

# Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch



Newsletter 92



April 2012



## Chairman's Report

The recent spell of warm weather has provided us with a good start to the butterfly and moth season, and I hope you receive this Newsletter having had your first sightings of the year, with the promise of more to come.

Our AGM and Members' Day in October was well attended: my thanks to all the speakers. Unfortunately, Jeremy Thomas was unable to join us and so Sue Clarke stepped in to give a fascinating talk, with assistance from Dave Green, on their recent study of the Wood White. I'm pleased to say that Jeremy has agreed to speak at this year's Members' Day. Dan Hoare reported on the excellent results from the South-East Woodlands Project, and Mervyn Grist and Tim Norriss provided wonderful summaries of the 2011 butterfly and moth year.

This year's events are already under way, starting with the annual (and excellent) moth conference on 14 January, which was very well attended. We also held our spring social event on 25 February, at which various members showed a selection of their butterfly and moth images from the two counties and beyond. While on the subject of dates, the 2012 AGM and Members' Day will be held on 13 October at our usual venue at Littleton Millenium Memorial Hall (doors will open at 1pm). More information will be available on the Branch website nearer the time and in the next Newsletter.

I'm also pleased to say that we will once again be holding our flagship event at Longstock Park Nursery on the Leckford estate (near Stockbridge) for a single day on 14 July. This will be in conjunction with a food fair, and we shall have our own marquee. As in previous years, we intend to have a variety of displays, together with the ever popular live-moth display. More information will be available on the website and in other media before the event.

When I took on the chairmanship of the Branch I was determined that we should continue to focus on "conservation in action". Those members who walk transects, assist with habitat management, send in their records and so on have my sincere thanks. However, I think it's also important for us to highlight the significant (often financial) contributions that the Branch makes to the Society as a whole, because this is something that we should also feel proud of. For example, as a Branch:

- We cover all costs of ownership, lease and management of all of our reserves.
- We fund our own reserves officer (Jayne Chapman).
- We partially fund our regional officer (Dan Hoare).
- In the recent past we made a significant financial contribution to the very successful South-East Woodlands project, as well as an additional contribution to the new Dukes on the Edge project, led by Dan Hoare.
- We very recently made a financial contribution to Butterfly Conservation's Match Pot Appeal. This donation is highly significant for the Society because it attracts a 10x multiplier from landfill taxation funds. It will benefit many conservation activities both in and outside Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Some recent grants from these funds are supporting the Wood White in Northamptonshire, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and other species in the Wyre, and threatened fritillaries in the Morecambe Bay area.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the Newsletter; there are many very exciting items on the following pages. I'm particularly pleased to see the Education Fund starting to be put to good use.

And finally, please remember that we have a series of field trips throughout the year which are always informative and give you the opportunity to meet up with other members. Best wishes for the sunny months ahead!

***Peter Eeles, Chairman***





# Reserves News

## New Reserves Officer: Jayne Chapman

### Introduction



I have spent the majority of my 33-year working life in the ceramics industry – retailing, manufacturing and managing potteries - including running my own business for 19 years. This has coincided with a lifetime interest in the outdoors, mostly focused on owning and working with horses, cattle and sheep.

In 2007 I had a (late) mid-life crisis and enrolled at Sparsholt College, graduating three years later with a foundation degree in Conservation and Wildlife Management. Within a few months I was unbelievably lucky enough to be offered the job of Reserves Officer. My business is still running, and I juggle the two with the help of some amazing staff.

Most of you are aware that Lynn Fomison retired after a very successful 14-year 'reign' with Butterfly Conservation, leaving me to tread very carefully in her footsteps. Following a two-month induction period, I officially took over on 1 October 2011. It is slightly onerous taking over from someone so well respected and knowledgeable as Lynn, but I hope to be able to do as good a job as she did. I would like to thank everyone I have met so far for their support and understanding and above all their patience while I have been settling in.

My spectacular introduction to the reserves was to witness the life-cycle and emergence of thousands of Six-spot Burnet Moths *Zygaena filipendulae* from the larval stage at MHD around 21 May through to their flight period from June onwards. The summer flew by, with walks and talks merging with gaining an understanding of all the myriad skills necessary to manage nature reserves successfully.

However, I am very much looking forward to the challenges ahead and to meeting and working with you all, and I will endeavour to do my very best to manage the reserves for the benefit of all the lepidoptera that inspired me as a five year-old in 1965 and still to do so today.

Something I will remain mindful of is a snippet I happened to read in an earlier publication, which went something like this..."If you get the management wrong, entire local populations [of butterflies] can be wiped out". So, no pressure there then!

### **September/October**

**O**n 28 September Steve Goodwin returned to MHD to hold a training day for members of the Kempshott Conservation Group on the identification of the three species of scabious: devil's-bit, field and small. Marjoram and thyme seed was collected for their own local conservation effort. The following day Andy Barker brought along a group of Sparsholt students to learn about restoration and recreation techniques on chalk grassland habitat. These visits are very important to us and help us to secure educational funding from Natural England under our stewardship agreements.

Peter Clarke was joined by Patrick and Colin Beyer in the tumuli area of MHD on Saturday 1 October for a moth evening. Five MV lights and one actinic attracted over 170 moths of an estimated 30 species. The most noteworthy were Large Wainscot, Blair's Shoulder-knot, Figure of Eight and Deep-brown Dart. On our two most recent moth evenings we have recorded 20 species; not bad for early autumn. They again included Deep-Brown Dart and Figure of Eight, in addition to Dusky Thorn, and Beaded Chestnut, all of which have declined nationally by 90% or more (*The State of Britain's Larger Moths*, Butterfly Conservation, Rothamsted Research).

Patrick Fleet reported: "Our first autumn work-day for volunteers took place on Wednesday 5 October. We concentrated our efforts on the bare chalk area known as chalk-corner, where ash saplings, wild Clematis and other scrubby invaders threaten to take hold. Around 2005, plug-plants of scabious, rock-rose and both the vetches – horseshoe and kidney – were planted. All are doing well and producing their own seedlings. A bonus at the end of a rather cloudy day was a brief appearance of a Humming-bird Hawk-moth near the cemetery."

