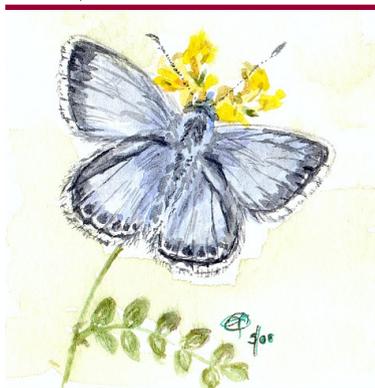


# Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



**HERTFORDSHIRE AND  
MIDDLESEX BRANCH**

**NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE 61**

*Spring 2011*

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### Chairman's Report, by Andrew Wood

At the AGM in Ashford in January I was elected to takeover from Dave Chandler as your Branch chair. I'm pleased to say that Dave will continue on the committee as Vice Chairman. Dave was elected in 2004 and has chaired the branch through changing times since then and I want to thank him for all the hard work and effort that he has put in over this time. I'm sure I will be calling on his knowledge and experience during the coming year.

Let me introduce myself. I have been a member since 1984 and on the branch committee for 11 years, latterly as Moth Officer. You may have encountered me as I have assisted John Murray with transect co-ordination and producing the annual report for much of that time. I have recently been made redundant and have decided that I will take the plunge of turning that set back into early retirement. This means that I should have more time to devote to branch affairs as well as recording moths and butterflies.

I have had a life long interest in natural history, and this moved particularly to butterflies in the early 1980s and moths from the 1990s. I have lived in Hertford since 1994 and prior to that I lived in the old county of Middlesex in Brent and Hillingdon from 1980 onwards, so I have a solid background in the branch's area. Looking back over that period it is clear that our butterflies and moths are ever changing and that we have a tremendous amount to learn about population dynamics and the effects of climate change. In the early 1980s Walls were common and Speckled Woods uncommon, a situation now more than reversed in our area. We have seen spectacular species such as Silver-washed fritillaries and Purple Emperor become more abundant while we worry about formerly ubiquitous species such as Small Tortoiseshell.

Over the last few weeks I have been out and about walking and cycling in Hertfordshire and Middlesex, and despite the rather dull and uninteresting weather so far in 2011 it has filled me with anticipation for the forthcoming butterfly season. Walking through previously unvisited wood and seeing honeysuckle draped over trees and shrubs makes me wonder if a return visit in late June will see White Admirals gliding through the rides and clearings. Will that rough grassland be

alive the chequer boarded Marbled Whites come July? It is things like this that keep us going through the long dull days of the winter until we see the first mild days of late February/early March when we hope to catch sight of the Brimstones, Peacocks and Commas emerging from hibernation and searching for early nectar sources and whose numbers give us a first idea of whether this is going to be a good year or not

With the man made nature of virtually all of our two county's landscape we are reliant on good management and practice by landowners, from gardeners, councils, large private landlords and conservation organisations to ensure the survival of our butterflies and moths. Our organisation's very name means we need to be deeply involved in conservation, and in many cases this requires conservation measures not just for a species but for the habitats that supports that species and many other kinds of animal and plant. This means that we need to work with other organisations who own sites or indeed parts of the wider countryside. I see our branch providing the specialist knowledge and expertise about butterflies and moths that enables these organisations to undertake such work so that rather than having a number of bodies with discrete areas of interest we have a web of inter related groups all working to a common goal of biodiversity and a thriving local environment.

### Branch Committee Changes

As indicated above, Andrew Wood has taken over as Branch Chairman, replacing David Chandler who had held the position for 7 years. The committee showed their appreciation to David by presenting him with a Richard Lewington print of one of his favourite butterflies - the Dark-green Fritillary. David has agreed to continue in the role of vice-Chairman for this year, replacing Margaret Noakes, who continues as Membership Secretary. Members present also voted to confirm Margaret Huitson as Committee Secretary.



Retiring Chairman David Chandler receiving his gift from Margaret Noakes.

The talk at this year's AGM was on the subject of the Brown Hairstreak, and given by David Redhead of Upper Thames Branch. A brief summary is given below:

### **Brown Hairstreak Talk, given by David Redhead**

David gave a most informative talk summarising the immense amount of work that he and colleagues in the Upper Thames Branch have been doing on the Brown Hairstreak over the past 10 years. The area occupied by this species in Oxfordshire originally appeared to be centred around Bernwood Forest, but by the end of the 2010 season had expanded to over 300 1km squares (covering eleven 10km squares), even reaching inside the Oxford ring road.



