

Butterfly
Conservation

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE **43**

SEPTEMBER 2005

The Fritillaries of Herts & Middlesex in the Summer of 2005 by David Chandler

Apart from being your Branch Chairman, I also act as the species co-ordinator for fritillaries in the two counties – and I include The Duke of Burgundy in this list even if, as we all know, it is not a true “fritillary”. I will write more about our local Duke of Burgundies in an article in the new year.

Meanwhile, this year we have had a good fritillary season with reports of Dark Green Fritillaries at Aldbury Nowers and Silver-Washed Fritillaries at various places throughout Herts county like Bricket Wood, Broxbourne, and Tring & Hemel Hempstead. There have also

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been reports of sightings of several Heath Fritillaries at the introduction site in Middlesex, which now include my own observations.

About a year ago I penned an article in the Branch magazine about Heath Fritillaries in our area and it prompted a vigorous letters debate in our magazine. As a leader of a Branch I respect and follow Butterflies Conservation's policy on introductions and re-introductions but, when personally speaking, I err towards being more sympathetic towards introductions & re-introductions than many others in the society. So on this very personal level I decided early in 2005 that I wanted to visit the Heath Fritillary site in the flight season to look at the butterflies in their new domain. I was sure I would find this experience fascinating, because despite being middle aged and being interested in butterflies for many of these years, I had still to see the Heath Fritillary in the wild.

So in the spring I spoke to Paul Losse & Alex Machin of English Nature and Ched George of The Ruislip & District NHS, the local natural history society involved. I planned a visit with them in mid-week alongside their local experts. Ched suggested the first week of June as being the most likely week during the Heath Fritillary's flight period when we might see some adults flying; however, he added that as the weather was poor during 2004 when the donor stock transfer took place, the local natural history society were not expecting too many Heath Fritillaries to emerge.

Undaunted, I resolved still to go and see the site and, in the event that I saw no Heath Fritillary butterflies, I would not be too disappointed because I wanted to see the breeding site from the site habitat management perspective because my own habitat management experience has been restricted to Chilterns chalk down-land sites.

As events turned out, for personal reasons, I could not make the initial planned date and so I went on my own on a very hot Sunday in mid-June and when I found the location from the directions given to me by Ched. I was pleasantly surprised at the efforts that had been made to re-create the habitat suitable for Heath Fritillary. The cow-wheat was in nice big clumps in the cleared areas and I was rewarded with two Heath Fritillary sightings (slightly worn specimens) but it was too hot at 32°C for them to stop long enough on the bramble flowers for me to see what sex they were. I watched them fly over the site for a quarter

of an hour in a very good humour.

The Heath Fritillary has an alternate name in the Woodman's friend, and this echoes back to the time when much more woodland coppicing took place in our forests. This activity, which declined since the Second World War, to a large extent, mirrors the fall in the various woodland fritillary butterflies' populations over the past 50 years as the coppicing cycle was no longer followed. It is only through the intervention of volunteers actively managing woodland again that many of our woodland specialist butterflies may be given a chance to recover their numbers in our forests.

During my visit to the site I also saw lots of Meadow Brown & Speckled Woods, a Large Skipper and two White Admirals. On



another level the Middlesex Heath Fritillary site reminded me of a more rural location like the Botany Bay complex on the Surrey/Hants border than one so close to our metropolitan capital city. It was nice to see Heath Fritillaries for the first time but also wonderful to see the White Admiral so close to London which for me was a splendid extra bonus at the end of a good day in the field.

**Butterfly Conservation
Hertfordshire & Middlesex Branch**

**Annual General Meeting
14 January 2006**

**To be held at the Welwyn Civic Centre
Prospect Place, Welwyn
Herts, AL6 9ER**

Grid Reference: TL232160 [Map 166]