A late Clouded Yellow was spotted at MHD by Herbie, one of our regular volunteers. This migrant species has been scarce here this year, with only a couple of sightings earlier in the summer. At Yew Hill the Dingy Skipper seems to have re-established itself for the first time since 1994, and at Bentley Station Meadow the Pearl-bordered Fritillary appeared in numbers for the first time since the Reserve opened in 1992. At Magdalen Hill Down, Green Hairstreak Grizzled Skipper and Chalkhill Blue enjoyed one of their best years ever in 2011.

## **November/December**

The usual cattle were brought to MHD and YH for winter grazing by our graziers, Chris and Sarah Jackson, and John and Doreen Wolfe kindly provided five steers to graze Bentley Station Meadow during September/October.

A slight change to the usual routine was the very welcome loan of 20 Shetland rams from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HWT). This particular breed of sheep is browser rather than grazer, and they have done a great job tackling some of the woody scrub species forever threatening to take over. Conservation grazing is a very important part of the work that we do on the reserves, and the livestock play a crucial role in creating the structured and diverse habitats necessary for butterflies and all manner of other species.

## **January/February**

Magdalen Hill Down and Bentley Station Meadow both come under the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). This year we would like to express our gratitude to Jonathan Bills and Elaina Whittaker-Slark, both rangers with the SDNPA, for allowing us to benefit from the skills of their very friendly and professional group of Conservation Volunteers. They carried out a range of tasks, including removing fallen trees at MHD following the high winds in January and clearing an area at Bentley Station Meadow to allow light to filter through for the butterflies.

Our volunteers also play another important role over the winter months: 'lookering'. This oddly named activity involves nothing more than routinely checking the grazing animals on a daily basis for signs of ill-health, stress, etc. We can then report back to the graziers if we have any reason for concern for the animals' well-being. 'Lookers' have to attend a training session to acquire the necessary skills. Unless a volunteer is going to guarantee to stay for a while, the costs of this exercise can be prohibitive. However, once again HWT came to our aid by offering us places at the in-house 'looker' training session at their Pondtail Nature Reserve near Fleet. Jenny Mallett, Colin Beyer and I spent a very informative morning on 28 February with Vicky Phillips, learning the skills necessary to become competent 'lookerers'.

We will be recruiting two new volunteers to help us in the 2012/2013 grazing season. Full training will be given. Details can be found on our website. If you are interested, please call me for a chat.

As I am writing this the sheep will be heading home to St Catherine's Hill. It will be sad to see them go, but the move heralds the beginning of a new season: spring, skylarks, cowslips and the lead-up to the summer, when we hope many of you will join in our season of walks and talks on the reserves. I look forward to meeting more of you at these events.

Part of our success depends on sharing resources, especially during these hard times. We are indebted to both HWT and SDNPA.

### **Wildlife sightings**

On 12 February Patrick Fleet reported a lapwing on North. This is believed to be the first sighting of this species. Also on that day Patrick saw a golden plover on the Extension, and two days later I counted six more. At a work-party on 17 February David Thelwell spotted a woodlark flying overhead. Other recent sightings include a male Brimstone spotted by Colin Beyer in the tumuli area of Magdalen Hill Down on 23 February.

### **Volunteering**

We would love to hear from you if you feel you have a spare few hours to volunteer in any capacity: work-parties, administration, leading walks. Do you have a knowledge of wild flowers, butterflies, moths, birds, trees, shrubs or berries? There are many ways to volunteer: for instance, baking a cake to sustain our winter work-party volunteers. This would be certain to gain you 'volunteer of the year' status - certainly with me at least!

### **Final Update**

Butterfly Conservation has decided to take the plunge and embrace social media, so if any of you with a Facebook account can find our new Branch Facebook page here:

[www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationHampshireAndIsleOfWight](http://www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationHampshireAndIsleOfWight)

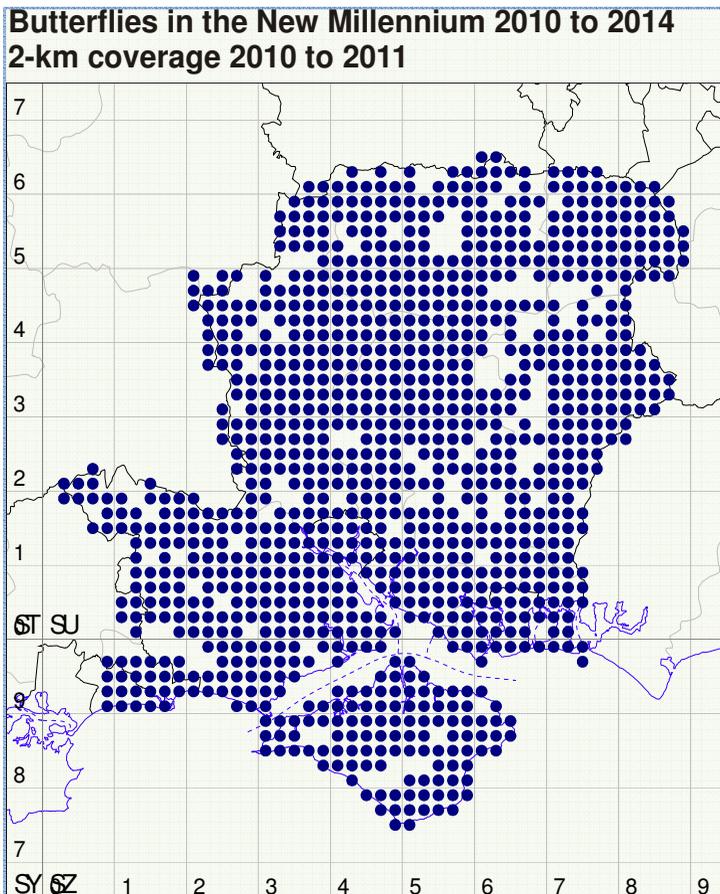
Please have a look and be sure to 'like' our page. All of our 'friends' will be able to upload photos and report sightings, as well as staying in touch with frequent updates. Hantsmoths are already up and running with frequent updates of moths, plus a useful forum for questions and answers. Visit them on Facebook here: [www.facebook.com/groups/137013809748338/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/137013809748338/)

***Jayne Chapman, Reserves Officer***



# Butterfly Recording in 2012

This year (2012) is year three of this current five-year recording period. We welcome records from anywhere in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Some parts are not as well covered as others, and members may be interested in exploring more neglected areas to survey the butterflies present: see the 'Conservation' section of the Branch Website for details of the 10-km squares in which we would particularly like more recording. They are SU55, SU62, SU63, SU64, and SU74 where there are still quite a few gaps. Records from even a brief visit would be useful if you are anywhere near these areas.