Brown Hairstreak  
Photo © Jim Asher

David described the work of the group in searching for eggs over the winter, monitoring the emergence of the larvae and their subsequent development and eventual emergence the following August. The diligence of the group and the data they have amassed is truly

impressive. For example, they have been able to show that while at least 25% of the eggs just seem to disappear over the winter, a remarkable 90% of those that survive produce larvae in April. Those larvae quickly crawl away from the egg to a nearby opening leaf bud, which they enter and in which they feed. By the 3rd instar, they are active by day, but usually within 50cm of the original egg, although perhaps 50% of larvae do not survive to that stage. They pupate after the 4th instar, but pupae are very difficult to find in the wild. Adult females begin egg-laying by mid-August and can fly right through until early October.

David also spoke of threats to the butterfly and its habitat requirements. As young Blackthorn is the foodplant, its quality is crucial and deer grazing can have a very damaging effect. The blackthorn needs managing to ensure vigorous young growth, and so neglect is also a threat. As the adult butterflies feed on honeydew, and usually mate in trees, the presence of oak and ash trees are essential.

## **Changes to the Branch Annual Report, by Andrew Wood**

We have been publishing a report of the state of butterflies in our area since John Murray produced the first report in 1995. From 1996 until 2009 we have had a professionally printed glossy report produced by John and Rob Souter up to 1999 and since 2000 by John and myself. John's pioneering work and the continued editions have set a benchmark for branch annual reports and for ensuring that we make known the current state of butterflies in our area. Although we have done all the layout ourselves using desktop publishing software and presented the printers with finished copy, the costs of binding and printing have continued to increase, despite changing printers and slightly shortening the report.

Your committee has been discussing the format of the annual report for the last year or so in the light of:

- The time and effort needed to produce them (recent reports have appeared long after the events they report).
- Printing costs continuing to increase while branch funds do not.
- The difficulties of obtaining sponsorship in the current economic climate.
- A new 5 year recording period (2010-14) making it appropriate to review the format.

Reporting is important but it needs to be done in a faster and more cost effective manner. We have not gone to solely online publishing as we know that a good number of the membership do not have internet access. Also data of this kind can often be best read away from the screen, or even taken into the field.

So the new report, which you will have received with this newsletter is the result. This new format means that we are able to issue an all colour production at the same time as saving about 70% of the production costs of the previous reports.

Data that was previously included in reports, such as the detailed analysis of transects is now being published separately and is available on the branch website. We will also send it out free of charge to anyone

who is unable to access the website or print out the Adobe Acrobat file that contains it. Please contact Andrew Wood if you would like a copy.

Your comments on the report are welcome and should be sent to Andrew Wood.

*Also included with this newsletter is your butterfly recording sheet, to enable you to submit your records. Note that these should now also be sent to Andrew, rather than to John Murray, as John will now focus on moth recording.*

### Field Trips, 2011

Included with this newsletter is our annual program of field trips. One of those trips (on Saturday 5th June) requires prior booking, as detailed below:

#### **Rescuing Woodland Butterflies - Malcolm Hull**

More butterfly species have become extinct in Herts & Middx than any other UK counties. Many of the butterflies which have been lost live in managed woodland habitats. For years, conservationists have tried to reverse this trend, but our efforts have been only partially successful. To date only one species, Silver-washed Fritillary, has returned as a Herts & Middx resident.

In 2007, to try and improve our success rate, Butterfly Conservation set up the South East Woodlands Project. The aim is to set up a large scale project covering whole landscapes, aiming to protect and encourage rare woodland butterfly species. This is by far the largest butterfly project ever undertaken in the region. The methods used and results achieved will set a benchmark for conservation for years to come.

Three years in, we have a unique opportunity for a guided tour around one of the main sites at Tytherley Woods on the Hants/Wilts border, led by Dan Hoare, the Project Co-ordinator. This will provide an opportunity to see rare butterflies such as Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Duke of Burgundy and possibly also Marsh Fritillary. Dan will also talk about the habitat improvements and the management that's been put in place. It should be a very enjoyable day full of butterflies (weather permitting). This will be of great interest to those involved in learning about the conservation of

woodland butterflies but in order to get round and see some of the work it will be a little structured, so probably not aimed at the leisurely photographer who wants to stay in one spot all afternoon!