Time: 2.15 for 2.30 – 5.30

**Guest speaker: TONY DAVIS
Butterfly Conservation's
Moth Officer**

Full programme to be confirmed in the next newsletter

The Sales and Plant Stand will be present

Refreshments will be available

NON-MEMBERS WELCOME

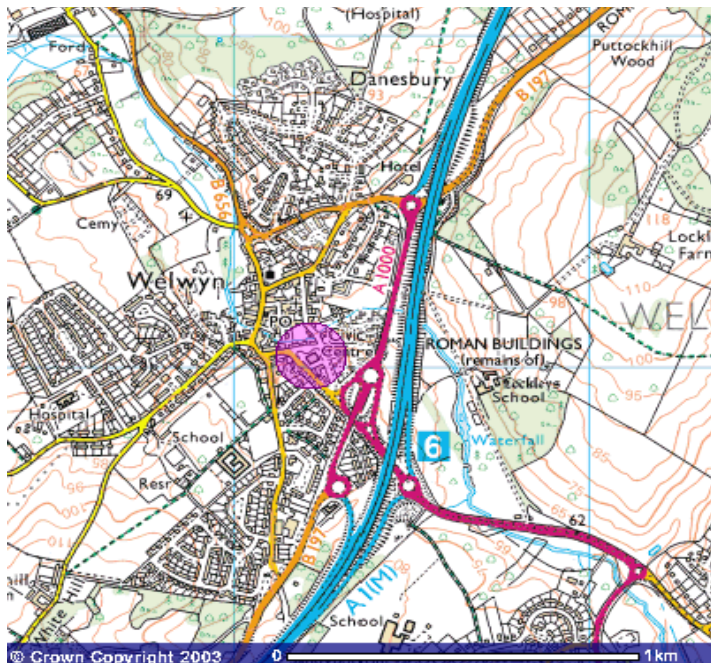
The Annual General Meeting will be held on a Saturday 14th January 2006, at Welwyn Civic Centre, Welwyn, Hertfordshire. Tony Davis, Butterfly Conservation's Moth Conservation Officer has kindly agreed to be our guest speaker. His talk will be in two parts – an introduction to moths and the work of the Butterfly Conservation moth team.

Welwyn Civic Centre is situated in Old Welwyn and is just off Jct. 6 of the A1M. When you exit the A1M, you will encounter the Welwyn bypass and some roundabouts. However, you need to take the exit that takes you under one of the slip roads and almost immediately after this

bridge the Civic Centre can be seen on the right. Take the turning immediately after the building and follow the road right round the Civic Centre and the car park entrance is behind the building. The nearest railway station is Welwyn North (approx 1 mile) – please check that there are no engineering works that might affect your journey. If anyone has any difficulty getting to the Annual General Meeting please ring or email Liz Goodyear (details on back) who will endeavour to find you a lift.

A winter meeting will be held in Middlesex and full details will be in the next newsletter.

We look forward to seeing you – non members are also welcome.



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Branch Website, by Liz Goodyear

As visitors to the branch website will have seen, there have been some changes recently.

Head Office would like every branch to have their own website, and to help those new to designing a webpage, some templates have been created for branch use by Steve Gray of Touchdown Online, who also responsible for the national website. Several branches are now using them and it was felt that this was the right time for our branch website to move over. Basically the website had outgrown itself, and I could no longer accomodate all the pages and pictures on my domestic webspace so a new home was essential.

Steve has also been able to provide server space and during the change over has been a great help sorting out the regular problems I have encountered! Each branch has been able to adapt the templates so we can all have our own look but that has also had it headaches. There are still several pages that need updating but I hope everyone will agree that the new design and layout is an improvement.

HOWEVER THIS IS THE IMPORTANT BIT WHICH EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW - THE DOMAIN NAME HAS CHANGED - IT IS NOW: <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk>

The old name (www.hmbutterflyconservation.org.uk) still exists and anyone using it for the moment simply gets redirected unknowingly to the new name. However, eventually, ownership of the old name will lapse and the links will not work so please change your settings to the new name now. If you are responsible for a website with links to this site - please change the link as one day when you click on it - it will simply say page not available!

Whilst writing.....if any **transect walkers** would like to write some text about their own transect, include some pictures and tell me about each section and what can be seen, and detail the butterfly tables, I would love to include it on the website. Only condition is that the transect has to be walked on a publically accessible site. Also photos of recognised butterfly sites would also be welcome for a new section of pages yet to be developed - I look forward to a deluge of information and photos.

Decad Bashing, by Andrew Middleton

After enthusiastic recording for the Millennium Atlas, whereby most Herts & Middx tetrads were visited several times and 10, 20 or even 25 plus species were noted in many, good coverage has been sustained through 2000-4, but at a slightly lower level. Rather than rely on a 'last year' tetrad-bashing frenzy, John Murray's 2005-9 mapping challenge aims to encourage sensible, steady, and dare I say, sustainable recording over 2005-9, via decad (10m square) recording co-ordinators.

I said I would be happy to try and co-ordinate recording for TQ38, roughly east to the Lea Valley and south to the Thames, plus the odd extra Thameside tetrad of TQ37, and combine this with a little more effort in my own decad, TQ39, stretching north to the M25.