# How to send in your records

## • **Electronic recording options:**

As paper records are time-consuming for Branch volunteers to process we ask members to select one of the following electronic methods wherever possible; this will ensure accuracy of your data.

1. **Sightings form:** user-friendly section of website Sightings Page, which you complete and send on-line; first choice for many of our members, with the data being routed onto our database. See article by Robin Turner [April 2011 Newsletter, pages 7-8], reproduced on the Branch website <http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/recording.htm>

2. **MapMate:** if you have a large number of records, MapMate is 'must have' software for submitting records to the Branch and for reviewing your own records over a period of time. If you would like to send in your data via MapMate, the Branch Cuk is 1c4.

3. **Excel Spreadsheet:** it is still possible to send your records using a spreadsheet. Please contact me and I will email you a BC approved spreadsheet, which facilitates transfer of data onto the main database (avoiding unnecessary and time-consuming administration).

## • **Paper recording forms:**

For those *without computer access*. Approved paper recording forms are downloadable from our website; or contact me (contact details on back page).

1. The **Butterfly Site Recording Form (green)**: should be completed when visiting the same site on a number of occasions.

2. The **Casual Recording Form (yellow)**: should be completed when visiting a number of different sites during the season.

Forms are sent with this Newsletter only to members who submitted paper records in 2011.

## • **Target Species for 2012: a plea!**

**White-letter Hairstreak** Records are significantly down, so please have a look for these butterflies flitting around elms during late June to mid-August, particularly at the edge of woods or in a hedgerow. They occasionally visit bramble, privet and thistle flowers, amongst others, but mainly prefer aphid honeydew from neighbouring trees, often around the treetops; so binoculars are useful. Are they really absent from vast areas of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight? Please make a point of looking around any elms in your neighbourhood or on your travels in the county, but stay 30 minutes or so and watch for movement if you can. Patience is needed.

**Wall** Although still well distributed on the Isle of Wight and occasional on the coast in Hampshire between Lymington and Keyhaven, it appears to be only just hanging on at Fort Gilkicker, Gosport and Shipton Bellinger, possibly also in the New Forest (on private land?), Portsdown Hill and elsewhere. Please search coastal areas and also watch out for it inland. The butterfly has three broods in this part of the country: May to mid-June, July to mid-August and mid-September to end October.

Many thanks in advance. We welcome all records; if you have any queries please contact me. Linda Barker is a difficult act to follow but luckily she is readily available to deal with any questions in my first year as Butterfly Recorder.

**How to work out a grid reference:** Easy to select via the website Sightings Page: the Ordnance Survey has a website which explains how to read grid references. Visit:

**[www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/gi/nationalgrid/nghelp1.html](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/gi/nationalgrid/nghelp1.html)**

or contact me in the event of difficulty.

*Paul Brock, Butterfly Recorder*

## **Transects**

**A**s reported in the September 2011 Newsletter I am standing down as Branch Butterfly Recorder. I am very pleased to be handing the role over to Paul Brock, who comes with considerable experience of recording butterflies and other insects. I wish him well.

Thanks to everyone who has sent in records and communicated with me over the past seven years.

I will still be involved with butterfly recording, but concentrating on transects only, with Andy. We are always looking for people to help with transect recording; please contact me if you would like to get involved.

*Linda Barker, Joint Transect Coordinator*



# News, Events, Comment & Reviews

## Longstock: Butterflies and Buddlejas

The Branch's main event of the year will once again be held at the Waitrose Plant Centre at Longstock Park Nursery home of a national buddleja collection. This will be a 'one day' event on Saturday 14 July. The centre typically opens from 8.30 a.m. Members are advised to attend between 10.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Details will be put on the Branch website.

This year will see a major change from the previous format in that we are sharing the venue with a food fair that typically attracts a good number of visitors, although the theme for the day will remain 'Butterflies and Buddlejas'. There will be guided walks around the buddleja collection together with open access to the conservation area, where Dark Green Fritillaries and several other species were found in 2010.

This major enhancement of the event reflects an increased commitment by Waitrose/John Lewis. It should attract more visitors and will afford a greater opportunity to introduce people to our charity.

We will have a dedicated Hants and IOW Branch marquee, as well as gazebos amongst the trees for the popular moth displays (including species trapped on-site the previous night). We anticipate having more children visiting the event this year and will be offering a number of lepidoptera-themed activities.

We need two things to make this an even greater success than in the two previous years: one we can't control – the weather; the other we can – help from our members.

**Please support us;** even if you can only offer an hour or two it will be a great help. We need help with several activities, including greeting visitors on behalf of the Branch, helping man our displays, and talking about butterflies and moths.

If you can help contact: **Peter Eeles** ([pete@ukbutterflies.co.uk](mailto:pete@ukbutterflies.co.uk))  
**Roger Buchanan** ([roger@roger-jane.co.uk](mailto:roger@roger-jane.co.uk)).

## **June Bailey Education Fund**

**T**he Branch has established an Education Fund named after June Bailey, whose legacy to the Branch initiated this development. It has also been generously supported by her husband Ken.

Details of how to apply for funding can be found on the Branch website, together with an application form. Applications can be made by an individual or an organisation and should be in support of a butterfly or moth project.

Normally the Branch would make two awards annually with a value of up to £300. This year, we are advertising two pairs of awards (four in all). The closing date for the first will be 31 May and for the second 30 September. In subsequent years the closing date for the awards will be 31 March.

