

December 2021

Dear Branch Member,

Please see the latest news from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch, below...

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## 2021 Big Butterfly Count

First, thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Big Butterfly Count.

A preliminary look at the results for our Branch show:

- Over 3,000 recorders submitted a total of nearly 8,000 surveys during the event.
- Seventeen recorders submitted over twenty surveys each!
- The most favoured survey location was Gardens (75%), and only a very few being carried out on school premises (1%).
- The average number counted was 11.26/survey which is a little higher than the UK average for 2021 of 9.21.
- Species that did well in abundance compared to 2020 were: **Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Ringlet, Small Copper & Small Tortoiseshell**
- Those faring less well were: **Gatekeeper, Common Blue, Holly Blue and Six-spot Burnet.**
- **Jersey Tiger moth** was included in the survey for the first time with 106 being recorded.

Position by abundance shown in table below...

Species	Number Recorded	Positions by Year											
		2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Small White	17,816	1	2	3	1	3	3	4	4	1	5	2	3
Large White	15,614	2	1	4	2	4	1	3	5	2	6	3	2
Red Admiral	9,867	3	6	7	8	2	5	7	8	9	7	5	7
Meadow Brown	9,662	4	4	2	4	5	4	2	2	5	1	4	4
Gatekeeper	7,367	5	3	1	3	1	2	1	1	4	2	1	1
Peacock	5,673	6	5	6	14	7	7	5	3	3	12	7	10
Comma	2,953	7	10	12	5	6	13	8	12	6	11	11	8
Ringlet	2,819	8	11	11	17	15	8	11	13	11	4	10	6
Marbled White	2,572	9	16	10	19	17	6	10	10	14	3	14	15
Small Tortoiseshell	2,545	10	15	17	16	12	11	13	6	8	17	16	16
Small Copper	2,333	11	14	16	18	18	18	18	18	16	15	17	14
Green-veined White	2,273	12	13	14	9	14	9	15	14	10	14	12	13
Brimstone	2,132	13	9	9	11	9	10	9	11	7	16	13	11
Speckled Wood	1,809	14	12	13	7	10	12	14	9	12	9	6	9
Common Blue	1,276	15	7	8	6	11	14	6	7	17	10	8	5
Holly Blue	1,222	16	8	15	10	16	15	12	15	15	13	15	12
Painted Lady	1,178	17	18	5	15	13	17	17	17	13	19	18	19
Six-spot Burnet	403	18	17	18	12	8	16	16	16		8	9	17
Silver Y	374	19	19	19	13	19	19	19	19		18	19	18
Jersey Tiger	106	20											

## Recording Generally

Please continue to submit all of your sightings - today's common species could well be tomorrow's scarcities. For acceptable methods of submitting records, please see our website, <http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/recording.php>

Due of our current (but temporary) situation, it may not be possible to issue the 2021 Annual Butterfly Report in April in conjunction with the Spring Newsletter. Many apologies if this happens, but with these regular eNews I do hope to issue reports on this years 'Tetrad Challenge' and Garden Butterfly Survey in the spring or early summer editions of the eNews.

**Bob Annell (Butterfly Recorder / Annual Butterfly Report Editor)**

## Isle of Wight Group update

Since the last newsletter, the Isle of Wight Group attended the **Hullabaloo** event at Sandown in October. This event normally takes place in May but was postponed due to the pandemic. It combines art with science and technology, and we were in the Discovery Bay tent alongside other conservation organisations.

Although it was a smaller event than usual, it was still well attended and there was a steady stream of people visiting the table to learn more about butterflies and moths as well as taking away membership forms and general leaflets. Hopefully we can cover further events in 2022.

The Tiger Moth project which has been running in the Isle of Wight this year resulted in many records during the **Jersey Tiger** flight period and an overwhelming experience for one moth recorder.

Debbie Pledge ran her MV trap for three hours in her Newport garden on 26th August and was amazed to record at least 124 **Jersey Tigers**. She found 44 outside the trap and to her astonishment she then estimated a further 80 when she opened the trap!

This is the most reported in one night for the Island and shows how the species has both expanded its range and abundance. Thirty years ago, you would be lucky to see one!

Thanks to everyone for your support this year.

**Jim Baldwin (County Moth Recorder (Isle of Wight) / Isle of Wight Group Leader)**

## 2021 Field Walks on the IOW

We had 6 walks this summer, all well attended. The two **Glanville Fritillary** walks were a particular success, as quite a few people travelled over from the Mainland, to see our Island Butterfly.