First off, enlist the keen experts known to me to frequent key habitat pockets ~ in effect, Robert Callf around Grovelands Park, Oakwood Park & Vicarage Farm (NW TQ39), Keir Mottram, Ally Pally and more on the boundary of TQ38 & TQ39, and Diane Andrews here, there and generally everywhere, playing the sweeper role very effectively. Have they got anything in return for liaising with me? Co-ordination in the form of updated maps at <http://www.acmiddleton.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/TQ38&39.htm> and monthly print-outs for those still enjoying snail mail. With some effort also from myself, and occasional records from other observers, all TQ39 tetrads, and several outlying tetrads in TQ38, have registered 10 or more species, and a good number are already around the 15-20 mark. Teamwork!

On to the south-west of TQ38 ~ City of London, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Islington, plus smaller portions of Camden and Westminster. Hold on, that sounds like most of north London. Whilst there are a number of excellent and well-managed open spaces in TQ38, and some with established butterfly transects, in other tetrads I have tried all day and still not found any suitable habitat, and when I have, it can then take an hour or so to locate the likely butterflies. However, I would have enjoyed a bit more reward in terms of nymphalids this summer on my city treks. As all tetrad bashers know, it takes time to build up local knowledge of the whereabouts of sometimes quite small hotspots, whilst private gardens would undoubtedly yield many valuable records. So if you aren't yet recording butterflies on a casual basis wherever you see them and whenever you get the chance.....please do. All the records are entered into the

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National Butterfly Recording Scheme and help to inform conservation effort both locally and across the UK.

To relate a positive experience, Haggerston Park is near Bethnal Green, in a highly urban area of Hackney. In 2004, I visited the park and was delighted to find a small wildlife area where I saw three species of meadow butterfly ~ Common Blue, Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown. A visit there in 2005 was just as good, and coincidentally, I met a group filming park-user activity, and gave a sound bite to camera about the effectiveness and simplicity of said area.

My plea to all interested parties is to take some time to record butterflies wherever you happen to be. These casual records, often of *just common species*, provide a wealth of valuable information on both the species themselves, and the reasons, often quite simple, for why other species aren't found. Consider recording more widely in your neighbourhood. Have a look at the maps and liaise with co-ordinators, or perhaps take on a vacant 10km square yourself. It really does focus the mind on what may comprise good habitat, management, planning and opportunity for butterflies in both urban and rural environments.

For more information, please visit the branch website, or for info on TQ37, 38 & 39, please call me on 02082450847 or email me at acmiddleton@blueyonder.co.uk.

By the time you read this, just the last butterflies of the year will be flying, but even late autumn butterflies in gardens can help fill the gaps and perhaps encourage more recording next year.

	21	21	19	16	
	18	12	14	16	
TQ39	19	12	15	14	
	10	12	14	14	
	19	15	13		
	18	12	12		
	12	10	11		
TQ38	0	1	1	10	
	2	3	3	10	
	2	1	4	8	10
TQ37	0			3	10

.....transect
number = species recorded

Species recorded 2005-9 at 1st Sep
05 (additional transect / other
records to be added)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Introductions, by Terry Goody

Dear Sir, an observation re: Michael Pearson's letter about Bunkers Park in the March Newsletter.

We seem to be getting bogged down with the weighty and thorny subject of introductions. I can only assume & imagine that BC's policy relates to specialised butterflies and not our commoner species, which are widespread because of their non-specific requirements.

As Michael states in his letter, he records low numbers of Brimstones on his Transect, one can assume that he also records Orange Tip, Whites, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, etc

My observation is this: If, as he suggests, a programme of planting the foodplants of these butterflies was undertaken, would it not be sufficient to let Nature follow her course, and most probably natural colonisation would take place, thereby avoiding the thorny subject of "Introductions".

As an indication of the potential success of this strategy, I would like to relate my own experience:

When I lived in Hoddesdon, the fence on the left side of my garden was wire, so as the fence belonged to my neighbour, to secure a certain degree of privacy I planted some shrubs.

Over time these grew quite tall and took up a lot of space. After a few years and a change of neighbour, I was asked if I would object to them erecting a proper wooden fence. Not only did I not have any objections, I offered to dispose of the large shrubs, and I decided to dedicate the border to butterfly friendly plants. This resulted in an amazing increase in the numbers of butterflies and moths, so in my own experience this strategy can and does work!

National Moth Day, July 7th 2005 at Stanmore Country Park, By John Hollingdale

Why is the weather never sunny on my butterfly walks? I must have upset someone somewhere. It was, however, warm which was encouraging. The party numbered about ten on my annual walk around Stanmore Country Park including one youngster with a net. I had reason to be very thankful for his presence.

We set off around the first meadow and soon he said "I've got something". 'Something' turned out to be a Meadow Brown and a Purple Hairstreak. We potted the hairstreak and it was a good opportunity to look in the books and compare it with the White-letter Hairstreak which has also been seen here.

