust on (01727) 858901.

Aldbury Nowers Butterfly Transect

The Wildlife Trust is looking for more volunteers to help with the butterfly transect walk at Aldbury Nowers. Surveying involves one transect walk per week for 26 weeks from April to the end of September. Each transect walk takes 45-60 minutes and volunteers are allocated between 1 and 5 weeks a year depending upon their availability. The transect provides the opportunity to visit probably the best site in Hertfordshire and Middlesex for butterflies, with the chance of seeing the Duke of Burgundy, Marbled White, Green Hairstreak and a strong population of Brown Argus. If anyone is interested, please could they contact Martin Baker at the Wildlife Trust, on (01727) 858901.

Butterfly in the Spotlight: No.4 The Brimstone - by Gavin Vicary

At this time of year the bright yellow colour of male Brimstones flying on the first sunny days of spring is a sure sign that winter is behind us. It is the vivid yellow of the Brimstone that is believed to have led to the name butterfly (i.e. they are the original butterfly coloured fly).



The Brimstone is a large butterfly that is unlikely to be confused with most other species. At rest they never open their wings and so the males appear much more subtly coloured than when in flight. The females are even better camouflaged, as they are pale green in colour and blend in with foliage remarkably well. The only other butterflies that they are likely to be confused with are the migrant Clouded Yellow or, in flight, females can be mistaken for Large Whites which are of similar size.

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The illustration shows the characteristic angular shape of this butterfly at rest and also a conspicuous brown spot that is present midway across the hindwing.

The adults hibernate through the winter and are often the first butterflies to emerge in springtime. They do not live in compact colonies, but wander freely in search of mates and sites to lay eggs.

The foodplant of the Brimstone is either Purging Buckthorn or Alder Buckthorn which tends to be more common in damper areas. The distribution of the butterfly in Britain coincides almost exactly with the range of its food plants and hence it is rarer in the north of England and found no further north than the Lake District. On the continent it is widespread and occurs much further north in Scandinavia and other parts of central Europe.

Due to their wandering nature Brimstones can be found anywhere

in our branch area including gardens, although distribution maps tend to be patchy which largely correlates to the location of the foodplants. There is very little alder buckthorn in Hertfordshire or Middlesex and so purging buckthorn tends to be the foodplant used in our area.

Female Brimstones are amazingly adept at seeking out the foodplant and having laid eggs in spring all the adults then die either in late spring or early summer. The eggs they have laid however proceed through the other stages of the lifecycle before new adults re-emerge in late summer. They then feed to build up reserves to see them through winter hibernation.

Poors Field at Ruislip Woods (NNR), 10 August 1997

The sun was shining as a group of about a dozen members gathered in the almost empty car park at Ruislip Lido, a feeder reservoir for the not too distant Grand Union Canal. Included in this company was Arthur Moffat, one of our more senior members, who has known this area for fifty or more years and was the instigator of the British section of the Butterfly House at Sion House. He explained to us that when he first visited the site, Pearl Bordered Fritillary was a common butterfly and Red-backed Shrikes nested there; alas no longer.

Negotiating a herd of long-horned cattle (yes – there was a bull there !) we investigated a hedge on the way to where Arthur remembered there had been a pond. A Red Admiral was the first butterfly we saw, quickly followed by Hedge and Meadow Brown and a Small Copper. The pond was found but obviously had not seen water for many a year. Arthur, in his eighties, left us here to return to his car and the rest of the party made their way towards the part of Poors Field that still retained its heathland habitat.

The following butterflies were seen along the woodland hedge or on the heath: Small and Green-veined White, Peacock, Comma and

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Small Tortoiseshell, Small and Essex Skipper, Small Heath, Speckled Wood and Common Blue. We then split up and went our separate ways -some to continue the search and some for the sanctuary of the nearby pub.

A phone call later that evening informed me that the more diligent members had spotted two Brimstones in the nearby Herts. and Middx. Trust reserve. The Lido is obviously a popular venue when the sun shines as it took us about 15 minutes to drive the 200 yards to the main road later in the afternoon, but that didn't spoil the day spent in the company of so many knowledgeable people.

Some Light on Moth Surveillance, by Alan A Bolitho

The enthusiastic article by John Hollingdale in the December 1996 issue of our Branch Newsletter encouraged me to take the plunge and operate a moth trap.

As a schoolboy I enjoyed many days out and about studying butterflies and moths with P. J. Bell, the Hertfordshire naturalist. At his home he operated a moth trap similar to the Rothamsted design, but with a two-stage holding box enabling him to identify and release his captures. With this example in mind I built my own. The local glazier was non-plussed when asked to cut a number of odd shapes and sizes and even more so when he heard what they were for. With a wooden base and an orange box the trap was complete. A standard 100 watt bulb was fitted and the trap set to work. Unfortunately, those early records were lost, but the interest remained.

Some years later and wanting to take a more active role in promoting the wellbeing of our butterflies and moths I considered what I could realistically contribute. Although I had been recording the butterflies in the garden for some years, the number of species varying between 13 and 17, I had little idea of the moth population. John Hollingdale's article was the decider – I would

go for a moth trap.

First I read 'A Guide to Moth Traps and Their Use', by Reg Fry and Paul Waring, published by the Amateur Entomological Society. From their findings I decided on a Robinson trap similar in principle to my original, but somewhat more sophisticated. The trap had to be sited close to the house to prevent direct illumination of the neighbours, but looked out over the garden with a background of trees and shrubs.

Initially I intended to operate on a weekly basis, but soon changed from any rigid pattern. The temperature, cloud conditions and the moon all had their effects and I was soon operating on a more opportunist basis when conditions proved favourable. The next question was of timing. Using a timer, the trap switched on at dusk and off at dawn so I could arise at my usual time. Soon I became aware of unusual activity by the bird population squabbling over their instant breakfast. The birds had soon discovered that not only were there moths in the trap, but on it, and around on adjacent walls and plants. Thus I had to be up in good time and benefited from a number of additional finds, and there was no longer a free breakfast for the birds.

As the number of species increased, so did the time taken in their identification. While there are many distinctive varieties readily named, there were an awful lot of 'brown jobs' that required careful study before they could be named with any degree of certainty. The time required to empty the trap and name the species had to be allowed for in the next day's schedule.

Perhaps the most important aspect was that of records. While I thought I had a system to give me a condensed record over the year, it soon became apparent that it would not work. The number of records was growing at an alarming rate when I had to admit to a complete change and rewrite them all in a new format. Not being computer friendly, I had a manual system using the listing issued by Rob Souter for the Herts. and Middx. Moth Survey in a vertical column and the date of each night's operation as the horizontal. Now I could readily see the species on the wing at any time, their numbers and broods. Time spent in presentation of records before

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the start of the season is essential to display the information you require.

In my first year of operation I have recorded 180 species out of some 2500 trapped. My previous knowledge of the moth population was limited to a handful who made themselves known, but as I now know this is like the tip of the iceberg, the reality was largely unseen. Many members are content to take a purely supporting role for our butterflies and moths, but there is so much more to be gained from a little more activity and a moth trap. Only factual records will provide a full picture of our ever-changing moth population. Are you prepared to play a part ?

Day-flying moths, by Rob Souter

It is now 3 years since I first asked members to record any day-flying moths they saw whilst out looking for butterflies. I have received a few records to date but since these species are under-recorded (as they do not usually get attracted to light traps) I wish to encourage butterfly recorders to continue to keep an eye out for these interesting lepidoptera. To assist, I've provided information on a few of the more common species that I think might be found by anyone in the Hertfordshire and Middlesex area. You should refer to a good guide to these species such as Skinner's Moths of the British Isles, Collins Guide to Insects or Collins Guide to Butterflies and Day-flying Moths. My references come from Colin Plant's 'The Larger Moths of the London Area' 1993.

From May look out for the Mother Shipton *Callistege mi* and the Burnet Companion *Euclidia glyphica*, both in the family Noctuidae. These are intricately patterned, brown moths that are reminiscent of and therefore sometimes confused with Grizzled and Dingy Skipper butterflies.

The Mother Shipton (category 3) (so-named because of a portrait of "Old Mother Shipton", a sixteenth-century soothsayer on each of the forewings) is common in Britain and is found in meadows, downland, open woodlands and hedgebanks. Its larvae feed on clover and the pupa is a cocoon spun within a twisted grass blade. Once regarded as being "widespread in the London region" by de Worms in 1955, it seems to have declined and is now a very local resident, rarely found in quantity. Plant had records for 7 tetrads in Middlesex and only 1 in South Herts.

The Burnet Companion (category 2B) is equally widespread in Britain and inhabits hedgerows, wet meadows, woodland margins and downland. The larvae also use clover and pupate in a cocoon of silk and plant debris spun on the ground. In the London area it is described as a widespread but only locally distributed resident, and apparently uncommon. Plant had 22 tetrads in Middlesex and 10 in south Herts. I have received several records of Mother Shipton but few for Burnet Companion.

In June the Burnet moths begin to emerge. Burnets are brightly coloured, black and red, day-flying moths which are attracted to various wild flowers. There are 7 species of burnet moth in Britain, 2 of which are common and widespread in our area. These are the Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet *Zygaena lonicerae* and the Six-spot Burnet *Zygaena filipendulae*.

The Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet (category 1B) flies from mid June to late July. It is widespread, in England at least, apart from the south-west. It is common on roadside verges, occurring also on chalk downs, railway embankments and in rough meadows, woodland clearings and marshes. The larvae feed on Common Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* but also feed on Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*. This species has black pupa enclosed in transparent cocoons attached to grass stems which tend to vary from pale whitish-yellow or greenish-yellow to white. The adult has 5 spots on each wing, with the single spot near the wing tip. Plant has records from 22 tetrads in Middlesex and 18 in south Herts.

The Six-spot Burnet (category 1B) occurs from the end of June to late July, and is the most widely distributed and commonest burnet species. It can be found in a wide variety of habitats, including chalk downs, derelict meadows, waste ground and roadside verges. The larvae feed on Common and Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and *C. uliginosus*,

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whilst the black pupa can be found enclosed in an opaque cocoon, which varies in colour from bright yellow to dirty white and is attached to grass stems and other vegetation. The adult has 6 red spots on each forewing. Plant has records from 23 tetrads in Middlesex and 19 in south Herts.



People often confuse the Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet with the very similar Five-spot Burnet *Zygaena trifolii*. This species is actually represented by two sub-species; ssp. *decreta* which is probably extinct in south-east England and has been absent from the London Area since 1948; and ssp. *palustrella* which is restricted to chalk grasslands.

Another cause of confusion is with the Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae* (category 1A), another black and red species often encountered during the day but which is in the family Arctiidae with footman and tigers. The Cinnabar is not strictly a day-flying moth either but is easily disturbed from rest in long vegetation during the day. Its larvae are the familiar yellow and black devourers of Ragwort *Senecio jacobea*. This species is also widely distributed in England, flying from May to July and inhabiting meadows and wasteground where the foodplant is abundant. Records of this species are also welcomed, whether adult or larvae.

From July until October the commonest day-flying moth is The Vapourer *Orgyia antiqua* (category 2C) from the family Lymantriidae. This widespread and common resident uses a wide range of larval foodplants including hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, oak *Quercus* sp., willow *Salix* sp., *Buddleia davidii* and cultivated roses. It is probably under recorded since it has even been found in the heart of London, with a large colony on the plane trees in Leicester Square. Plant has records for 31 tetrads in Middlesex but only 2 for south Herts.

Some of the more unusual day-flying moths for which I have received records include the Speckled Yellow *Pseudopanthera macularia* (category 3), which flies from mid May to the end of June. This is a very local

species in our area since it prefers sunny rides in older woods, such as the Broxbourne Woods complex where it was seen last year. And the Orange Underwing *Archiearis parthenias* (category 3) and very similar Light Orange Underwing *Archiearis notha* (category 4) which fly at tree top height from mid March to April. Whilst the larvae of the Orange Underwing feed on birch *Betula pendula*, and is probably under recorded, the extremely local and apparently rare Light Orange Underwing is restricted to aspen *Populus tremula*. Plant records these species as fairly frequent in Broxbourne Woods whilst the only other record in our area is at Park Wood, Ruislip. Records of these moths were received for Bricket Wood and Stanmore in recent years.

Several other moths will be encountered during the day by disturbing vegetation including various Carpets and Shaded Broad-bar but these are not day-flying species although are still worthy of a record. In summary, this is a list of moths to look out for during the day in the Herts and Middlesex area at particular times of the year.

Light Orange Underwing	mid March to late April
Orange Underwing	mid March to late April
Mother Shipton	early May to end June
Burnet Companion	early May to end June
Speckled Yellow	mid May to end June
Cinnabar	mid May to end July
Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet	mid June to late July
Six-spot Burnet	end June to late July
The Vapourer	early July to end October

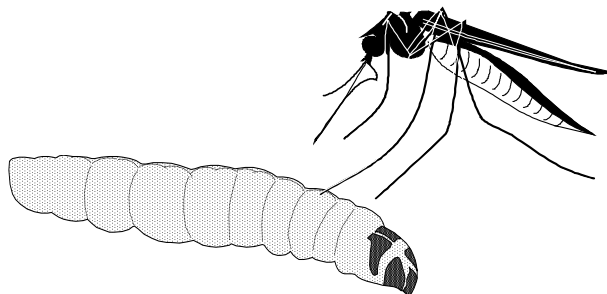
Cabbages Aren't So Defenceless After All, by Ian Small

There are times when you come across an interesting piece of information which makes you realise just how complicated the natural world really is. For example when you hear about the humming birds which only take nectar from a single plant species, and in so doing are the sole vehicle for germination of that species. How do such things evolve? Which came first?

My wife is a very keen gardener and member of the Royal Horticultural Society. It was in the RHS magazine, 'The Garden', published last November, that I came across an article about the chemical messages released by plants in response to stimuli, and in particular to pathogens.

The example which caught my eye was that of the humble cabbage. When this becomes infested with Large White caterpillars, it responds by releasing a scent. This scent has no effect upon the caterpillars themselves, and does not deter them from feeding, so you might be forgiven for wondering why the cabbage bothered. The answer is that the scent is an attractant for the parasitic wasp, *Apanteles glomerulata*, which lays its eggs within the caterpillars.

The role of parasites in controlling numbers of particular butterfly species is only beginning to be elucidated. As this particular example shows, the inter-relationships between butterflies, their caterpillar foodplants and their parasites is likely to be both subtle and complex. If you are like me, however, you will find that these glimpses into their world of chemical and biological warfare are deeply fascinating.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday, 28 April . “The Butterfly Year” by Gavin Vicary. A joint talk with the RSPB, to be held at the United Reformed Church Hall, Mill Lane, Broxbourne at 8 pm. Admission £1.20

Sunday, 21 June. “Gardens and Butterflies” by Dr Harold Hughes OBE, Chairman of Butterfly Conservation. Talk starts at 2.15, as part of the 2-day Festival of Gardening, to be held at Hatfield House, Hatfield.

Saturday & Sunday, 18-19 July. Butterfly Festival to be held at Juniper Hall Field Centre, Mickleham, Dorking, Surrey. Hosted by the Surrey & SW London Branch. Many activities and exhibits for all ages. Entrance £2 for adults, 50p for children under 14 years.

FIELD TRIP PROGRAMME

The following is the current listing of field trips. It is recommended that you contact the trip leader prior to travelling to ensure that no last minute changes have been necessary.

Saturday, 9 May. Waterford Pits, as part of 24-reserve-opening event. Meet at 8.00 am in Vicarage Lane, TL 317150 (sheet 166) to witness opening of moth trap run over the previous night. Meet at 10.30 for walk to see Grizzled Skipper. Joint meeting with British Naturalists Association, to be led by Alan Downie (01992 - 650829).

Saturday, 9 May. Stanmore Country Park. Moth evening starting at 8.30 pm. Meet in car park on the east side of Dennis Lane, opposite Stanmore Recreation Ground, TQ 172927 (sheet 176). Leader will be John Hollingdale (0181 - 863-2077).

Saturday, 16 May. Marshall’s Heath. Moth evening starting at 8.40 pm. Meet at the east end of Marshall’s Way, north of B653 Harpenden to Wheathampstead Road, TL 160148 (sheet 166). Leaders will be John Murray (01582 - 833544) & Mark Sterling.

Sunday, 24 May. Pegsdon Hills to see Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper. Meeting starts 10.30 at Wendy House, Hexton village hall,

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TL 107307 (sheet 166). Joint meeting with the Upper Thames Branch to be led by John Hollingdale (0181 - 863-2077).

Sunday, 7 June. Chequers Reserve, Pulpit Hill, Bucks, to see Green Hairstreak. Meet at 10.30 at Longdown Hill car park, SP 832046 (sheet 165). Walk will cross Pulpit Hill and the old rifle range, and be led by Terry Rodbard (01582 761998).

Sunday, 14 June. Kensal Green Cemetery. Meet at 11.00 inside the main gate (east end of the cemetery on the Harrow Road, TQ 232 825, buses 18 & 52). Joint meeting with the London Wildlife Trust, to be led by Tim Freed (0171 602 3979).

Sunday, 21 June. Whitecross Green Wood, Oxon, to see the Black Hairstreak. Meet at 10.30 at SP 600150 (sheet 164), passing through two gates to park opposite the white cottage. Leader will be John Hollingdale (0181 - 863-2077).

Sunday, 5 July. The Commons Nature Reserve, to see White-Letter Hairstreak. Meet at 11.00 am in the Commons Wood School car park, TL 257111 (sheet 166) on the south side of Welwyn Garden City. Leader will be Peter Oakenful (01707 - 335196).

Sunday, 12 July. Westbrook Hay (Boxmoor Trust) to see Marbled White. Meet at 10.30 by the school at the road junction at grid ref. TL 028053 (sheet 166).

Sunday, 19 July. Arnside Knot, Cumbria, to see the High Brown Fritillary. SD 456775 (sheet 89). Contact the leader, Alan Downie, (01992 - 650829) for further details.

Saturday, 25 July. A moth evening at Broxbourne Woods. Meet in the reserve car park (TL 325071, sheet 166) at 9 pm. Leader will be Rob Souter (01438 - 816091).

Sunday, 2 August. Therfield Heath, to see Chalkhill Blue. Meet at 10.30 in the car park of Royston Sports Club, TL 348405 (sheet 154). Leader will be Brian Sawford (01462 - 672287).

Sunday, 16 August. Patmore Heath to examine contents of the previous night's moth trap, and to walk the heath. Meet at 10.30:-6km north of Little Hadham, turn right at the Catherine Wheel pub,

and park on the edge of the reserve, at TL 443257 (sheet 167). Leader will be Gavin Vicary (01279 - 771933)

Saturday, 19 September. Moth evening at Stanmore Common, Middlesex. Meet at 7.30 pm in car park of Warren Lane, TQ 159935 (sheet 176). Leader will be John Hollingdale (0181 - 863-2077).



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.

Therfield Heath, TL 335400 First Sunday of each month from 10.00 a.m. - 1 p.m. Details from Vincent Thomson (01763) 341443.

Duchies Piece (Aldbury Nowers) SP 952131. Third Sunday of each month. Meet 10.00 a.m. in the lay-by, near Tring station.

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

Fryent Country Park - details from Leslie Williams at the Brent Ecology Unit on (0181) 206 0492

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

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

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