

## Purple Emperor 2008 (Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton)

With weather conditions throughout the flight period being very unsettled, 2008 has to go down as probably the worst season for records since our study began, although we did devote more time to our national White-letter hairstreak project. Activity was pretty limited to the few sunny days, although when the sun shone activity would be intense.

The first Hertfordshire reports came on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 at Northaw Great Wood, where Andrew Middleton saw two males at the known territory. Several reports were received from the Broxbourne and Wormley Woods complexes, but many of the other known sites had no reports. We held one field trip at Broxbourne Wood Nature Reserve on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2008. The forecast was for rain, but we managed a few minutes of sunshine before 10 am just as a few people arrived. The highlight was a Silver-washed Fritillary. In a brief moment of sunshine just before 11 am, a male Purple Emperor flew over the track and perched on willow bush just above our heads; it remained there for the rest of the morning whilst the rain became heavier and we gave up and went home.

However, of significance was that two of the areas identified in our report as having potential proved correct. A single male was seen close to Bishop's Wood, near Harefield and there were three reports of individuals in the Berkhamsted area, between Hemel Hempstead and Tring. Males were seen at Potten End and close to a private wood near Great Gaddesden, and a female was seen on a willow on the edge of Berkhamsted Common. We then received a report of a second sighting at Ashridge, but this time in Hertfordshire. However, there is concern that we have not had any reports from Tring Park in 2008.