The 'Browns' don't seem to mind cloudy weather and we saw many during the walk. In the next meadow came the cry from the netsman "I've got a Marbled White". I haven't seen many in the Park and when the second specimen was found it really was a red letter day. The first moths seen were several Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnets. On the rest of the walk many Gatekeepers were present in large numbers and we saw the following moths: Shaded Broadbar, Bright-line Brown-eye, Treble Brown Spot and Six-spot Burnets.

We hung out twelve pheromone lures but with no takers; too late in the day we decided. The last sighting of the day was of a Red Admiral.

In the evening was the moth light event. Three of us gathered around the sheet and waited for dark; trying to get rid of the circling bat by hissing at it before it ate all the incoming quarry. The sky, of course, by now was completely clear of cloud, but that didn't put the moths off. Thirty-three species of Macro were identified including several Black Arches, an impressive moth. Nine species of micros (Tortrix and Pyralids) were also identified the next day including five new records for the Park; the list isn't a very long one. Some leaf mines and two more micros are with Colin Plant. I always get nervous when leading public events but at the end of the day I must say I enjoyed myself immensely.

Purple Emperors (*Apatura iris*) in 2005, by Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton

With a relatively cold spring, we were not expecting an early start to the season, but we were proved wrong when the first sighting came from Northaw on the 26th June. The weather then let us down and for another 2 weeks very few reports came through and we struggled in poor sunshine to get any sightings from our known sites.

The two Purple Emperor branch field trips were held in July in Broxbourne Wood NR, but what a difference these two days were!

Saturday 9th July ~ Broxbourne Wood NR: We arrived early but the weather was dull, although we assured everyone that this was perfect. We happily told everyone that as soon as the sun broke though, we would have bumper sightings. By 11am, the sun still wasn't shining but the many expectant people lined the main ride from the car-park patiently. Some had come some distance to see Purple Emperor and we desperately hoped they wouldn't be let down. It remained cloudy to around 1 o'clock. Unfortunately, despite some serious sun in the afternoon, no Purple Emperor were seen until 4.15 when a very brief sighting was made after most people had gone home! The territory at Broxbourne Common also produced only one flight - very disappointing for the 30 odd people who came along during the day. However, Archie Lang whilst walking around the edge of the reserve, was pretty sure he had seen a Silver Washed Fritillary. For those who waited patiently, when the sun shone both White Admiral and Purple Hairstreak made an appearance and some people had never seen these species, so the day was still very enjoyable.

It was very unfair that the next day, the sun did shine and Purple Emperor activity across the two counties was probably at its most exciting. The males having been held up for so long by poor weather, went berserk for 48 hours and almost as quickly as the activity started it stopped so when the next field trip on the following Sunday arrived we again were not over optimistic that we would have a lot to show people.

Sunday 17th July ~ Broxbourne Wood NR Field Trip in conjunction with Countryside Management Service: In the end the day was quite fantastic and activity started early when, at 9.50 we had our first sighting of a probable male Purple Emperor circling around some 'early birds', then at 10.45 a female was seen honey dew feeding. At

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11.15 we had a grounded female near the dip taking moisture and dead on cue just before 12, a female was seen egg-laying. The egg was visible through a telescope (the egg was monitored by Andrew Middleton for 17 days until it hatched). From then on there were several other reports of females and a further grounding just after 2pm. However, the highlight of the day started to unfold around 2.15 when a member from Suffolk saw a female feeding at a sap run in an oak tree near the car-park (this particular tree had been used before for sap run feeding). It was then confirmed that were two together. Barry Palfrey from Beds & Northants took a photo of the synchronised wings of two females side by side. We thought this was good then at 3.15 three females were confirmed in the tree. Then finally four when a very tatty individual (possibly male) joined in the fun. It's also possible that the tree was being used for shade as well as sap feeding in the heat of a very hot day. We watched the same tree on a much cooler day; a week later and there was no activity at all. Andrew Middleton took a few people around to the territory visible from the road at Brickendon and later on to Broxbourne Common – unfortunately there were no sightings from either of these two territories, despite them being active earlier on in July. A thrilling day, which for those present was a day to remember. The Countryside Management Service Walk around the Reserve was very well attended and they joined us to watch for Purple Emperor in the morning before continuing on their walk around the Reserve. We also were able to show everyone a dead male Purple Emperor that had been found earlier that week on the ground. Its wing was crippled and it probably died soon after emergence. This male will be placed in the county collection, with a female that was also found dying a few days later. There has been a gap in the county collection for more than a 100 years, ever since A.H. Foster had gone to great lengths to try and obtain a Purple Emperor for the collection at the beginning of the 20th Century but without success!



