

Small Blue in Hertfordshire and Middlesex 2019

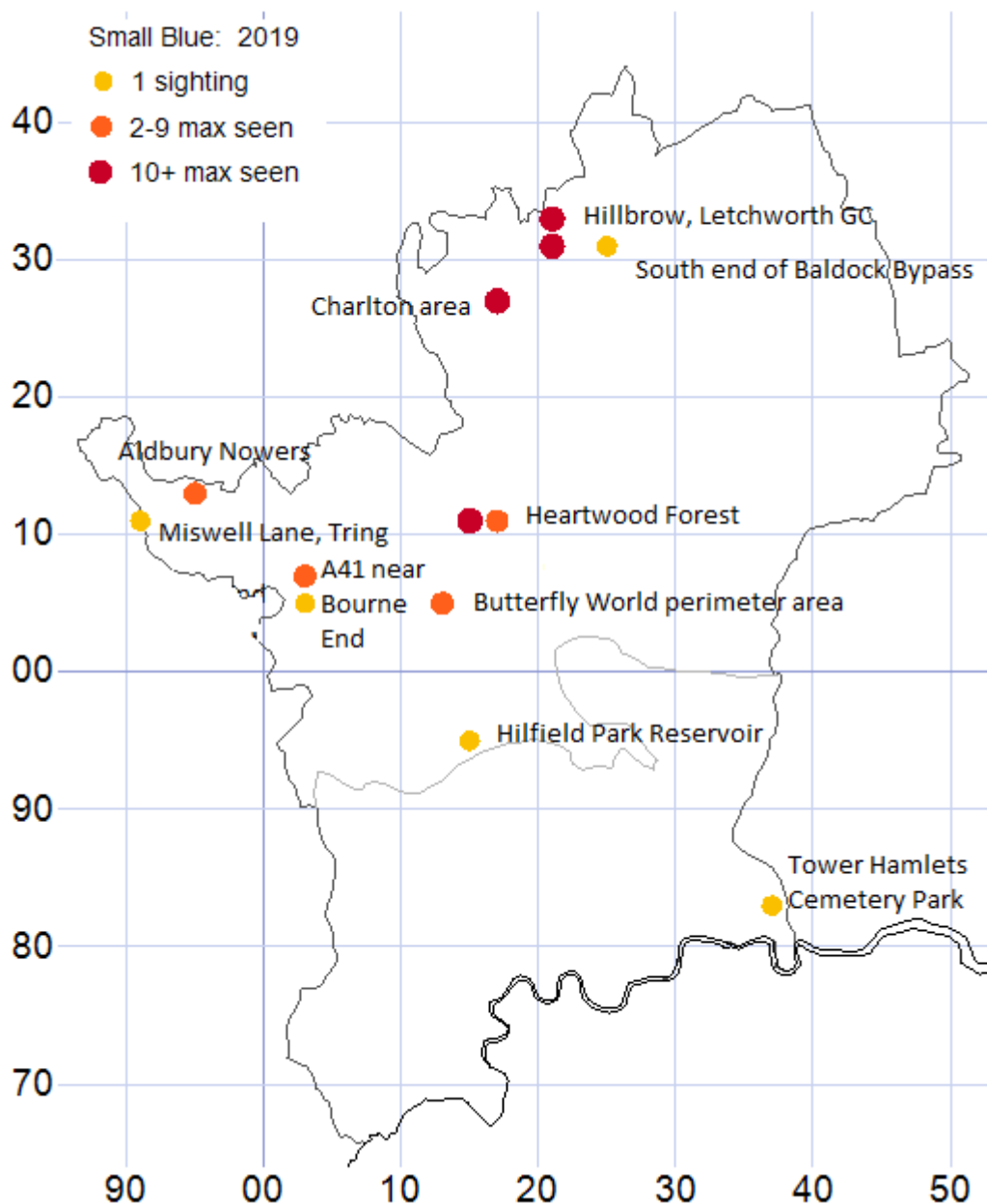
Our major project of 2019 was the construction of new chalk habitat at Greenwood Park, Chiswell Green, St Albans, within an existing wildflower meadow. This site was chosen due to its proximity to the existing Small Blue colony at the former Butterfly World site, which is under threat of development.

The site was planted with wildflowers including Kidney Vetch, Birdsfoot Trefoil and Horseshoe Vetch. The project was carried out with support from St Stephens Parish Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. More project info on the two links below

https://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/GreenwoodPark_Apr2019.pdf

https://hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/SmallBlueDisplayBoards_GreenwoodPark.pdf

Review of 2019



Analysis of Sites

The map above shows the abundance and distribution of Small Blue in Herts & Middx during 2019.

Existing sites:

- A41 near Bourne End Smaller numbers (up to 8)
- Aldbury Nowers Higher numbers than in 2018 (max 6 adults seen)
- Butterfly World perimeter area/Gardens of the Rose (max 6 seen, no access to the disused site since 2016)
- Charlton area (Private site, best numbers so far, up to 12 on a visit)
- Heartwood Forest (max transect count 3, A non-transect count of 14 was also recorded)
- Hillbrow, Letchworth (up to 31 individuals seen, seen on 3 sites). This includes the highest number recorded (9) on the setaside field corner
- Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (1 on 3 separate walks on the transect)

New Sites

- Around A505 Baldock bypass (south end near B197 junction, 1 found)
- Hilfield Park Reservoir (an individual seen on 2 occasions).

Sites with no reports:

- A41 south of Bourne End near the Premier Inn (one seen in 2017)
- Alpine Meadow, near Berkhamsted (one record in 2016)
- B487, East of Redbourn (Seen in 2016 and 2018) visited 2019, Kidney Vetch flourishing.
- Hedgeswood Common near Gaddesden Row (one record in 2015)
- Ickleford (the last colony before modern records, last record 2003)
- Martin's Way, Stevenage. On the road cutting (1 found, close to the St Nicholas church site)
- New Mill Meadow, Tring (two records on separate days in 2016)
- Pitstone Chalk Quarry (one record in 2014)
- Roughdown Common (2 seen, 2018)
- Stevenage St Nicholas churchyard
- Telegraph Hill (one record in 2009)
- Tring (private garden where Kidney Vetch has been planted one record 2017)
- Westbrook Hay on Boxmoor Trust land, close to other Bourne End sites, record in 2018)
- Wilbury Hill (one record in 2013)
- Wilstone Reservoir Bank (one in 2016)
- Wood Lane, Pirton (2 seen on transect)

Sites with Kidney Vetch but no records (All checked in 2019 with no success)

- Around A505 Baldock bypass (south end near B197 junction, A507 near Clothall Common, Icknield Way crossing near Weston Hills, fields alongside A505/A507 off Warren Lane)
- North of Barley along B1368 a planted set aside area, not known prior to 2017.
- Therfield Heath.
- M1 Junction 9 and embankment by Watery Lane Bridge.
- M1 Junction 8.
- M25/M1 Junction

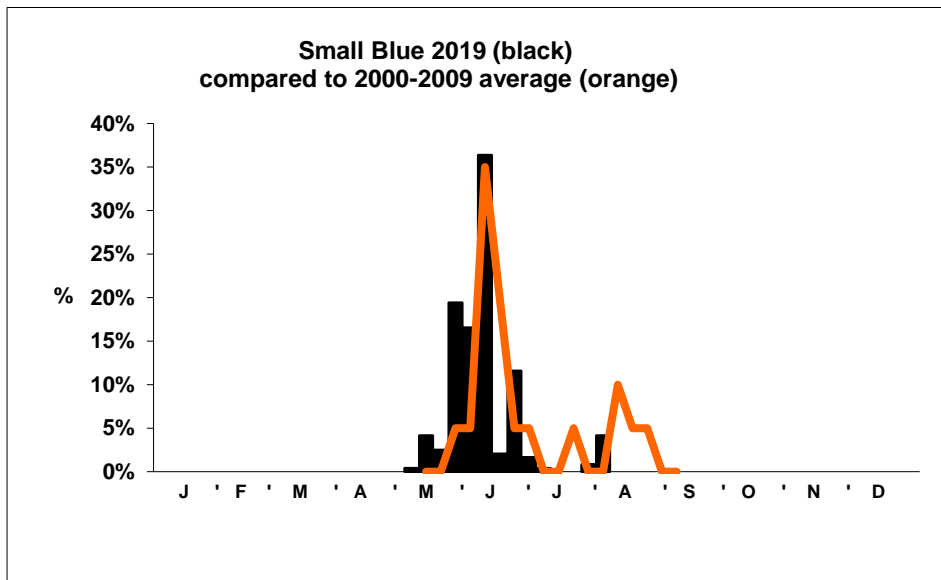
Conservation Work and Advice

As a branch we have undertaken site visits and/or offered advice at

- *Greenwood Park, Chiswell Green*. Construction of new chalk habitat, described above.
- *Heartwood Forest (Woodland Trust) - Valley Field*. Three plots, each 20 meters diameter rotavated and planted with Kidney Vetch seed in September 2017. The Valley field has a chalky slope and a good mix of wildflowers. Two plots were planted with Birds foot trefoil/Kidney Vetch mix and the third with Cowslip/ Kidney Vetch mix. Kidney Vetch is thriving in 2019.
- *Hillbrow (Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation)*. Advice on more scrub removal, in community orchard area and area in northern tetrad that has become neglected. The upper field was not cut and lifted in 2018 as had been advised, owing to a report to LGCHF of a colony of Common Lizards being found
- *Westbrook Hay/Roughdown Common area (Boxmoor Trust)* – Planting at Roughdown Common was more successful and Small Blues were recorded there for the first time. Bovingdon Brickworks has also been planted with Kidney Vetch

Flights and Broods

There were records from 30 April to 4 August with the only break between being 4 July to 28 July. The start date was notably earlier than 2018, no doubt due to the mild early spring speeding development. This break may be real or could just be lack of visits in that period. The chart below shows that there was a very small second brood from early July into August, but the balance between the broods suggests a rather partial second one.



Andrew Wood zoothorn@ntlworld.com

Malcolm Hull malcolmhull@icloud.com

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