The people on my Kemphill Moor Copses walk were treated to seeing an **ab. Valesina Silver-Washed Fritillary**, almost as soon as we got into the copse. Most had never seen one before. Fortunately, it stayed long enough, for most people to get a photo.

On the BC transect, in Kemphill Hill Moor Copse, that I do with my husband, we also saw 6 **ab. Valesina Silver-Washed Fritillaries**, close together on a path. I've never seen as many previously, in this Copse.

This year, I have noticed very low numbers of **Common and Holly Blues**, on our transect.

We also did the **Purple Hairstreak** survey in high summer, and found a lot more Oak trees where they were present, than we knew about before.

There we have seen, lots of **Red Admiral** flying up to last week, on the Island.

I am hoping to organise two extra walks, for 2022.

**Kay Shaw (Isle of Wight Field Meetings organiser)**

## Update from Magdalen Hill Down and Yew Hill

From October we started a weekly volunteer group every Monday at **Magdalen**. This dedicated team of volunteers tackle dense bramble thickets, digging up dogwood and clematis roots and clearing large areas of invasive scrub. It's hard but satisfying work.



*Volunteers at MHD, October 2021*



*Clearing the Scrape at MHD*

Some of the transect routes have become overgrown and unpassable in places so volunteers are helping to clear footpaths. The volunteers opened up the chalk grassland area on Extension field, battling huge stands of bramble and thickets of dogwood and hawthorn. The scrape area has been thoroughly cleared revealing hidden juniper trees whilst creating new patches of bare ground. A corporate work party helped clear scrub from Tree and Shrub East.

The fortnightly Wednesday group at **Yew Hill** is having great results too. Clearing the access gates and digging up spreading hawthorn saplings that are creeping along the trackways is a step-by-step effort. But it's working, we'll get there!



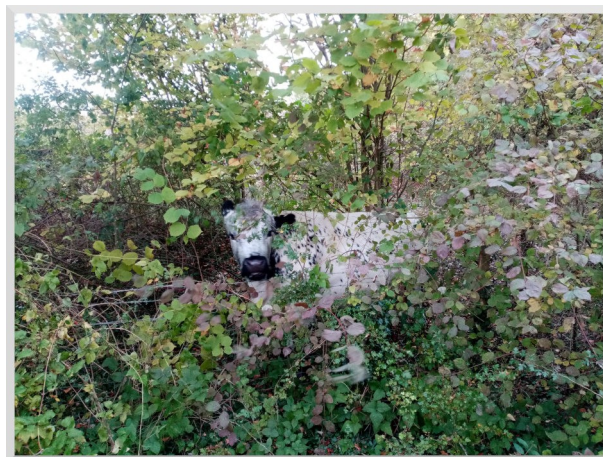
Hans Taylor is continuing his hedge-laying from a section of hedge he started a couple of years ago. He's giving training sessions to the Winchester College students who come to help every Wednesday afternoon.

For the winter grazing we have sheep at Hill Top at Yew Hill, and Magdalen has a herd of about 20 cows and we should have around 45 sheep to graze the Original hillside and keep the turf height down.

Thank you to all the Transect Walkers, Livestock Lookers and Reserve Volunteers who give so much time, effort and commitment to maintaining and monitoring these nature reserves. You have made this year a real success despite a difficult start. Many thanks from all of us at BC.



*Clearance at Yew Hill, November 2021*



*Bovine hide & seek*

**Fiona Scully (South Downs Landscape Officer)**

## Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) 2021

The WCBS aims to provide a national 'snapshot' of how butterflies are faring across all types of habitat in the UK. To do this, a random sample of 1km Ordnance Survey squares are selected and, where possible and permitted, butterfly numbers are monitored each year, focussing on the key summer months of July and August.

Thanks go to all 'square owners' in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight who carried out walks in 2021. Overall 33 different squares were monitored, ranging from one in a densely populated part of Portsmouth, which had a good year with four different species seen, through to a square on a National Nature reserve near Winchester, where, as may be expected, many more butterflies were spotted with sixteen different species recorded.

Based solely on results from squares monitored by Butterfly Conservation, **Meadow Brown and Small White** were most widespread in 2021, being seen in over 90% of the squares monitored, with **Gatekeeper and Large White** next most widely seen. A more detailed analysis will be provided once information from squares monitored through the British Trust for Ornithology Bird Breeding Survey is also available.

**Jacky Adams (WCBS Co-ordinator)**

## Rare moths, searches & surveys

This season involved searches and surveys for some of our rare moths.