Purple Emperor at Broxbourne Wood,
2003.

Photo: Nick Sampford

We tried to visit all our existing sites this year and were able to

confirm that they were all still being used. However, we also spent a lot of days searching out potential new sites, and looking at historic areas. This year we also had several other people searching the historic sites in the north Hertfordshire area where we are increasingly confident that a territory will be found within a few years.

In 2005, we confirmed a new territory at Fir and Pond Wood (an HMWT reserve just east of Potters Bar) when a single male was seen, and two other reliable reports of Purple Emperor came from sallow rich gravel pits. The first was at Tyttenhanger on the 3rd July and finally an extremely late but very tatty male was seen at Stockers Lake near Rickmansworth on the 21st August. Both these reports came from birdwatchers. Purple Emperor was also seen at Tring Park this year by several recorders, and we have now heard that a second Purple Emperor has been seen down by the canal in Tring. These sightings, at slightly out of character sites, continue to confirm the importance of sallows within the landscape as a whole; road verges, field edges and waterside are just as important as sallow in woodland.

Our technique for finding Purple Emperor is to look for territorial activity, at woodland high points. The nature of the weather this year meant that this type of activity peaked incredibly quickly and it was necessary to look for females – this is much harder and not always so successful. It was a very frustrating season, however we were able to enjoy new aspects of the species' activity for the first time.

Other highlights of our year included giving a 20 minute presentation with Matthew Oates at the Butterfly Conservation's International Symposium held at Southampton University in April. It was a very daunting experience but over 100 people listened to our talk and many people assured us that our talk was very good!

Ryewater Away Day, Saturday 2nd July 2005, by Liz Goodyear

10 years ago the Hertfordshire & Middlesex Branch was formed (when the London Branch was split into two with the Surrey and SW London Branch also being formed) and the committee thought it would be nice to do something 'different' to celebrate this anniversary. We had met Clive Farrell the owner of the Ryewater Gardens and Nursery, when he came to Hertfordshire to talk to the committee about his proposed Butterfly Dome at St. Albans in the autumn of 2004. He very kindly invited us to come down for a visit and the venue for something 'different' came about.

Clive Farrell has transformed an area of farmland just south of Sherborne in Dorset, into a mosaic of different habitats, which we knew would be a very interesting place to visit. Although it took quite a bit of correspondence to find a convenient date, Saturday 2nd July was fixed. Also with the help of Brian Dicker, chairman of the Dorset branch a field trip to Martin Down and Vernditch Chase was arranged for the Sunday for those members that wanted a butterfly weekend. On the day 20 people came along (including some members from other branches including Brian Dicker and his wife). Some members came down just for the day, like myself, and others made a long weekend of the trip. Visiting friends, looking for fossils along the Dorset coast, or joining the field trip to Martin Down (details of this trip in a separate article).

Although to drive down in one day, involved an early start, the traffic was light and with Malcolm Newland we arrived at Ryewater with plenty of time to spare. Unfortunately the sun didn't want to shine – every now and then it tried but throughout the day it stayed firmly behind a bank of grey cloud.

We were immediately met by Clive who was very excited, as that morning, some of his tropical butterflies that he keeps in a specially heated greenhouse had emerged and he was very keen to show them to us. The first thing that hit everyone when they entered the greenhouse was the humidity but the sight of these fantastic creatures was quite overwhelming. Frantic attempts were made by everyone to take photos only to find that our camera lenses were completely misted up due to the humidity! Thank goodness for digital cameras and the many failures, could just be deleted! Clive talked about these butterflies, the

food plants and the life cycle and one particular butterfly became very attracted to Malcolm Newland's shirt and accompanied him throughout the visit to this greenhouse.

Clive then took us indoors and with his garden designer Andrew George showed us the plans for the Butterfly Dome and talked us through the garden design at Ryewater. We then set off on a tour of the gardens. It quickly became apparent that we could spend several days walking around the gardens and still not see everything. It's hard to describe all the different designs and habitats that Clive and his team have created. There were chalk banks, a lake in the shape of a 'S', a magical area with giant furniture, and meadows heaving with wild flowers. The site is managed purely for butterflies and wildlife and the result is spectacular. Unfortunately as the sun's attempt to shine was thwarted throughout the day, butterflies were not in profusion but the species list was quite respectable considering the weather. We were even able to try our hand at paddling a coracle on his lake although, one person (who I shan't name) misjudged the requirement of balance and had an unexpected swim! As the tour drew to a close we were taken into another of Clive's greenhouses (called the Snakehouse – not because it contained snakes but because the path was created to look like a snake), we all looked up and saw some butterflies, our first thought was they were White Admiral, but on closer inspection they were newly emerged Southern White Admiral. Clive and Andrew George's designs show great imagination and they have even created the garden's own prison camp for unruly plants. We were all presented with a disease resistant elm from the David Bellamy collection and at the end of the day we were treated to home-made cakes and tea before we left. Margaret Noakes thanked Clive and his staff for making us feel so welcome and everyone agreed we had a really great day out!



Liz in a coracle

Species list for visit (thanks to Malcolm Hull for keeping a note) was Ringlet, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Six Spot Burnet Moth, Small Skipper, Common Blue, Large White, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Large Yellow Underwing, Speckled Wood, Burnet Companion, Shaded

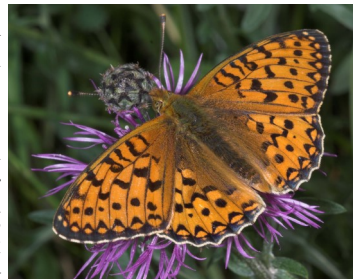
Broad Bar, Small White and a Hummingbird Hawkmoth just as we were about to leave

Field Trip to Martin Down and Vernditch Chase, Sunday 3rd July 2005, by Malcolm Hull

Cool and cloudy weather conditions provided an inauspicious start to the second day of the branches tenth anniversary weekend celebration. But Martin Down is a well managed chalk grassland site on the Wilts/Hants/Dorset borders, a National Nature Reserve and one of the best butterfly sites in the country. And we weren't disappointed. Brian Dicker and other members of the Dorset and Wilts BC branches joined us as we set off on the trip. For the first 40 minutes most sightings were moths, with the 5 spot and 6 spot Burnet Moths both seen. Telling the two apart by counting the spots is not easy. Brian explained the easier way - the spots are in pairs and on the 5 spot there is only a single spot at the tip of the wing, not a pair.

A man approached us asking if we knew the identity of a small completely black butterfly he had just seen. We couldn't, maybe a dark Small Blue or a new species? 10 minutes later we saw it ourselves - a Chimney Sweeper Moth, quite rare and an indicator of top quality habitat..

One of the great advantages of Martin Down is that unlike most chalk grassland sites there are no steep hills to climb as it is quite flat. It is crossed by a number of ancient dykes, which provide shelter on an otherwise very open site. As we arrived at the first ditch I caught a glimpse of a large orange butterfly. On pursuit, this turned out to be a Dark Green Fritillary, which posed beautifully for photos. As the sun struggled to break through, more butterflies appeared. Small Heath, Red Admiral, Common Blue and Marbled Whites, one of them seen puffing up its wings after recently hatching out. More DG Fritillaries were seen and a tatty old Adonis Blue. as we headed back for lunch more numbers started building and it took much longer to get back! The car park was surrounded by thistles and we saw more DG Fritillaries there than in the rest of the morning, around 30 in all.



Dark-green Fritillary
Photo: Ian Small

After lunch, we headed north into Vernditch Chase, a mostly wooded site. Silver-washed Fritillaries, many nectaring on bramble, were the star attraction. Several dozen were seen, along the woodland edge and alongside the track through the woods. I'd been delighted to see just one SWF in Bricket Wood, St Albans the previous weekend - it seemed surreal to see them in such abundance. White Admirals proved more elusive and despite lingering some time in a promising spot, we had yet to see any when our guide turned for home. By far the most spectacular sighting was a huge bright red moth, fluttering gently through the wood, a Scarlet Tiger Moth. On the way back we saw several more Scarlet Tigers and eventually White Admirals as well. Many thanks to Liz, Brian and everyone who helped organise a truly memorable trip.

Full Species List

Large Yellow Underwing, Cinnibar Moth, Red Admiral, Small Heath, 6 spot Burnet, 5 spot Burnet, Marbled White, Chimney Sweeper, Plume Moth, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Cistus Forester, Ringlet, Dark Green Fritillary, Large White, Comma, Large Skipper, Latticed Heath, Adonis Blue, Common Blue, Yellow Shell Moth, Small White, Silver Washed Fritillary, White Admiral, Scarlet Tiger, Speckled Wood, Green-veined White, Gatekeeper.

Field Trip to Bricket Wood Common - Sunday 10 July, by Malcolm Hull

Historically, Bricket Wood, near Watford has been one of the better butterfly sites in South Herts. However scrub encroachment and a cessation of coppicing led to the local extinction of many species. Improved management in recent years has reversed this trend, with the number of butterflies recorded on the weekly transect tripling in the last three years. The number of species recorded also increased from 17 in 2001 to 25 in 2004. Previous field trips at this location had concentrated (unsuccessfully) on Brown Hairstreak. Numbers of White Admirals have been increasing steadily on the site for several years. And in 2004 there were six sightings of Silver-washed Fritillary, which inspired the idea of a further field trip.

So on a warm sunny Sunday in July six branch members met in School Lane and set off across the Common.

Firstly we looked for dragonflies round the pond. Banded Demoiselle, Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker, Broad Bodied Chaser and Four



White Admiral ~
(Broxbourne Wood).
Photo: Barry Palfrey

Spotted Chaser were all recorded on the trip. Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton noted the concentration of Sallows and suggested this would be a good spot to look for Purple Emperor. It has never been seen on this site, although the first sighting in St Albans district since the 1950s had been made at Tyttenhanger a few days earlier. I was keen to look for Silver-washed Fritillary, as I had seen one at this very spot only the day before. However the pond was in shade and we continued on along a

bridleway through a large clearing. Male and female Brimstones were evident, mostly nectaring. There is a concentration of their larval food plant, Alder Buckthorn at the edge of the clearing creating a "Brimstone Meadow" where dozens can be seen in May.

Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, a Holly Blue, Green-veined Whites, Small Essex and Large Skippers were all present. Several Marbled Whites were seen, a species which first colonised the wood about 6 years ago and is now well established.

On the far side of the clearing we saw Speckled Wood, Purple Hairstreak and White Admiral, perching on bramble, just a little to far for a good photo. Heading north, we walked along the ride, created in 2001/2, this has now become the best part of the wood for butterflies. More White Admirals (total 6) and Red Admirals (total 4) were seen, also Large White, Ringlet, Comma, Large Yellow Underwing and Narrow-bordered 5 spot Burnet moths. Returning via the Hornbeam Coppice and School Lane, we stopped off again at the pond and were rewarded with the sight of a Silver-washed Fritillary. Although it did not come close enough to photo, it was clearly observed through binoculars (a male), probably the first time one has been seen on a branch field trip in Herts. Encouraging news came from Colin Everett later the same day when he spotted a female Silver-washed Fritillary egg-laying on violets further south in the same woodland complex.

Shop Early for Christmas from the Butterfly Mail Order List

The following goods are available from Herts & Middx Butterfly Conservation by post. The list changes from time to time and we cannot guarantee availability. Please allow up to 2 weeks for delivery. More information and photos of some of the goods are on our website at <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk> Click on “Events and Sales”, then “Gardening mail order” and finally “On-line mail order page”

All profits go directly to help the work of Butterfly Conservation. Why not help your favourite charity by buying a butterfly gift? You may help a friend or relation build their interest in butterflies & moths.

NEW - Butterfly Badges from Andrew Middleton
A new range of badges (1/2") with the Branch name and a choice of 4 pictures - 1. roosting Dingy Skipper, 2. Comma larva, 3. Orange Tip, and 4. Small Tortoiseshell - each badge costs 40p

Greetings Cards from CB Picture Postcards – Clive Burrows range of greetings cards featuring his own stunning butterfly photographs. Each card, is A6 size, folded & blank inside for your greeting. There are 6 different designs each with one photo on the front. Designs include Marbled Fritillary, Small Tortoiseshell, Scarce Swallowtail, White Tree Nymph, Blue Morpho and Spotted Fritillary. A card with envelope costs £1.50

Butterfly Postcards from CB Picture Postcards– 9 different cards, all based on photos by HMBC member Clive Burrows, prize winner in

the last BC national photo competition. Designs include Peacock, Apollo, British Butterflies (6 species on 1 card), White & Red Admirals (2 species on 1 card), Peak White, Black-veined White, Butterflies of Andalucia (6 species on 1 card) and Papillons de Alpes Maritimes (6 species on 1 card).

Spanish Pyrenees (6 species on 1 card) - 35p each

Mounted Butterfly Prints by Nick Sampford – a range of high quality butterfly photos by a HMBC member, each professionally mounted on card (A5 approx). Designs include Adonis Blue, Brown Argus, Brown Hairstreak, Chequered Skipper, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Gatekeeper, Orange Tip, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Purple Emperor, Silver-studded Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Swallowtail, White Admiral and Wood White - £4.99 each

FSC Identification Guide to Butterflies– Fully laminated folding guide showing all UK butterfly species in full colour. This publication from the Field Studies Council is our single best selling item, an invaluable guide. HMBC Price - £3.00

FSC Identification Guide to Caterpillars – Fully laminated folding guide showing the caterpillars of all UK butterfly species. HMBC price - £2.50

Butterfly Gardening by Jenny Steel. This newly published book shows what to grow for nectar, how to encourage butterflies to breed and how to manage your garden in a butterfly friendly way. (A5 booklet 28 pages) HMBC price £3.00 (original price £3.50)

Britain's Butterflies by David Tomlinson and Rob Still – published by Wild Guides in association with Butterfly Conservation, this is simply the best guide to identifying UK butterfly species in the field. Contains digitally enhanced colour photos of adult butterflies, larval foodplants, eggs, pupae and caterpillars. Also distribution maps, observation tips and much helpful text. 192 pages, laminated paperback. HMBC Price - £12.50 (original price £15.00)

Saving Butterflies by David Dunbar. A practical guide to the conservation of butterflies, suitable for larger gardens with sections on how to start & manage a wildflower meadow. Also much practical advice on managing the countryside for butterflies (Hardback book 8”x 8”, 80 pages). HMBC price £4.99. (original price £ 9.99)

Pocket Field Notebook – Ideal for recording butterfly sightings, with

attractive covers containing butterfly pictures. 60 pages blank, lined, spiral bound – 40p.

Butterflies of Hertfordshire by Brian Sawford – Classic Guide to locations and species in Herts, the most comprehensive account ever published (hardback, 195 pages). HMBC price £7.50 (original price £15.00)

The Butterflies of the London Area by Colin Plant – comprehensive guide to the butterflies of Middlesex and other areas within 20 miles of central London (hardback, 199 pages) with colour photos and detailed distribution maps for each species. HMBC price - £7.50 (original price £15.95)

NEW - Usbourne Pocket Nature – Childrens Guide to Butterflies and Moths – useful for beginners, with many colour pictures (24 pages). Contains internet links to aid further exploration. Suitable for Children - £1.50

Set of 8 Herts & Middx BC Annual Reports 1996-2003 by John Murray & others. A complete set of previous branch reports since the current high quality format was introduced in 1996. The original price for a full set is £28. HMBC price - £12. Individual years also available by request

Herts & Middx Branch Report 2003 by John Murray and Andrew Wood. The comprehensive report on butterflies & moths in the two counties with distribution maps covering the period 2000-03 - £3.50

FREE LEAFLETS

Moths – an introduction - a new BC leaflet with information and advice on moth lifecycles, habitats and myths. Eight sides of A5 (folded), including many full colour photos – FREE

Welcome to Butterfly Conservation – a new BC leaflet introduced by David Attenborough about conservation success stories (Large Blue, Welsh Clearwing, Heath Fritillary, Dark Bordered Beauty) and other aspects of the Society's work. 16 sides of A5, full colour with superb photos – FREE

Gardening for Butterflies Leaflet (A4 folded) – New BC publication, completely rewritten to provide advice for all seasons & including moths - FREE

Butterflies and Farmland (A5 folded, A2 when unfolded) includes

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

A2 poster of farmland butterflies & text useful for those interested in management of farmland – FREE

NEW - Hedgerows for Hairstreaks (A5 folded) Contains tips on hedgerow and woodland management to conserve the Brown Hairstreak - FREE

You can order all of these items by post, by contacting Malcolm Hull by letter, email or phone (evenings & weekends) – contact details on back cover. There will be a small additional charge for postage at cost.

If you'd like to order any of our popular butterfly attracting plants call in at our sales stall. A full list of forthcoming dates & locations for the sales stall is available on the branch website.



Copy Deadline for the December Newsletter will be

20 November 2005

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

The December edition is usually circulated to arrive between Christmas and New Year, when you are more likely to have time to read it ! Please pass on your interesting observations / anecdotes to remind us all of summer days as we shelter from the cold.



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. Fourth Sunday of the month. Meet at 10.30 am. John and Margaret Noakes 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. Regular work parties on HMWT's Aldbury Nowers (Duchies Piece) reserve have not taken place for a number of years, but will restart in October. Meet 10.00 am on the third Sunday of the month (1st meeting 16 Oct) at the lay-by, half a mile from Tring station on the Ivinghoe Road. Final details of the work programme have still to be confirmed. Anyone wishing to be kept informed of the coming winter's work programme, or for confirmation of the October meeting, is asked to contact Michael Pearson (see back cover).

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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Please direct your correspondence to the relevant committee member. The magazine is produced by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex branch of **Butterfly Conservation** (*Company limited by guarantee*). Registered Office:Manor Yard, East Lulworth, near Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP. Registered in England No. 2206468 - Registered Charity No. 254937 - VAT No. 565 9070 16. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Committee or the National Society. Copyright 2005.