## **Latest/Earliest Sightings Dec 2011 to March 2012**

**R**ed Admiral has certainly lived up to its reputation of appearing in every month of the year. The last sighting of 2011 was on 26 December by Chris Barter at the gates of Fratton Park football ground. Just before Christmas, on 22 December, Ted Raynor reported a Red Admiral and a Painted Lady at Queen Elizabeth Country Park. Also on that date Red Admirals were seen by Lynn Fomison in Ropley, Brian Fletcher in Winchester, and Pat Clipstone in Gosport, and Ralph Hollins reported an unidentified White on Portsdown.

There were no sightings on 1 January reported on the website but on the following day Red Admirals were seen by Brian Shaw in Portsmouth, David Tinling in Gosport and Dave Pearson in the New Forest, and the first Brimstone was noted by Henry Edmunds at Cholderton .

Red Admirals were reported throughout January but it was not until mid-February that other butterflies began to appear. Mark Russell saw the first Peacock on 15 February at Munsley Bog; David Tinling reported a Speckled Wood on the 16<sup>th</sup> in Gosport, the earliest ever in Hampshire; and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Mark Swann saw a Small Tortoiseshell at Testwood Lakes, Brenda Powell observed a Comma in Gosport, and I had my own first sighting of a Brimstone at Great Fontley.

The first day of March produced reports of Brimstone, Peacock, Comma and Red Admiral. Now we await the first Orange Tip – the true herald of spring. Finally, the earliest ever Holly Blue was seen on 11 March by Trevor Carpenter in his Fareham Garden.

***Jenny Mallett, Branch Organiser***

## Events

The Branch is attending the following events. If anyone can offer to help please contact:

Linda Barker, 02380 270042. [lindabarker4@btinternet.com](mailto:lindabarker4@btinternet.com) or  
Jenny Mallett, 01329 832177. [Jennifer@mallett2.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:Jennifer@mallett2.orangehome.co.uk)

- 17 June, Open Farm Sunday, Trinley, near Andover
- 23 June, New Members Day
- 8 September, Romsey Show
- 7 October, Blackmoor Apple Day

Fuller details on the website nearer to the time.

### Open Farm Sunday

The Branch has been invited to take part in the Open Farm Sunday on 17 June at the Trinley estate, near Andover. This farm is the home of the BBC Farmer of the Year (2011). It is a working farm, actively promoting the conservation of wildlife.

Would anyone be interested in helping out at this event? We will have a stand and there will be butterfly walks and craft activities for children.

If you would like to help and for further details please contact Linda Barker: 02380 270042; email [lindabarker4@btinternet.com](mailto:lindabarker4@btinternet.com)

### Social Afternoon, 25 February 2012

As usual, this year's event was held at the Church Hall in Weeke and consisted of a series of short presentations of members' images from the previous season: butterflies and moths, home and abroad. Some of our members do get to exciting places and many are quite excellent at recording what they find. The event is always an enjoyable opportunity to meet up before the start of the butterfly season and it whets the appetite for the spring emergences and, for those with such plans, foreign travels.

Attendance this year was a little down on 2011, possibly owing to the excellence of the weather, but partly because of the long lead-in since notice of the event in the September Newsletter. As you will see from the letter accompanying this Newsletter, we are very keen to develop our services to members, and email reminders (for example) might have helped publicise this enjoyable occasion.

*Roger Buchanan, Chairman Information Subcommittee*

## Hampshire Moth Weekend

The Hampshire Moth Weekend will be held again in 2012, with the objective of encouraging recorders to explore new sites for moths in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, be it in a friend's backyard or in an under-explored part of our area. As an incentive, prizes are again being offered for the individual(s) who find the rarest or most significant species, and for the most new 10km-square records over the weekend.

The 2011 edition was a great success, with recording at 80 sites, of which 57 were light-trapping sessions: 51 observers took part, finding 489 species, and returning 2,813 records of 7,866 moths.

With planning for the next county lepidoptera atlas now under way, there has never been a better time to make your efforts count.

For more details, please email Mike Wall ([mike@hantsmoths.org.uk](mailto:mike@hantsmoths.org.uk)), or Tim Norriss ([tim@kitsmail.com](mailto:tim@kitsmail.com)) or see the HMW pages at <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/hmw/HMW2012.php>

***Mike Wall, County Recorder (Microlepidoptera) and Tim Norriss, County Recorder (Macrolepidoptera)***

## Friends of Danebury Ring

The butterflies of Danebury Ring need your help. Lynn Fomison and I are in the process of establishing a group to support the Hampshire County Council rangers in the conservation management of this site, which is located about two miles NW of Stockbridge and has some areas of wonderful chalk grassland rich in rockrose and other downland plants. Scrub invasion and tree growth is limiting butterfly and moth habitat in some places, and improvements can be made by careful conservation work. This will include clearing up felled trees and hand-cutting scrub to encourage wild flowers in several locations.

If you can come along to any of our working sessions we will be very pleased to see you. The dates will be notified by email and on the Branch website. Some of the sessions will be planned for a couple of hours on a summer's evening. Loppers can be provided.

Interested? Please send an email to Lfomison AT madasafish.com to register your interest.

***Tim Norriss, Moth Officer***

## **South East Area Group News**

### **Portsmouth Harbour SSSI**

In addition to the Group's own efforts to get the Bedenham Grasslands included in the SSSI, there is an independent action headed by Gosport botanist John Norton to secure the addition of Gilkicker Point too, primarily on account of its rare coastal flora, although the site also hosts the Wall Brown and Small Heath.

### **Horsea Island: Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)**

The larger area of Horsea outside the SSSI has been declared a SINC, perhaps in anticipation of Portsmouth City Council's intention to develop much of the area when the new junction on the M275 has been completed. The MoD has now accepted that goats offer the best means of scrub control on the SSSI sections of the Island and is now seeking suppliers. The horses placed in the main meadow in 2010 did much damage to the grasslands and all but exterminated the Small Heath.

### **Fareham Borough Council**

FBC has disbanded its ecology team, choosing to refer green issues to the support group within HCC's planning department in Winchester. Management of FBC's open spaces at Warsash, Holly Hill and Cams will remain with ranger Mark Trigwell (tel. 01329 824843).