In April we set out with torches and nets to look for the **Sloe Carpet** flying around stands of unmanaged Blackthorn. Unfortunately this coincided with the coldest April nights for 99

years. Only 21 **Sloe Carpet** were recorded, and none of these were in Hampshire. A search of the Isle of Wight, where the moth hasn't been recorded since the 1960's, was also unsuccessful. However, we retain hope that it can be rediscovered on a warmer future April night. We are also encouraging land managers to retain old and unmanaged Blackthorn to help this elusive moth.



*A Blackthornicket suitable for Sloe Carpet (Dave Green)*



*Searching for Sloe Carpet at night, April 2021 (Dave Green)*

In June we began searches for the unfortunately named **Drab Looper** moth. This sweet little sandy-coloured moth flies by day near Wood Spurge. The moth was seen and recorded by the Wildlife Trust's Graham Dennis at Pamber Forest in North Hampshire and also seen by Andy Barker at West Wood near Winchester. Woodland management advice has been sent out to various woodland managers on how to help this species.



*Drab Looper at West Wood, 2021 (Andy Barker)*

In July we set out to count caterpillars of the **Striped Lychnis** moth. This moth feeds on Dark Mullein and is almost exclusively found in Hampshire and on the Chilterns in Buckinghamshire. As part of a national monitoring programme 10 sites are surveyed each year. Three Hampshire sites were included this year and sightings came in from an additional 20 Hampshire locations. In total 537 **Striped Lychnis** caterpillars were recorded in Hampshire this year, the best site this year being near Litchfield where 110 were counted by Richard & Julie Elston. Interestingly the **Striped Lychnis** was also recorded just over the border in Wiltshire this year. This is only the fourth county record for Wiltshire and will have undoubtedly colonised from the Hampshire population.





*Striped Lychnis caterpillar near Litchfield (Richard Elston)*



*22 Striped Lychnis caterpillars on Dark Mullein at BC's Holtspur Bottom nature reserve (Peter Cuss)*

Numbers of larvae of the very rare micro-moth ***Coleophora vibicella*** (the “**Large Gold Case-bearer**”) continue to recover on Hayling Island, following problems with over-grazing a few years ago. Standardised counts take place each year and from a low of just one larva in 2018, over 300 were found in 2021.

A student has been carrying out a study on **Dingy Mocha** for BC. Her work has primarily taken place in Dorset but she found two larvae at a new location in the New Forest. Although adult **Dingy Mocha** continue to be found in light traps at various places around the Forest, no larvae have been found in recent years. Heavy grazing in the Forest means that there are few suitable Sallow bushes on the Crown lands and it is likely that the adults which have been seen are breeding on private land that is not heavily grazed. The new site is an area which has been temporarily fenced after replanting of the conifer crop. Similar plots elsewhere in the Forest will be worth investigating.



*Dingy Mocha larva (Mark Parsons)*

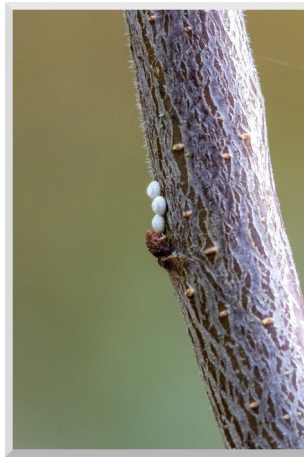
We welcome the help of more people in 2022. If you are interested in getting involved do please contact the Branch.

**Steve Wheatley (Regional Conservation Manager) & Tony Davis**

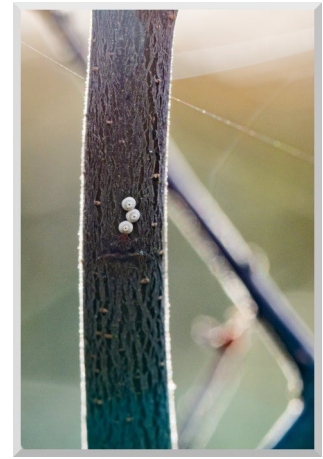
## A Lucky Streak

I moved to a small village on the border of Hampshire and Surrey nearly four years ago, almost by accident - but that's another story. I was very pleased to find I had some wonderful wildlife on my doorstep, including the **Purple Emperors** at Alice Holt, and a Butterfly Conservation nature reserve - Bentley Station Meadow. I joined a couple of volunteer sessions, helping to cut back tangled Blackthorn and Hawthorn overgrowth. Whilst chatting at break-time about the management of the reserve, the subject of **Brown Hairstreaks** came up - one had been seen unexpectedly that summer and it was hoped that we were creating perfect breeding conditions for them... The eggs are laid on 2- to 3-year old regrowth, and it is thought annual flailing of hedgerows is denying this habitat to them.