Numbers are limited and booking is essential - please contact Malcolm Hull (details on back page). Public transport is poor and we aim to provide lifts from Herts/Middx. Please bring packed lunch. Malcolm will provide joining details to successful applicants.

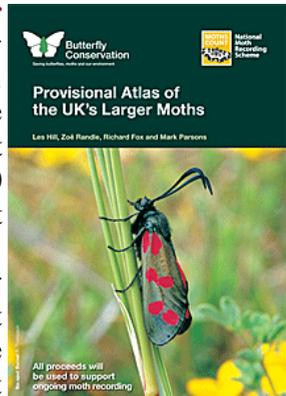
## New National Publications

Two major new publications were produced by the Moths Count project and National Moth Recording Scheme at the end of 2010 and are now on sale. Limited numbers of both publications are available, so you are advised to order early to avoid disappointment. All proceeds received by Butterfly Conservation for both publications will be used towards ongoing moth recording.

### **The Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths**

shows up-to-date distribution maps for 868 resident and immigrant macro-moth species. This is the first atlas to cover all the UK's larger moths and it includes the first distribution maps ever published for c.300 species (the Geometrids), as well as the first new maps for over 20 years for other species. As such it is a major step forward in our knowledge of moth distributions and a 'must have' for moth recorders. The maps include historical records (pre 2000) and current records (2000 onwards). The production of the

atlas is a major step towards helping our declining moth fauna and analyses of the data will follow in due course. The maps illustrate under-recorded areas and will enable targeted recording and improved knowledge and conservation. The Provisional Atlas (455pp., softback) can be ordered for £20 (plus £5.00 P&P to UK addresses) by cheque to Butterfly Conservation Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Dorset BH20 5QP or via [www.butterfly-conservation.org/shop](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/shop).





### **British and Irish moths: an illustrated guide to selected difficult species**

(covering the use of genitalia characters and other features) aims to make available up-to-date information on the identification of difficult macro-moths, beyond what is currently available in the field guides. Written by moth experts Martin Townsend, Jon Clifton and Brian Goodey, 72 larger moth species (plus their subspecies and forms) are included. Much of the Guide is focussed on genitalia characteristics, although there are discussions of other characteristics such as wing markings. It provides the next step for those wishing to make definitive determinations of difficult moths such as ear moths, dark/grey dagers, copper underwings and the November Moth group. The Guide runs to 91 pages and contains over 130 superb colour illustrations. It is spiral bound to aid use and has protective plastic covers. Copies of the Guide are available from Butterfly Conservation ([www.butterfly-conservation.org/shop](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/shop) or by cheque) and from specialist retailers. The recommended retail price is £20, but it is available from Butterfly Conservation at a special initial offer price of £15 (plus £2 P&P to UK addresses).

### **Thankyou to Jez Perkins**

Back in the Winter 2009 newsletter we included a plea for sponsorship for Jez Perkins on his planned ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro in aid of 4 charities. The was successfully completed last September, and we can now thank Jez and all his sponsors for the sum of £483.10 which was donated to the Branch as a result.

### **Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey, by Zoë Randle, BC Surveys Officer**

We are delighted to inform you that we have decided to continue the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) again in 2011. Once

again this will be a collaborative project with BTO and CEH. We would like to thank everyone who took part last year and especially the WCBS Champions who helped promote the survey within the Branches. The survey had another successful year with nearly 700 squares sampled. We hope you will continue to survey the same squares in the same way as last year. Our priority is to re-survey these squares for at least the next 2 years so that we can determine trends in the wider countryside and see whether they differ from transect trends. We also welcome new participants either to help re-survey old squares, or to survey new ones for the first time. New surveyors will be allocated randomly selected 1-km squares in their Branch area. The squares need to be surveyed in July and August by two visits at least ten days apart. Anyone interested in taking part in the WCBS in Herts and Middlesex in the coming season should contact Andrew Wood (the Branch Champion) for further information.

### **A Good Butterfly Site Near You? – a Request to all Members, by Liz Goodyear**

A few years ago we compiled a list of butterfly species based on recording data that would form a criteria for identifying important butterfly sites in Hertfordshire. These sites would then be submitted to the Herts Biological Records Centre and the County Wildlife Sites Officer for acceptance as a County Wildlife Site [CWS] on the basis of its butterfly importance. The species selected were :

#### **Red Status (any one to be present)**

Dingy Skipper	(UK Priority Species)
Grizzled Skipper	(UK Priority Species, Herts SAP Species)
Green Hairstreak	Locally important
Brown Hairstreak	(UK Priority Species)
White-letter Hairstreak	(UK Priority Species)
Small Blue	(UK Priority Species)
Chalk-hill Blue	(Species of Conservation Concern)
Duke of Burgundy	(UK Priority Species)
White Admiral	(UK Priority Species)
Purple Emperor	(Species of Conservation Concern, Herts SAP Species)

## Hertfordshire and Middlesex

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Dark Green Fritillary	Locally important
Silver-washed Fritillary	(Species of Conservation Concern)
Wall Brown	(UK Priority Species – Research only)
Small Heath	(UK Priority Species – Research only)

### **Amber Status (Two species to be present)**

Purple Hairstreak	Locally important
Brown Argus	Locally important
Marbled White	Locally important

We have to have recent records to present as evidence, so it is very important that if you have a good site near to where you live, where you know that any of the above species are present and known to be breeding, and you think the site should qualify as a CWS, please make sure you send us the records.

### **Pembrokeshire Butterflies 2010, by Steve Kiln**

We as a family have been holidaying in South Pembrokeshire, south of Milford Haven for over 50 years. My uncle used to own a farm near Pembroke and then he moved to farm near Stackpole. He retired over 20 years ago but we still go there on family holidays. In 2010 we went there in mid-July for a week, the weather was not too good - typical Pembrokeshire weather - but there were a couple of good days. The Geology of this area of Pembrokeshire is either old red sandstone or limestone. From Stackpole eastwards it is old red sandstone, but from Stackpole westwards, via Barafundle beach, Broadhaven, St Govan's Head, Stack Rocks and Bull Slaughter bay it is limestone. Then it changes to old red sandstone before Freshwater West beach and then that continues until Angle Bay in the Milford Haven estuary.

The whole coastline is good for butterflies, but there are two areas of particular interest. The Earl of Cawdor, related to Macbeth, owned a house near Stackpole (demolished circa 1930) and he decided to dam the river and create the Bosherton lily ponds. They are not as beautiful as they were, although there still are a few water lilies, the ponds have been plagued by algae. The area is very close to Broadhaven beach and there are some nice wild areas nearby like the dry valley behind the beach and The Warren, the area between Broadhaven and Barafundle plagued by rabbits. The other area is the Castlemartin ranges. The

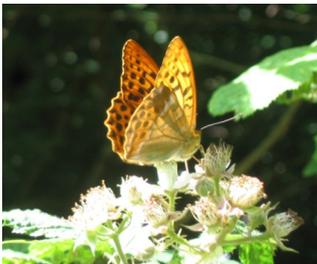
MOD took over a huge area during the Second World War and used it as a tank and artillery range. This range goes from Broadhaven beach westwards, taking in the Govan's Head, Stackrocks, Bull Slaughter Bay, Linney Head and half of Freshwater West beach, as well as many villages. The downside is that access to Stackrocks and St Govan's Head is limited and Linney Head is rarely open - I've not been there since I was 8!

The plus side is that there is a lovely unspoilt natural landscape of calcareous grassland, with gorse and wild flowers and lovely limestone cliffs and coves, unbuilt on with limited agriculture. Much of the coast has the Pembrokeshire coastal path along it but it is diverted inland between Freshwater west and Stackrocks. The whole area is great for wild flowers:- knapweeds, scabiouses, yellow rattle, field gentian, sea lavender, feverfew, hemp agrimony, vipers bugloss, yellow wort and many others. Choughs, Fulmars, skylarks, meadow pipits and even this time razorbills at Stack Rocks.

Butterflies of note.

**Silver-studded Blue.** This butterfly likes the calcareous grassland and the sand dunes and there are many colonies in the area. This year, butterflies were scarce due to the weather and there were few blues around. On the Friday, the weather was better and at St Govan's Head I saw two Silver-studded Blues. According to a report I found on the internet, this butterfly is found in the sand dunes area at Freshwater West and Linney Head and in the calcareous grassland in the Castlemartin ranges as well as in the Stackpole Warren.

**Silver-washed Fritillary.** I found at least 10 in the paths around the Bosherton lily ponds and please see photos attached.



Silver-washed Fritillaries  
Photos © Steve Kiln

**Dark-green Fritillary.** At Broad Haven one day I asked the car park attendant what were the fritillaries flying across the beach and on the headland, he said they were the Dark-green Fritillaries. On the same Friday walking from St Govan's head we saw maybe 50 of them and at Bull Slaughter bay I managed to get a good photo of one nestled in a small dip, nectaring on the knapweed and sheltering from the wind.

**Marsh Fritillary** According to another report, the Castlemartin range is one of the best sites for them plus the sand dunes behind Fresh Water West. We may have been late in the season for them but I thought I saw one at least. They don't stay still in the Pembrokeshire winds, better luck next time.

**Small Copper** It was very poor for them - I only saw a couple of them in the dry valley behind Broadhaven. A good spot for them is walking from Freshwater west to Angle along the coast path in the dips caused by the streams. There you will also see the Wall butterfly, much fewer these days.

**Grayling** A strange butterfly almost always with wings closed and camouflaged against the red sandstone rocks, seen at Broadhaven.

Looking forward again to surfing, walking and seeing puffins at Skomer.

### Friends of Hampstead Green, by James Leigh

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 I launched my website [www.bringbackthebutterflies.org.uk](http://www.bringbackthebutterflies.org.uk) This was to encourage people to grow butterfly-friendly flowers and plants in private gardens and public parks. For the last year and a half I have been negotiating with Camden to create a butterfly conservation garden on Hampstead Green, London, NW3. We have formed a group – the Friends of Hampstead Green - and have applied for funding. If anyone in the London area would like to get involved with our project, please email me for further details. [thebutterflyman@btinternet.com](mailto:thebutterflyman@btinternet.com)

## My campaign to save butterflies from extinction

'Butterfly Man' rallies the troops to protect species

Susanna Wilkey

A HAMPSTEAD conservationist has launched a campaign appeal for funds to save the area's butterfly population.

James Leigh, known locally as the Butterfly Man, has been working on a project to revitalize Hampstead Green on Pond Square into a haven for wildlife for over three years.

He has formed the Friends of Hampstead Green and has drawn up plans for a summer meadow with flowers and plants that attract butterflies and other insects.

The past three bad weather seasons have hit the UK's butterfly population hard and conservationists have warned that half of the common and garden butterfly species are now threatened with extinction.

Wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation announced last month that seven out of 10 species of the insect are in decline in the UK.

Mr Leigh said: "We need the money now so we can get planting, watering and tending as soon as possible and get the butterflies back as well as get the green in one shape."



**BUTTERFLY MAN** James Leigh has launched a campaign to protect butterflies at Hampstead Green. Photo by Leigh Jones

Mr Leigh continued: "It looks like a meadow in the morning and nothing

## Butterfly Conservation is on



Since 1st March, Butterfly Conservation has been on Twitter - if you want to follow up to the minute information, or contribute, go to [savebutterflies](#). As I write this (March 15th), there are reports of the first Comma sightings, mating Brimstones and perhaps most interesting of all, numerous sightings of Painted Lady, including at the BC Head Office in Dorset. The majority of sightings are from the South-west, but already extend as far north as Blackpool. If you see one, or if you want to check whether this is really turning into another Painted-Lady year, don't forget that there is also the Butterfly Conservation Migrant Watch website - [http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/sightings/1097/painted\\_lady\\_butterfly.html](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/sightings/1097/painted_lady_butterfly.html). (There is another page for Hummingbird Hawkmoth sightings.)

For those of you who are not currently "tweeting" – Twitter is an information network made up messages called Tweets, which have a maximum of 140-characters. Individuals, corporate companies and charities are using Twitter to air views, promote what they do and raise awareness of causes.

Head Office would like to ask for your thoughts and ideas concerning what we "tweet" about. Many organizations are "tweeting" three times a day or more, sometimes directly about the work they are doing, sometimes about current affairs and sometimes with colloquial thoughts and information. For example, our current plans range from promotion of the Big Butterfly Count to what moths are found daily in the Head Office moth trap, what is your favourite butterfly and much more! Contributions of your early sightings and first sightings in the area would also be great.

All thoughts welcome. Please send them to Libby Darly in the publicity team at head office - [ldarley@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:ldarley@butterfly-conservation.org)

### New Light Shed on Speckled Wood Behaviour

*The following article was published on BBC Online on 26 Nov 2010 - [http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth\\_news/newsid\\_9220000/9220916.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_9220000/9220916.stm)*

Older female butterflies spend up to 55% of their day flying in order to catch the attention of a mate, scientists have found. Researchers studying speckled wood butterflies observed virgin females acting more conspicuously as they aged.

While they still had enough lifespan left to lay and feed their eggs, females increased their activity - apparently in order to attract a mate. Males used "sunspots" as vantage points from which to observe female flights.

The study, published in the journal *Animal Behaviour*, sheds new light on the mating behaviour of this common European species. In the past, researchers have identified two types of mating behaviour in male butterflies: patrolling and perching. Patrolling males seek out females for mating "on the wing", whereas perching males are known to remain in one place. Male speckled wood butterflies have been identified as "perchers" but less is known about the role females play.



"The mating system of a species is very much the interaction of male and female behaviour," says graduate student Martin Bergman. By observing their behaviour over two months, Mr Bergman and his colleagues found that older unmated females spent 35% more of their time flying than mated and younger

virgin females. Mr Bergman explains that his results compliment existing theories surrounding the "evolutionary cost" of females remaining unmated.

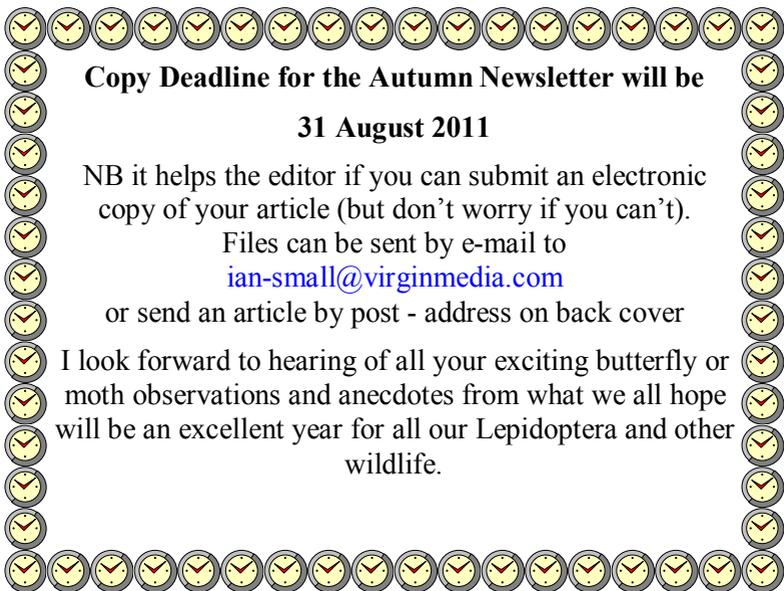
"The theory of sexual selection suggests that for a butterfly female, there is a cost of being unmated for a long time, since the time left for egg laying and feeding decreases," he says. "Our study is, to my knowledge, one of the first to empirically show how [butterfly] females change their behaviour according to age."

Previous studies indicate that male speckled wood butterflies compete for "sunspots" on the forest floor where light breaks through the canopy. Researchers theorised that unmated female butterflies would travel to these territories in order to find a mate. However, this new evidence suggests that the highly prized sunspots do not attract females as first thought.

Instead, the sunspots are thought to provide vantage points where male butterflies have the best chance of seeing unmated females in flight. With this increased visual detection, males are then able to pursue females with minimal effort and a high chance of mating success.

### Thanks to NFU Mutual

NFU mutual have agreed to pay the postage costs of this newsletter. Every policy that Butterfly Conservation members take out with NFU Mutual earns BC an extra £10 and this goes into the Match Pot fund which is paying for conservation management work all over the UK, including work on some of the very rarest species such as Pearl-bordered Fritillary and High Brown Fritillary.



**Copy Deadline for the Autumn Newsletter will be**  
**31 August 2011**

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

I look forward to hearing of all your exciting butterfly or moth observations and anecdotes from what we all hope will be an excellent year for all our Lepidoptera and other wildlife.

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