### **Hilsea Lines, Portsmouth**

Portsmouth County Council's Countryside Service is to clear-fell large areas of slope at Hilsea Lines, the 19<sup>th</sup> century defences at the northern end of Portsea Island, following tree falls in the vicinity of the footpath. The cleared areas will be replanted with a broadleaf mix including 250 'Sapporo Autumn Gold' elm cultivars, in the hope that the White-letter Hairstreak will recolonize the area from its IBM lakeside habitat half a mile to the north-west. To avoid tree falls in future, all the new trees will be either crown-lifted or coppiced at 15 – 20 year intervals.

*Andrew Brookes, Leader SE Area Group*

## **Isle of Wight Area Group – plans for 2012**

This year we shall be organising some butterfly monitoring as well as continuing with butterfly walks and moth-trapping events. Organised monitoring of the IOW's struggling Pearl-bordered Fritillary colony (see article on pp 21/22) will allow us to cover a larger area on a single date and so gain a better picture of its status in Parkhurst Forest. We would be very pleased to see you if you are able to help in April and May. In any case, please let Stuart Read know of any casual sightings you have of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries in the Forest as soon as possible after the event.

Rob Wilson has stepped down as leader of the IOW Area Group. We thank Rob for getting the Group up and running and for organising such a varied events programme over the last two years. Caroline Dudley has agreed to act as contact for the Group at present.

We have tried to hold our butterfly walks at a range of locations. However, the dates are determined by when the people who have offered to lead walks are able to do so. If you would like to be involved in organising events for the IOW Area Group, please get in touch.

The Group has its own moth trap, which is available for short-term loan. Please contact John Rowell on 01983 281342 if you are interested in borrowing it. If you are new to moth-trapping, here is your chance to try it out before committing yourself to buying your own trap.

We are currently trying to compile some IOW - specific pages for the Hants & IOW Branch website. A page for the Glanville Fritillary has been written but there is plenty of scope for more pages on, for example, places to go to see particular species and IOW-specific information on different butterfly and moth species. If you are able to contribute anything, please get in touch.

We wish you an enjoyable season!

*Caroline Dudley, contact for Isle of Wight Area Group*

## **The Strange Behaviour of Wood Whites**

Listening to the very interesting talk given at Members' Day 2011 by Susan Clarke about her studies of the Wood White butterfly I was reminded of some rather strange behaviour that I observed in the Botany Bay area of Chiddingfold Forest some years ago.

I was walking along one of the rides and saw in the distance two white butterflies which looked too small to be any of the normal whites. When I got closer, I realised that they were two miniature second-generation Wood Whites, both as small as my little finger nail. As I followed them down the ride they reached a tall fir tree, at which point they started circling each other, getting higher and higher until they were level with the top of the tree. They then ceased their normal fluttering and both floated down almost to ground level, just like two petals of blossom falling off a tree.

Both Wood Whites then flew in their normal slow manner further down the ride, only to return to the fir tree a few minutes later to repeat their rather unusual behaviour. I must have stood watching the pair for over half an hour as they repeated their actions time and time again.

*Peter Martin, Branch member*



# Diary of Events & Field Trips HAMPSHIRE & IOW BRANCH

**APRIL – OCTOBER 2012**

FIELD TRIPS ARE FOR EVERYONE. You most emphatically do NOT have to be an expert to come on a field trip. There is just one exception to this in that the terrain over fields and woods will most regrettably often make access impossible for some people with mobility problems. Please check with the Leader if in doubt.

FOR YOUR SAFETY AND COMFORT remember that everyone taking part in a field meeting or other event has a responsibility for his/her own safety and that of others. Wear strong shoes, appropriate clothing, sunscreen, carry a drink, heed all safety advice, watch out for hazards, and check for ticks after the walk. If the weather looks doubtful please check with the leader in advance. Bring lunch if staying all day.

We will encounter some day-flying moths on field trips but if you are interested specifically in moths a good way to learn is to go along to one of the moth evenings organised by members usually at short notice. Some are listed here, whilst others may be published on our website.

To make the diary easier to read, we have split the Hampshire and IOW diaries into two sections. Further information: Branch website: [www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk) Check the website for later additions to this programme.

**Booking is not usually necessary on our reserves, but for more information you are welcome to contact Jayne Chapman.**

**Email:** [jchapman@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:jchapman@butterfly-conservation.org)

**Tel:** 01962 808400

Private groups are also welcomed at our reserves by pre-arrangement with Jayne Chapman. These are free to the group but raise vital grant income for Butterfly Conservation.

Events on the Isle of Wight have been arranged by the Branch's IOW Area Group. They welcome visitors from the mainland and may be able to offer lifts.  
**Contact Caroline Dudley. Tel: 01983 754935.**

# Hampshire

**Wednesday 18 April Res**

**Magdalen Hill Down**

**Leader:** Jayne Chapman **Tel:** 01962 808400

**Meet:** 10.30am in the gravel car park opposite the cemetery on the Alresford Road, B3404 Winchester. Map ref: SU 512 295.

Sat Nav: SO21 1HE.

A walk to see the cowslips and enjoy early spring butterflies.

**Saturday 21 April Res**

**Magdalen Hill Down**

**Leaders:** Maurice Pugh and Roger Buchanan **Tel:** 02380 252963

**Meet:** 9.30am (for photographers) 10.30am (for walkers) in the car park at the top of the track between the cemetery and Blackwell & Moody stonemasons, Alresford Road, B3404 Winchester. Map ref: SU 512 295. Sat Nav: SO21 1HE.

A spring butterfly and photographic walk, offering tuition in photography for butterflies. If you wish to discuss this in advance, please call Roger.

**Wednesday 2 May Res**

**Magdalen Hill Down**

**Leader:** Jenny Mallett/Jayne Chapman. **Tel:** 01962 808400

**'Wednesday Wander'**. The first Wednesday of the month up to and including 7 September. Come along to enjoy butterflies of the month, wildflowers and a leisurely walk with friendly company.

**Meet:** 10.30am in the gravel car park opposite the cemetery on the Alresford Road, B3404 Winchester. Map ref: SU 512 295.

Sat Nav: SO21 1HE

**Saturday 5 May F/t**

**Butser Hill National Nature Reserve**

**Leader:** Ashley Whitlock **Tel:** 02392 731266

**Meet:** 10.30 am. Leave A3M at Clanfield, take north lane at crossroads and follow signs to Butser Hill car park, map ref SU 711 199. Car park charge applies. Very steep slopes, wear walking boots, bring drink and lunch.

Target species: Duke of Burgundy, Small Heath, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers.

**Saturday 12 May F/t**

**New Forest, New Copse (am)  
Pignal Inclosure and beyond (pm)**

**Leader:** Paul Brock **Tel:** 01590 624683

**AM Meet:** New Copse Inclosure: 10.00 am at Ladycross. Map ref SU 335 031 (turn off A337 Lyndhurst to Brockenhurst road onto B3055 signposted Beaulieu. After about 2 miles turn left onto forest track at sharp bend signposted Ladycross, then shortly take first turning on left.)

**PM Meet:** Pignal Inclosure and beyond: 1.30 pm at Standing Hat car park SU 314 036 (turn off A337, as above, onto B3055 signposted Beaulieu, shortly turn left on a forest track, drive to the second car park (Standing Hat) about half-mile away. Target species: Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

**Wednesday 23 May F/t**

**Pewsey Down National Nature Reserve**

Joint field trip organised by Hampshire Wildlife Trust.

**Leader:** Brian Fletcher **Tel:** 01962 882746

**Meet:** 10.30 am (until 4.00 pm) in Wiltshire chalk downland reserve car park at Map ref SU 115 638. From the A303, take the A345 past Upavon; next roundabout go straight across on minor road through Alton Barnes. Car park about 1 1/4 miles further on. Bring lunch. Target species: downland butterflies.

**Saturday 2 June F/t**

**Bentley Wood**

**Leader:** Ashley Whitlock **Tel:** 02392 731266

**Meet:** 10.30 am. From West Dean take minor road north towards West Tytherley. After one mile fork left. Shortly, turn into small gravel track on left leading to car park. Map ref SU 258 292. Eastern clearing in the morning, and possibility of visit elsewhere in the wood in the afternoon. Bring lunch. Target species: Fritillaries.

**Wednesday 6 June Res**

**Bentley Station Meadow**

**Leaders:** David Walton & Jayne Chapman **Tel:** 01962 808400

A Half-term trail (bring the children) to look for butterflies and wild flowers.

**Meet:** 10.30am in the Forestry Commission car park off Gravel Hill Road. Map ref: SU 802 433. Leave the A31 east of Bentley sign-posted Alice Holt Research Station. Go along Gravel Hill Road, over a railway bridge. The car park is about 500 yards after the bridge on the right.

**Wednesday 6 June Res**

**Magdalen Hill Down**

**Leader:** Jenny Mallett **Tel:** 01329 832177

'Wednesday Wander'.

Meet: 10.30am as 2 May.

**Tuesday 12 June Res**

**Yew Hill**

**Leader:** Colin Matthews **Tel:** 01794 388272

**Meet:** 7.15 pm at the end of Old Kennels Lane at the junction with Port Lane and Millers Lane, Oliver's Battery. Map ref: SU 451 269, Sat Nav; SO22 4JT.

A good time of year to see orchids and butterfly habitat.

<b>Sunday 17 June Ev</b>	<b>Open Farm Sunday, Trinley near Andover</b>
<p>Please come and help. <b>Contact:</b> Linda Barker <b>Tel:</b> 023 8027 0042  Home of the BBC farmer of the year (2011). Working farm actively promoting wildlife and conservation. The Trinley Buildings, Frinkley, Andover SP11 6AH  For directions see web site <a href="http://www.trinley.co.uk">www.trinley.co.uk</a></p>	
<b>Tuesday 19 June Res</b>	<b>Bentley Station Meadow</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Jayne Chapman <b>Tel:</b> 01962 808400  <b>Meet:</b> 7.00pm in NE corner of car park at Bentley Station. An evening walk to enjoy the orchids and other flowers in the meadow.</p>	
<b>Saturday 30 June F/t</b>	<b>Silchester Common (am) and Pamber Forest (pm)</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Brian Fletcher <b>Tel:</b> 01962 882746  <b>Meet:</b> car park at Impstone Road, Pamber Heath map ref SU 616 622 at 10.30 am for Silchester Common and/or 1.30 pm for the walk in Pamber Forest. Bring lunch if joining both walks.  Target species Silver Studded Blue (am) and woodland butterflies (pm).</p>	
<b>Sunday 1 July Res</b>	<b>Magdalen Hill Down</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Jayne Chapman <b>Tel:</b> 01962 808400  <b>Meet:</b> 11.00am at top of the track that runs between the cemetery and Blackwell and Moody stonemasons. Drive up or walk up after parking in gravel car park opposite the cemetery on Alresford Road B3404, Winchester. Map ref SU 512 295. Come and see summer butterflies and day flying moths. Bring a picnic lunch.</p>	
<b>Wednesday 4 July Res</b>	<b>Magdalen Hill Down</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Jenny Mallett/Jayne Chapman <b>Tel:</b> 01962 808400  <b>Meet:</b> 10.30am as 2 May</p>	
<b>Sunday 8 July F/t</b>	<b>West Wood (am) and Pitt Down (pm) nr Winchester</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Ashley Whitlock <b>Tel:</b> 02392 731266  <b>Meet:</b> 10.30 am for walk in West Wood and 1.30 pm for walk on Pitt Down. Both at the Spindle Tree car park Map ref SU 422 293 just beyond sharp bend at the edge of Pitt Down on minor road from Winchester to Farley Mount CP. Bring Lunch. Easy walking, end about 4 pm.  Target species :West Wood (am) woodland butterflies and Purple Emperor. Pitt Down (pm) Dark Green Fritillary, Marbled White.</p>	

<b>Saturday 14 July Ev</b>	<b>Longstock Park Nursery near Stockbridge</b>
<p>“Butterflies and Buddlejas” - see newsletter &amp; flyer. This is a big event for us, held in conjunction with the John Lewis Partnership. Please come, we need lots of help. <b>Contact:</b> Roger Buchanan <b>Tel:</b> 023 8025 2963.</p>	
<b>Friday 20 July Res</b>	<b>Magdalen Hill Down</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Jenny Mallett/Jayne Chapman <b>Tel:</b> 01962 808400  <b>Meet</b> as 2 May. One of the best times to see butterflies and wildflowers.</p>	
<b>Tuesday 24 July Res</b>	<b>Bentley Station Meadow</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> David Walton <b>Tel:</b> 01962 808400  <b>Meet:</b> 10.30am in the Forestry Commission car park off Gravel Hill Road. Map ref: SU 802 433. Leave the A31 east of Bentley sign-posted Alice Holt Research Station. Go along Gravel Hill Road, over a railway bridge. The car park is about 500 yards after the bridge on the right.</p>	
<b>Wednesday 25 July Res</b>	<b>Yew Hill</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Ivan Arnold <b>Tel:</b> 01962 866706  <b>Meet:</b> 10.30am at end of Old Kennels Lane at junction with Port Lane and Millers Lane, Oliver’s Battery. Map ref SU 451 269. A good time of year to see Chalkhill Blues and many other butterflies and wildflowers.</p>	
<b>Saturday 28 July Res</b>	<b>Yew Hill</b>
<p><b>Leaders:</b> Brian Fletcher <b>Tel:</b> 01962 882746 &amp; Ivan Arnold  <b>Meet:</b> 2.00pm at end of Old Kennels Lane at junction with Port Lane and Millers Lane, Oliver’s Battery. Map ref: SU 451 269. A good time of year to see Chalkhill Blues, many other butterflies and lovely wildflowers.</p>	
<b>Wednesday 1 August Res</b>	<b>Magdalen Hill Down</b>
<p><b>Leader:</b> Jenny Mallett/Jayne Chapman <b>Tel:</b> 01962 808400  <b>Meet:</b> 10.30 am as 2 May.</p>	
<b>Saturday 11 August F/t</b>	<b>Old Winchester Hill National Nature Reserve</b>
<p>Joint event organised by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust.  <b>Leader:</b> Brian Fletcher <b>Tel:</b> 01962 882746  <b>Meet:</b> 10.30 am in the main reserve car park on the minor road (south) east of Warnford. Map ref SU 646 214. Bring lunch if staying all day.  Target species: Silver-spotted Skipper and other late butterflies and flowers.</p>	

**Saturday 25 August F/t**

**Martin Down National Nature Reserve**

**Leader:** Brian Fletcher **Tel:** 01962 882 746

**Meet:** 10.30 am at car park on left off the A354 Salisbury to Blandford road. Map ref SU 037 201. Bring lunch. Target species: Adonis Blue.

**Sunday 2 September F/t**

**Noar Hill**

Hampshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve

**Leader:** Ashley Whitlock **Tel:** 02392 731266

**Meet:** 10.30 am in lane north of Charity Farm. Map ref SU 737 322. Numbers limited so please book by 30 August with Alison Harper Tel 01962 882261. Wildlife and plants of old chalk pits. Bring lunch. Target species: Brown Hairstreak. Also wildlife and plants.

**Wednesday 5 September Res**

**Magdalen Hill Down**

**Leader:** Jenny Mallett/Jayne Chapman **Tel:** 01962 808400

**Meet:** 10.30 am as 2 May.

**Saturday 8 September Ev**

**Romsey Show**

**Contact:** Jenny Mallett **Tel:** 01329 832177. Our display at Romsey is always popular but is a very long day. We welcome help, if only for a couple of hours.

**Sunday 7 October Ev**

**Blackmoor Apple Day** (not far from Selborne)

**Contact:** Jenny Mallett **Tel:** 01329 832177

We think you will enjoy this event (weather permitting); our display gazebo is always 'buzzing' and there will be an opportunity to slice apples and pears for tasting by visitors to Blackmoor as well. Do help if you can.



## Isle of Wight

**Tuesday 1 May F/t**

**Ventnor**

**Leader:** Caroline Dudley **Tel:** 01983 754935

**Meet:** 1.30 pm at the entrance to Ventnor Park (near bandstand).

Map ref: SZ 556 773. Free parking along Park Avenue. Bus No. 3 to Ventnor or No. 6 via St Lawrence. We will walk a circular route down to the coast and back. Springtime butterflies.

**Wednesday 9 May Ev**

**Freshwater Fruit Farm, Wilmingham Lane,  
Freshwater, PO40 9UG**

**Leader:** Elaine Rice **Tel:** 01983 730187

**Meet:** 8.00 pm Map ref: SZ 358 869. From the Newport to Afton road turn right at the sign to Yarmouth (B3054), Wilmingham Lane. The drive to Freshwater Fruit Farm is about 400 metres on the right, just past a bungalow (also on the right). By kind permission of John and Brenda Craddock.

Moth trapping, Red Squirrels and Dormice.

**Friday 25 May F/T**

**Freshwater Bay**

**Leader:** Sue Davies **Tel:** 07702 151312

**Meet:** 10.30 am at westernmost Afton Down car park. Map ref: SZ 351 856. Bus No 12. After the walk, there may be the chance to see some moths trapped the night before.

Target species: Adonis Blue, Small Blues and Glanville Fritillary.

**Saturday 23 June Ev**

**Moth Night 2012. The Old Rectory,  
Kingston Road, Kingston, PO38 2JZ**

**Leader:** Elaine Rice **Tel:** 01983 730187

**Meet:** 8.30pm Map ref: SZ 479 814. Kingston is between Shorwell and Chale Green. From Carisbrooke, take left turn at mini-roundabout to Chale (B3399). Follow road until Kingston sign, then 2nd house on left.

By kind permission of Louise & Derek Ness.

**Saturday 30 June F/t**

**Fattingpark Copse**

**Leader:** David Biggs **Tel:** 01983 292595

**Meet:** 11.00 am in the lay-by on the opposite side of the road to the Crematorium, just east of the Race Course roundabout. Map ref: SZ 524 919. Buses Nos. 4 and 9. Join us afterwards for a pub lunch in the Woodmans Arms, Wootton Common. Target species: Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral.