Fast forward to October 2021, and I am carrying-out surveys for an ecological consultancy around Salisbury Plain, when I met a couple of chaps peering into a hedgerow, so I had to ask.... It turned out Alan and Mike were surveying for **Brown Hairstreak** eggs – and in a few moments called me over to show me what they were looking for - a pinhead-sized white dot at the base of a thorn. I was hooked and spent my breaks trying to find my own eggs, and after a while I had my eye in.



*Brown Hairstreak  
eggs, Side view  
(Alex Potts)*



*Brown Hairstreak  
eggs, Front view  
(Alex Potts)*

Back at Bentley, where I am now a Volunteer Reserve Officer, I began hunting in clumps of Blackthorn without any initial success, until one day, whilst clearing Bramble in the same patch worked on three years earlier, something made me take a closer look at a likely looking stem and yes! There it was- a single egg confirming breeding at the reserve. **Brown Hairstreaks** are known to forage over wide areas, so previous records may well have been adults from colonies elsewhere.

At the time of writing I have now found 10 eggs on six different plants, all singly laid at the base of thorns apart from the cluster of 3 (pictured). I hope this number will rise after the next volunteer event when extra eyes have checked suitable saplings.

I look forward to late summer next year when I hope to see the butterfly on the wing, which will be a first for me.

**Steve Lockett (Bentley Station Meadow Volunteer Reserve Officer)**

## **Wanted: Brown Hairstreak survey volunteers**

We are keen to get a better understanding of the known range of the beautiful but elusive **Brown Hairstreak** by undertaking a series of egg searches this winter across the county. Surveys will take place in both new and established sites. In particular, we are looking for two or three volunteers to join a search for **Brown Hairstreak** eggs on Stockbridge Down on Thursday 13th January. The search will be led by branch volunteer Iain McIntosh in partnership with Catherine Hadler, National Trust Area Ranger.

Please let me know if you would be interested in taking part in what is a surprisingly addictive and therapeutic activity: [clivepwood AT gmail.com](mailto:clivepwood@gmail.com). Previous experience is not necessary. In the event of bad weather the survey will take place on Thursday 20th January.

We have commented upon the apparent expansion in the range of the butterfly in recent editions of the branch Annual Butterfly Report. It is always tricky to differentiate between genuine increases in distribution and abundance from increased recorder effort for a species that spends a lot of time in the canopy of ash trees. We suspect that it is a bit of both in Hampshire over the past three years or so.

Several dedicated volunteers have spent many hours mapping the distribution of **Brown Hairstreak** eggs in a wide arc south of the A303 between Shipton Bellinger and Andover and down the River Test and River Anton catchments. Other valuable surveys have taken place up and down the Meon Valley, notably around Soberton.

It would be easy to attribute the subsequent records entirely to greater survey effort: the more you look, the more you find, etc. However, this rather ignores the fact that the **Brown Hairstreak** is a charismatic late season butterfly that comes down to feed on bramble and

ripe berries. It seems odd that its presence in these areas would have escaped detection for so many years.

Good evidence of range expansion comes from the fact that the butterfly has been recorded for the first time this year on no less than three established transects. Two are close to Andover whilst the third is in south-east Hampshire near Portsdown Hill. Eggs have also been recorded on our Bentley Station Meadow reserve for the first time in living memory. Well done the eagle-eyed recorders and well done the **Brown Hairstreak!**

**Clive Wood (Conservation & Records sub-committee member)**

## Wanted: Volunteer Transect Walkers

We need more walkers to help record the numerous transects in Hampshire and particularly on Magdalen Hill Down. Walking butterfly recording transects is great fun. You'd be using and improving your butterfly identification skills to help record essential butterfly data. You most certainly do not need to be an expert (but you may become one!).

Transects are around 0.5 to 1.5 miles long and are walked on the 26 weeks from start of April to end of September. Walkers are usually allocated 5 or more weeks in the season, with transects being walked on just 1 day in each of the allocated weeks (often waiting for suitable weather). If you fancy becoming a transect walker please get in touch with:

**Iain McIntosh (Magdalen Hill Down Transects Co-ordinator)**

Email - [iain@bay-trees.co.uk](mailto:iain@bay-trees.co.uk) – Tel. 0779 537 4075

## Social Media Links

**Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationHampshireAndIsleOfWight>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/HantsIoWBC>

**Instagram:** [https://www.instagram.com/hampshire\\_iow\\_butterflies/](https://www.instagram.com/hampshire_iow_butterflies/)

**Website:** <http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk>