

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 34

June 2003

Summer



**BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATIONSM**

A Bit About Bees.....

by Gavin Vicary

Whilst our society focuses mainly on butterflies and moths, many of us have a wider interest in other aspects of natural history and I thought many of you might be interested to read some novice investigations involving another of our great pollinators; the bees.

Following some recent building work, we ended up with a pile of soil which I occasionally dug in to, moving it to where it was needed around the garden. Our children also had great fun climbing to the top

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of it to be the "king of the castle". Then one day in May we noticed seven bees suddenly appear as soon as I started digging out some of the earth.

Over the next couple of weeks we regularly saw the bees, especially when the soil was disturbed and channels even became visible in the mud where they were active. The number of bees always seemed to remain roughly constant with either six or seven usually being seen.

Intrigued as to what was going on we decided to look on the internet and see what we could find out. We soon read about many different types of bee (254 in Britain) and realised that some lived solitary lives whereas others were social living in large colonies.

We also read about the problems that an introduced parasite has caused our honeybees. The varroa mite is barely visible to the naked eye and arrived in south west Britain from Asia. It breeds inside the bee larvae then attaches itself to the adult and feeds on its blood causing colonies to collapse if not treated with pesticides and has resulted in many British beekeepers abandoning the craft.

Another bee that we found a lot of information on is called the red mason bee. Unlike the bumblebees and honeybees it is a solitary bee and it nests in old holes bored in wood by beetles, hollow plant stems, or irregular cavities in stones and old walls. The female places pollen mixed with nectar in the cavity which acts as a food source for the single egg, which she lays immediately before sealing the cell with a mud partition. The process is repeated until the tube is filled with a row of about 6 to 10 cells. Thus we could now see a purpose for the bees appearing around our mud - they might have been collecting it to act as the barrier between cells in nesting sites.



Red Mason Bee
Osmia rufa

The Female red mason bees finish nesting in early June and being a solitary species never live to see their offspring. In the nests the eggs hatch into larvae, which feed on the pollen and nectar mixture and after moulting 4 or 5 times, the full grown larvae spins a tough brown silk cocoon and pupates. The new adults form in September and remain in the cocoon until the following spring when the new generation of adults emerge and the cycle begins all over again

We decided to try and encourage the bees by creating potential nesting sites for them. We have a couple of dead tree trunks in the garden for their wildlife value and so we experimented by drilling holes in them to see if they might attract any bees. Ten holes were made, each about four inches long and just under half an inch in diameter.

Having made the holes I forgot all about them for a couple of days until my young son asked about the bees again. We all went outside to have a look and to our delight nearly every hole had a bee sitting in the entrance looking out at us. Presumably these holes have been used as nests but of course we cannot really see far enough inside to tell.

I don't know if the bees we encountered were red mason bees or a different sort but we certainly enjoyed discovering a previously hidden aspect of our natural history living in our garden and hopefully having done something to help it thrive. The neighbours, however, think we are mad as they come, especially when they see me drilling holes in dead tree trunks!

In the last newsletter I mentioned the Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust nature reserve Aldbury Nowers near Tring. Unfortunately I lapsed in to my more familiar spelling of Albury, the village near to where I live. Apologies for any confusion caused and thank you to those that spotted the mistake.

Gardeners Urged to Save the Bumblebee

Many of you may have seen some of the following information in the national press in mid-May. For those who did not, this piece is abstracted from the BBC Online News, 16 May 2003..

Britain's native bumblebees are under serious threat and gardeners should plant bumblebee-friendly plants to help save them, say the National Trust and English Nature. Intensive agriculture and a decrease in the number of insect-pollinated crops have led to a drastic decline in bumblebee numbers over the past 70 years. With fields turning into poor homes for bumblebees, gardens are an increasingly important habitat for them.

“Without wild bees our gardens would be sterile places but we do not always give enough thought to how we manage our gardens to encourage these beneficial insects,” said Fiona Reynolds, director-general of the National Trust. “Every garden counts in the wildlife



stakes, whether large or small, urban or rural. With over 15 million gardens across the country, gardeners collectively can make a huge difference," she said.

English Nature and the National Trust say many gardeners mistakenly think all flowers are good for bees, when in actual fact, many modern hybrids are sterile and do not carry pollen to attract the bees. Bumblebees are also wrongly thought by some to be aggressive, usually because they are confused with wasps and honey bees.

- Most bees are solitary
- 80% of the food we eat comes from crops pollinated by bees
- 25% of Britain's 250 wild bee types are rare or threatened with extinction
- Some species have declined by as much as 60% since the 1970s
- There are 24 species of bumblebee in Britain
- Three bumblebee species and at least seven other bee species have become extinct in the last 150 years

Fencing Completed at Millhopper's, by John Noakes

Following a grant from the Lottery Scheme, funding from the branch and the Millhoppers Management Group, work is now complete.

Stock fencing has been erected around the reserve periphery, excluding the public footpath.

However we have arranged two pairs of access squeeze posts from the footpath side to allow people to enter. Our view is, if totally excluded, people could damage the fence in order to get in. We need to realise



villagers have enjoyed visiting this habitat long before we became owners and designated it a nature reserve.

The reserve can be accessed, as before from the road, via the stile and then between the first pair of squeeze posts and on through a new second inner unlocked gate. This isn't as complicated as it sounds

Two inner gates enclose a small area where the farmer can safely decant (if that is the right word) his cattle. The outer of these two gates is padlocked but not the inner one. However this one is chained at its hinge end to prevent it being stolen! A further stile allows access to the far end.

All the badger activity and sets are outside the fencing mainly within the blackthorn scrub. However their visits to the reserve have not been thwarted, as there is plenty of evidence of tunnelling under the fencing at several points!

Our perennial problem of vandalism continues. Recently the metal bar and the six-inch wooden posts at the road end, were destroyed when a stolen car was driven at them and then abandoned. We decided to strengthen our defences to almost anti terrorist proportions by constructing a barrier out of heavy duty RSJ. The end result looked like the buffers at Euston Station, however its Achilles heel proved to be the removable horizontal bar, which was essential for access. This was secured by a metal pin and padlock. Within four days the padlock was smashed, the pin stolen and the heavy bar, thrown in the stream. Following this incident, a local jogger spotted a lorry at the site with the bar loaded on the back. Clearly he knew he had been seen, as when we arrived shortly afterwards, the bar had been thrown back on the road and of course the lorry gone. The good news is we have a registration number and the police are pursuing this lead.

Apart from removing sixteen car wheels, one gearbox, a radiator, two bumpers and countless beer cans, all is tranquil at the reserve and we look forward to recording.

It is now too late in the season to introduce cattle but intend to do this in early autumn. With that goal in mind, we are currently in the process of establishing a legal grazing agreement between the farmer and ourselves.

Work to be done at Millhoppers during the year will consist of cutting paths, control of nettles and hogweed and hope the cattle will do our

job of cutting and raking for us later in the year..

Meanwhile I think I can call on my small band of reliable helpers when work needs to be done. We will no longer need regular working parties as previously stated in the Bulletin. I hope I do not live to regret this statement!

Report from Winter Indoor Meeting, 26th March 2003, by Ian Small

Over 30 Branch members attended this lively meeting in St. Albans. There were two parts to the evening - the main part comprised updates by each of the species co-ordinators on the current status of their 'target' species. This was followed by a brief interval, after which we were treated to a marvellous selection of members' photographs, which had all been transferred to computer and which were then projected as if they were slides. A full sales stall, with plants and other items was managed by Malcolm Newland. This stall raised £65 during the evening - the highest total for any of our indoor events.

The meeting had started with an introduction from Branch Chairman, Gavin Vicary, which was followed by a talk by John Murray on general aspects of butterfly recording. This was then followed by the individual species presentations by the respective co-ordinators, who are detailed on the next page. If you have sightings or information about any of the target species in Herts. & Middx, then we would like you to pass this information to the relevant co-ordinator:

Special thanks for the evening also go to Malcolm Hull, who provided the LCD projector, and who had to overcome a number of technical difficulties to get it working with the laptop computer (not helped when John accidentally pulled out the power cable within just a few minutes of Malcolm getting it working!).

All in all an excellent evening, and a format which is likely to be repeated next winter.

Species Co-ordinators

Species		Co-Ordinator	Phone Number
Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	Jez Perkins	07715 449341
Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura iris</i>	Liz Goodyear & Andrew Middleton	01920 487066 020 8245 0847
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	Brian Jessop	01442 824907
Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	Nigel Agar	01462 459870
Brown Hairstreak	<i>Thecla betulae</i>	Malcolm Hull	01727 857893
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phleas</i>	Gavin Vicary	01279 771993
White Admiral	<i>Limenitis camilla</i>	Andrew Wood	01992 709985
Fritillaries (Dark-green & Silver-washed)		John Whiteman	020 8579 7820
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Richard Bigg	01992 582815
Small Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	Andrew Palmer	01992 709985

Copy Deadline for the September Newsletter will be

26 August 2003

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 a letter or article by post - address on back cover - ALL

CONTRIBUTIONS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED !

Please send in your exciting butterfly reports from holidays, days out, or even your garden - I am sure we would all like to share the enjoyment you have - especially as the nights are now drawing in !

Notes on the 2003 Branch Accounts, by John Hollingdale

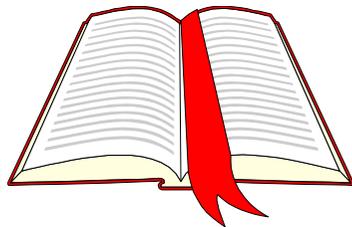
As the accounts opposite show, we have a deficit over the 12-month period to 31st March 2003 of approximately £110; nothing to worry about. However, we will shortly have to pay for the cost of the 2002 Annual Report, say £2900 and a further £1000 as our contribution towards the cost of fencing at Millhoppers reserve, in order that grazing can commence. The Black Poplars that border on the reserve will need the attention of professional arboriculturists shortly, and we will have to investigate the cost of this.



The excellent efforts of mainly Malcolm Hull and Alan Downie have contributed to the sound financial position we are in. the production and sale of plants and the organisation of our sales stall has contributed a net figure of £1200 to the Branch funds. Also, John Stevens has managed to persuade various donors to contribute £950 towards the cost of the Annual Report. This task requires great perseverance and we are very grateful.

The Branch is in a strong financial position at present and can fund our various activities. However, if in the future our income reduces for some unknown reason, your Committee will have some tough decisions to make.

If any member has any questions about our finances or wishes to make a comment or express an opinion, please contact me, or Ian Small, the newsletter editor (contact details on back cover).



Herts & Middx Branch Accounts 2002-2003

CURRENT A/C BALANCE AT 1/04/2002 ----- £1,963.79

Annual Income Since 01/04/2002

Annual Subscriptions -----	£3,123.00
Bank Interest -----	£43.42
Retiring Collections, Donations etc -----	£188.42
Sales of Report-----	£281.50
Sales (PTS)-----	£1,710.91
Sales (FR)-----	£198.02
VAT -----	£34.67
Grants for Annual Report-----	£950.00
Misc.-----	£15.00
Sub Total -----	£6,544.94
Transferred from Deposit Account-----	£2,700.00
Total -----	£9,244.94

Annual Expenditure Since 01/04/2002

Newsletter -----	£1,564.13
Room Hire -----	£17.12
Office Expenses-----	£45.51
Purchase of Goods and Materials (PTS)-----	£353.20
Purchase of Goods and Materials (FR)-----	£355.56
Cost of Annual Report (printing and postage)-----	£2,723.87
Exhibition Costs -----	£315.10
Bank Charges -----	£0.00
Generator Running Costs -----	£2.05
Conservation Expenses (Millhoppers)-----	£807.93
Misc.-----	£67.88
VAT (PTS) -----	£402.11
Sub Total -----	£6,654.36
Transferred to Deposit Account -----	£2,500.00
Total -----	£9,154.36

CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE----- **£2,054.37**
DEPOSIT ACCOUNT BALANCE----- **£7,649.23**

TOTAL FUNDS AT 31/3/2003----- **£9,703.60**

PTS = Promoting the aims of the Society (non-VAT-able)
FR = Fund Raising (= VAT-able)

Influx of Migrating Butterflies

Butterfly Conservation released the following Press Release on 9 June, which was picked up by some of the national press, including The Times.

2003 is shaping up to be a bumper year for the migrant Painted Lady butterfly. Thousands have already reached our shores from North Africa and continental Europe and have been basking in the high temperatures reached over recent weeks.

A huge migration has already swept through Malta causing much excitement, and reports of large numbers of migrating Painted Ladies have also come in from Spain. It is thought that the numbers reaching the UK this year may even reach the spectacular levels witnessed in 1996, when the huge number of Painted Lady butterflies made national headlines.



Although the first Painted Lady of 2003 was reported in early March in the UK, the invasion has really begun in earnest since the beginning of June. One observer estimated seeing over 400 Painted Ladies near Ipswich and groups of 50 or more butterflies have been reported from other sites in Suffolk, Sussex, Dorset and other coastal counties. Sightings are also starting to come in from Northern Ireland and northern Scotland.

Now that they are here, the Painted Ladies will breed, laying their eggs on thistles, nettles and other wild plants. Given favourable weather, numbers of Painted Ladies will rise further through the summer as their progeny emerge and more immigrants arrive.

Richard Fox, Surveys Manager for Butterfly Conservation, said:

"The number of Painted Ladies in Britain each year varies enormously. Last year was above average whilst 2001 was a very poor year for this butterfly. This year shows great early promise and may well rival the massive influx recorded in 1996. We are monitoring the butterfly's advance across Europe to the UK, and will continue to monitor its progress over the summer through our network of

volunteer recorders."

The Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) is a long-distance migrant butterfly, which causes the spectacular butterfly migrations observed in Britain and Ireland. Each year, it spreads northwards from the desert fringes of North Africa, the Middle East, and central Asia, recolonising mainland Europe and reaching Britain and Ireland. In some years it is an abundant butterfly, frequenting gardens and other flowery places in late summer. Because it is a wide-ranging migrant, the Painted Lady may be seen in any habitat in the UK in a good year. Adults tend to congregate in open areas with plenty of thistles, which serve both as larval foodplants and nectar sources. Gardens are also popular habitats for Painted Ladies: the species was reported by over 50% of the 11,000 participants in Butterfly Conservation's Garden Butterflies Count survey in 2002. Although Painted Ladies can breed here during the warmer months, Britain's climate is not suitable for their survival from year to year. As winter closes in the butterflies either migrate back southwards or perish. There is some evidence that global warming may be making our winters more hospitable. The first ever confirmed case of a Painted Lady overwintering in the wild in Britain was recorded by a Butterfly Conservation volunteer in Cornwall in 1998.

Pictures of Painted Lady egg and caterpillar from the Branch Website: <http://www.hmbutterflyconservation.org.uk>



Photo: Helen Bantock



Photo: Andrew Middleton

READERS LETTERS

Butterflies in Unusual Locations, by M A Parker

Reading the interesting reports of butterflies sighted in outlandish places in the March newsletter has encouraged me to share my own experience in the middle of a Russian lake last Autumn.

In September, I was on a cruise from St. Petersburg to Moscow. We were crossing Lake Onega, Europe's second-largest inland lake one chilly, but sunny, afternoon and it was our turn to visit the ship's bridge. On the floor there I spotted a Peacock butterfly! I immediately picked it up and held it in my hands for the duration of the visit. We were miles from land, but I suspect it might have come on board from an island we had visited that morning. As we emerged from the bridge, it flew away from my cupped hands - to where? I often wonder whether it survived. One of the other passengers joked that it must have thought that it was a Red Admiral ! (especially is we were in Russia).



If you have other unusual sightings, then please send them in ...editor.

Helping Hand? by Eileen Chacksfield

In the summer edition of the Branch newsletter last year I was distressed to read in your article about a field trip to Ivinghoe Beacon that you returned a fallen Green Hairstreak to a windswept leaf.

Butterflies, as I'm sure you will agree, are very aware of human beings and it is my belief that the Hairstreak deliberately fell in order to attract attention. In was dying and was asking for help. It could have been put in a matchbox, say, and taken home to die peacefully on a window sill or even in one's hand.

Now that the butterfly season is with us once again I do hope the above comments will be borne in mind.

NEW - Butterfly Books and Gifts by Post, by Malcolm Hull

The Butterfly Conservation stall has had a busy Spring, selling books, butterfly friendly plants and other goods. We've attended the Herts County Show, Capel Manor Spring Show, Rickmansworth Environment Fair & St Albans market. Many members have visited the stall, but some cannot. As an experiment we've decided to offer some of our best selling lines by post. These include:

- **Garden Cane Tip Eye Protectors** – pack of 3 different butterflies – price £3
- **Bug Box, with 2 times & 4 times magnification** – great for examining moths & caterpillars – price £1.50
- **Butterfly Spotters spiral notebook** – ideal for butterfly recording – price 40p
- **Gardening for Butterflies by Margaret Vickery** – All the tips you need to design & plant your own butterfly garden – price £2.99
- **WildGuides – Britain's Butterflies, by David Tomlinson & Rob Still** – brilliant new guide published jointly with Butterfly Conservation. It includes photos of all UK species as adults, caterpillars, pupae & eggs. – price £12.50
- **The Butterflies of Hertfordshire by Brian Sawford** – The leading guide to butterflies in the county, originally £15 – special members price £7.50
- **The Butterflies of the London Area by Colin Plant** – covers the whole area within 20 miles of central London, including all of Middlesex & South Herts., originally £15.95 – special members price £7.50
- **Butterflies of Britain Identification Chart** – best chart around showing all uk species, produced by the Field Studies Council – price £3
- **Caterpillars of Butterflies Identification Chart** – new chart from FSC showing caterpillars – price £3

If you'd like to order any goods, write ring or e-mail Malcolm Hull (details on rear cover). Please send cheques not cash made payable to

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Herts & Middx Butterfly Conservation. Please add £1 postage for each book ordered.

If you require any butterfly friendly plants, please ring Alan Downie

Aldbury Nowers Field Trip Report, by David Chandler ...(A Grizzled and Dingy Sky, but No Skippers !)

Thanks to Liz & Chris from Towcester plus Jane & young Alex from Hitchin for their patience in waiting for the sun to emerge on Saturday 17th May during the joint branch field trip to Aldbury Nowers (Duchies Piece) nr Tring Herts. because, unfortunately, for the second -year running this field trip was dogged by poor weather.

The showers having abated, the weather was dry & cloudy as the party set off up the hill at 11.15 towards the area where Dingy & Grizzled Skippers can be found. At the car-park I saw a Brimstone moth so there was a degree of expectation of a good walk. On the path leading up to the site Alex saw a nest of many caterpillars on clover. We inspected a couple in a viewing box and thought they might be Green Veined Whites caterpillars but later investigation lead me to believe they might have been Six Spotted Burnet moths.



We walked along bridle-path by the edge of the scrub next to the site proper and found a Soldier Beetle and a Snout Moth. We then made our way through the lower fields to the Ridgeway path and then up through the woods to the specially cleared area where cowslips have been planted. It is hoped Duke of Burgundy might re-colonise this site one day.



Brimstone moth
Opisthoptis luteolata
Photo: Ian Kimber

We saw very little other than birds and the strange tree climbing snails of Aldbury. We found a Clearwing moth, a Cardinal Beetle and, in a patch of dappled sun-light, disturbed one white butterfly, which I

thought was a Green-veined White, but it disappeared into the shadows as fast as it came and could not be positively identified. We wondered if that one adult butterfly would be the sum total of our day's efforts, but the weather brightened and the sun came out and our hopes were raised. We quickly descended to the main butterfly area where we were rewarded with, "absolutely nothing", the sun was out and the field was sheltered, but sadly it was still too cool & windy for any butterflies to take to the air.

It was now 1 o'clock and getting near to the end of the walk; we checked again along the path at the bottom of the site near the big briar bush where the Grizzled & Dingy Skippers can sometimes be found roosting and saw a very nice Cinnabar Moth and a Carpet but again we saw no adult butterfly. We all went back to our cars.

I think the trip was a success because of the good company, the walk in the beautiful Chilterns countryside and the unexpected revelation of those sharp eyes of young Alex in pointing out to all in the party the interesting beetles and roosting moths he found.



Cinnabar moth *Tyria jacobaeae*
Photo: Ian Kimber

Sitting in my car in the pouring rain beforehand I wondered if I should abandon the trip as a washout but with hindsight that would have been a mistake. Unfortunately I still have not been able to show people the Dingy & Grizzled Skippers of Aldbury but lucky for me if I take another Field Trip

perhaps it will be third time there in 2004!

EASTENDERS..... or a Lunchtime Butterfly Safari to Mile End, London. May 28th 2003, by David Chandler

The City of London does not have all that many places where you might find butterflies; in sixteen years of coming to town, I've seen Holly Blue in St Paul's Churchyard, the odd Peacock in Bunhill Flats, an occasional Small Tortoiseshell on the buddlias on London Wall and a Small White or two in Finsbury Circus. In short, there is quite a dearth of quality butterflying available to City workers.

Like me, fellow Herts & Middx committee member Malcolm Hull works in the City of London. One day early in May he rang me and suggested we go London butterflying on the next sunny day. It then rained for almost a fortnight; however, towards the end of the month the weather improved and were able to put our plan into action.

Meeting at Bank station at 12.30pm we looked at our AtoZ map and decided to take the Central Line three stops to Mile End where we would visit Tower Hamlets Cemetery & wildlife reserve. Arriving at the site fifteen minutes later we were quite pleasantly surprised to find that the cemetery was not manicured and ordered, but ecologically managed in a manner that was very sympathetic to wildlife.

There was a nature trail so the obvious thing to do was to follow it around the site. The notice board at the entrance said there was quite a variety of wildlife present including Foxes, and armed with this knowledge we were quietly pleased at our choice of venue. Although quite heavily wooded for most of the site, we followed the paths through the ramshackle gravestones straying off line to the left and right when we thought we saw suitable sunny glades and rides where butterflies might be found.

We were rewarded with seven butterfly species (if a caterpillar is permitted to count), some unidentified brown moths, a reasonable selection of garden and woodland birds and some interesting plants that I thought quite unusual for central London - (which may have been introduced).

The butterfly species seen :

Speckled Wood	12
Holly Blue	1

Common Blue	1 (female)
Small White	2
Large White	1
Green-Veined White	1
Orange Tip	as a caterpillar

Temperature = 21 deg. Daily sunshine Average = 100%

Other plants & animals of passing interest:

Plants: Kidney Vetch, Birds Foot Trefoil, Garlic Mustard. Moths: Tiny "chequered skipper-like" micro-moth. Birds: Green Woodpecker, Sparrow (now scarce in London) Blackbird & Collared Dove.

We left the cemetery around 1.40pm and were back at our desks in the City by around 2pm.

Malcolm and I plan to return to the Tower Hamlets Cemetery & wildlife reserve at Mile End in late July or early August to look for some of the summer butterfly species.

Brimstone Butterflies Breeding in Ipswich - Buckthorn Attracts Eggs

The Brimstones and Buckthorn initiative was launched in 1998/99 as a joint venture between Ipswich Organic Gardener's Group, Ipswich Wildlife Group, Butterfly Conservation and Ipswich Borough Council. Started with a budget of just £100, its aim quite simply was to bring about a reversal of the fate of the Brimstone in East Suffolk which until then, like many of Suffolk's one time common species, had been in gentle decline and was absent from many parts. The concept was driven by the fact that female Brimstones search out and detect their caterpillar's foodplant at a distance. By planting the foodplant, we have encouraged the butterfly into the area and have finally been rewarded with females laying eggs on bushes in Ipswich.

Altogether over 3000 bushes of both Alder Buckthorn and Common Buckthorn have been planted on around 200 sites; some plantings are

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of single bushes in private gardens, others are of larger plantings of between 50 -200 bushes. Every single bush is valuable to the butterfly and to the initiative and many of the bushes planted were grown on from seed at the Allotment Forestry tree nursery in Sidegate Lane, Ipswich.

The accompanying photographs were taken in Holywells Park, Ipswich, where both types of Buckthorn were planted. Eggs were first discovered on April 19th, after the Friends of Holywells Park Easter Egg Hunt. These were obviously eggs of a different kind! The photo of an egg, magnified, shows its milk-bottle shape. It will hatch into a caterpillar after about 2 weeks depending on the weather and on surviving predation. After pupating into a chrysalis, it ultimately turns into a gorgeous yellow butterfly which will be on the wing for a period in the summer and then go into diapause or hibernation until next Spring when the cycle will be repeated. Being able to survive a full 11 months, Brimstones are one of our longest lived butterflies.

The success of the initiative shows that individual actions of ordinary people do matter and that just one small gesture, in this case the planting of a bush, can make all the difference.

Please phone Julian for more details on:- Ipswich 414092 or email: julian.dowding@ntlworld.com



Eastern Regional Officer Makes a Start

The new Eastern Regional Officer, Sharon Hearle has now been in post for three months . A new office has been set up in Newmarket High Street which is conveniently central for the Anglia region. Sharon spent the last 12 years working for the Wildlife Trust in Cambridgeshire and is familiar with many aspects of habitat management, working with volunteers, grant schemes and Local Biodiversity Action Plan process. This is her first report:

I have now met all five branches in the Anglia region; Cambridgeshire and Essex, Hertfordshire and Middlesex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire with a combination of committee meetings and site visits. The post is funded by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) through their Environment Action Fund which helps voluntary groups in England promote sustainable development through projects on biodiversity. The amount of grant BC receives is directly dependant on the amount of voluntary work undertaken by Branches in the Region.

A Regional Action Plan (RAP) meeting was held near Newmarket in March to review last year's activities by Branches, discuss current plans and my initial work programme for the year. I am impressed by the range of work that Branch volunteers are able to achieve and the detailed knowledge which many individuals have. There will be great benefits from inter-Branch liaison over the year.

I am also in the process of contacting and meeting key players in each region from organisations such as English Nature, Forest Enterprise, Wildlife Trusts, DEFRA and local authority biodiversity Action Plan staff. This is a great opportunity to share information and plan activity for the year. There is clearly a need for increased awareness of Butterfly Conservation and its volunteer activities. Hopefully more records will reach the County Recorders in future. This liaison has already identified potential new sites for Chalk Hill Blue and Grizzled Skipper in Cambridgeshire. Butterfly Conservation is now represented on a number of regional network meetings such as Biodiversity Action Plan Officers, Forest Enterprise Regional Woodland Strategy, Fwag and National Trust.

Work is underway to focus on Grizzled and Dingy Skippers across the region to try and ensure someone re-visits all known sites from the last ten years. Sightings of butterflies or reports on habitat will be equally

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valuable and advice can then be given to landowners. Both species have shown an alarming decline and require conservation management at their now isolated colonies to maintain populations. Several sites are also threatened by development. The three year Grizzled Skipper survey in Hertfordshire has been particularly useful in helping to plan work in other counties.

I have started a weekly transect on Devil's Dyke in Cambridgeshire which will give me first hand experience of what a transect involves and data about the Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Chalk Hill Blue and others. Torchlight surveys for Barred Tooth Striped moth with the Cambridgeshire moth recorder and other volunteers in April was unsuccessful. Two moth training events are planned for Cambridgeshire on 26th July and 27th September with Paul Waring as part on the National Macro Moth Recording Scheme pilot project

An application in February to Anglian Water Environmental Action Fund for £4300.00 has been approved by their directors and will fund display material and leaflets, maps, tools for practical work and training day costs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thanks members for their kind donations toward this post and hope the achievements in due course fulfil their expectations.

Please feel free to get in touch with any project ideas.

Sharon Hearle

C/o Busy Bee, 21 High Street, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8LX Tel 01638 663990 shearle@butterfly-conservation.org.uk

Sharon requests anyone with video footage of Dingy or Grizzled Skippers to get in touch as she would like to use it for training sessions next season

Herts & Middx Branch. Field Trips 2003

Sunday 29th June 11.00am

At the invitation of Bedfordshire & Northants branch: **Sharpenhoe Clappers**, Beds for Dark Green Fritillary and Summer species. Meet at TL/166/065296. Leader: David Chandler 01582 862361.

Wednesday 9th July 11.00am – 3.30pm.

Joint with Surrey Branch. Bookham Common, Surrey. A favourite site, and reliable (weather permitting) for Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary and many others. Bring binoculars. Meet at Tunnel Car Park at Church Road, where it bends sharply near the station. TQ130556. Picnic lunch suggested. Leader: Howard Whiting 01737 247881.

Sunday July 13th 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch. **Fermyn Wood**, Northants for Purple Emperor. Meet at SP/141/967859 Leader: Douglas Goddard 01604.408670 goddarddouglas@hotmail.com

Saturday July 12th 11:00am

Broxbourne Woods. Purple Emperor. Bring binoculars. West car park (if full park in east car park and walk through to west car park) Map 166 TL324071 (west cp) or TL329069 (east cp) Contact Liz Goodyear 01920 487066

Sunday July 20 12.30pm (confirm start time with Liz Goodyear)

Joint with Norfolk Branch. **Broxbourne Woods** Purple Emperor. Bring binoculars. West car park (if full park in east car park and walk through to west car park) Map 166 TL324071 (west cp) or TL329069 (east cp) Contact Liz Goodyear 01920 487066

Sunday 13th July 11.00am – 4.00pm

Joint with the Friends of Holtspur Bank. **Holtspur Valley Butterfly Reserves Open Day. Bucks.** Park/meet at Scout Hut in Cherry Tree Road, Beaconsfield SU/175/923905. Downland/woodland guided walks. Displays including wildlife illustrations by Richard Lewington. Light refreshments. Contact: Frank Banyard 01494 672310 or David Fuller 01628 633163

Sunday 20th July, 2.00pm.

Butterfly Walk round **Bunkers Park & Long Deans NR.** (Hemel Hempstead). Target species: Marbled White, Small & Essex Skippers. Meet at Bunkers Park car park (TL086060) at 2pm. Leader & Contact:

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Michael Pearson, 01582 840772. e-mail: jandmpearson@supanet.com

Saturday 26th July 10.30am - 3.30pm.

Joint with Upper Thames Branch. **Silchester Common and Pamber Forest**. Berks/Hants border. Superb Hampshire Wildlife Trust reserve. Target species: Silver-studded Blue, Silver washed Fritillary, White Admiral, Purple Hairstreak, Grayling and (?) Purple Emperor. Meet at SU/175/616621. From A430 take minor road towards Silchester, turn right at edge of built up area into Impstone Road and to car park on left at end. Picnic lunch. Leader: Grahame Hawker 0118 9700144

Saturday August 2nd 11.00am

Joint with Bedfordshire & Northants branch. **Whipsnade and Bison Hill**, Beds for Chalkhill Blue. Meet at TL/165/166/000185. Leader: Greg Herbert 01582.663784

Wednesday 13th August 10.30am onwards

Joint with Upper Thames branch. **Greenham Common, Berks**. The second visit of the year to this 1200 acre common. 28 butterfly species recorded in the past, but much more to be explored. Extensive heathland but with many other types of habitat. Meet at Control Tower car park off Burys Bank Road, itself off of old A34 at top of hill south of Newbury. Tower car park is 1½ miles & right at new roundabout. SU/174/501653. Picnic lunch recommended. Leader: David Redhead 01865 772520.

Sunday 14th September, 2.00pm

Butterfly Walk round **Bunkers Park & Long Deans NR** (Hemel Hempstead). Target Species: late summer migrants Red Admiral, Painted Lady, and perhaps Clouded Yellow. Meet at Bunkers Park car park (TL086060) at 2.00pm. Leader & Contact: Michael Pearson 01582 840772. e-mail: jandmpearson@supanet.com



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. Regular work parties not currently required. Contact John and Margaret Noakes to see if they need your help. (01296) 660072.

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. For details ring Alan Strawn (new reserve warden) on (01442) 232946

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

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