**Saturday 7th July F/t**

**Whippingham Fields**

**Leader:** John Rowell **Tel:** 01983 281342

**Meet:** 10.30 am by gate to St Mildred's Church, Beatrice Avenue, Whippingham. Map ref: SZ 511 936. Parking available at the church and in nearby roads. Close to No. 5 bus route. Midsummer butterflies.

**Friday 27 July F/t**

**Tennyson Down**

**Leader:** Stephen Plummer **Tel:** 01983 755194

**Meet:** 10.30 am at the National Trust car park at the end of Highdown Lane, Totland. Map ref: SZ 324 855. The Needles Breezer open top bus stops at the High Down Inn. Target species: Dark Green Fritillary, Chalkhill Blue, Jersey Tiger, plus a few hoverflies.

**Saturday 11 August F/t**

**Brading Down**

**Leader:** Ian Pratt **Tel:** 01983 865769

**Meet:** 10.30 am at Brading Downs viewpoint car park. Map ref: SZ 597 868. Close to Nos. 2 and 3 bus routes. Target species: Chalkhill and Adonis Blues, Small Heath.



**Key to codes:**

**F/t** - field trip.

**Res** - takes place on one of the Butterfly Conservation Reserves.

**Ev** - other events.

## How many Commas?

In our garden each year male commas guard a particular sunny glade against all comers, flying up to intercept any butterfly which crosses it. In an area of about 0.5 hectares the glade is the only place where this happens. Speckled Woods will do the same sort of thing in six or seven different places, but commas in only one. We had assumed that there were two male commas each year – one in the spring and one in the summer – and that this was their territory. We may have been naïve, and we were certainly completely wrong.

As a check I took photos of nearly every comma seen in the glade, on 30 occasions in all. These photos proved to be of 25 different butterflies. So there were only five which were photographed twice on different days. The rest were known to have been there only once. For the five which appeared twice the dates were as follows:

- Comma 3 – 9 & 24 April (15 days apart);
- Comma 6 – 28 & 30 April (2 days);
- Comma 15 – 11 & 28 July (17 days);
- Comma 19 – 23 & 27 July (4 days);
- Comma 25 – 22 & 24 August (2 days).

Of course, there were probably a number which were not recorded. On four days a comma was seen in the glade but was not photographed: three of them did not settle and one was high in a tree. Commas were seen this year only from March to September. For 82 of the 214 days in these seven months we were away or out for most of the day. In any case I definitely did not sit watching the glade all day, so presumably the real number of different male Commas which guarded it this year was more like 40 or 50.

Using a modern digital camera and taking advantage of the Comma's behaviour makes photographing them easy. They usually settle with their wings out flat. If they do close them, a hat or a branch shading the sun will soon persuade them to open again for long enough. Our camera, with a long lens, takes a very sharp picture at about 2 metres, far enough away not to disturb them. Any more intrusive method, such as catching the butterfly and marking it, is too likely to influence its future behaviour.

In any case, it is easy to tell two Commas apart: their wing markings and the indentations around the edge of their wings all differ from one specimen to another. By comparing a new photograph with all the previous ones you can easily see if that butterfly has occurred before.



### **Conclusions:**

1. Male Commas do not have a territory which they defend over a period of days. Not only did they hardly ever return but on four occasions more than two of them used the same glade in one day. On one day three commas used it and on another there were two at the same time. On at least two occasions a resident intercepted an intruding male, but the one which returned to the glade was the intruder, not the defender.
2. There are a lot more commas than I had realised. This year I recorded a total of 50 in our garden. Previously I would have thought this represented about half a dozen individuals which we saw again and again. Now I am confident they are mainly different and that there were more like 40.
3. There are questions to be asked: do male commas only guard a glade like this once or twice in their lives or do they use other glades over a wide area?

**Tony Rackham.** [ab.rackham@btinternet.com](mailto:ab.rackham@btinternet.com)

## Bees, Butterflies and Blooms



**S**arah Raven's mission to aid pollinating insects by bringing flower power to our towns, cities and countryside was featured in the BBC2 television series of three programmes - Bees, Butterflies and Blooms, screened in February. She explored the issue of lack of nectar sources, particularly from the angle of food production, which is a cause of the alarming decline in bumblebees.

Programme 1 (Villages, Farms and Countryside) addressed ways of tackling the loss of flower-rich grassland by appropriate work on farm headlands and by reduction of grass-cutting on such places as village greens. Although this episode included several pieces of film shot at Magdalen Hill Down, it was a shame that it did not acknowledge the significant contribution made by BC and other conservation bodies in creating and maintaining flower-rich habitats.

Programme 2 focussed on Towns, Gardens and the Britain in Bloom annual competition, with emphasis on encouraging a switch from pelargoniums and other gaudy double-flowered varieties completely lacking in nectar to plants that will provide nectar and pollen.

Programme 3 (Cities and the Urban Landscape) featured schemes to create urban meadows in Birmingham but also showed the wonderful planting schemes in Sheffield and at the Olympic stadium.

The three programmes seem to have been enthusiastically received by people interested in conservation, subject of course to the minor reservations and nit-picking we can all do from the comfort of our settees. Although butterflies featured in the title they did not feature in any of the programmes, though undoubtedly they will benefit from the use of more nectar-rich plants.

I have just checked the RHS website: Wild about Wildflowers is the theme of the Britain in Bloom 2012 campaign as part of the celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

***Lynn Fomison***

## Alternative Methods of Mothing

At the recent Hampshire Moth Conference Glynne Evans drew attention to the advantages of mothing in other people's gardens: not having to buy and carry about a heavy generator and not having to stay up half the night and drive home afterwards. Whilst it lacks something of the camaraderie of sitting around a moth lamp with friends, setting up the lights at dusk in a place safe from disturbance and returning first thing the next morning to go through the contents with the house owner (and often their friends and family) has the one huge advantage that I'm not a total zombie the next day through lack of sleep. Well, no more than usual anyway.

We now have seven garden moth sites at which we trap, but Glynne and Sheila put us to shame with their 15 garden sites. Mothing in this way by sounding out friends and contacts has the advantage of quick addition of records for new local tetrad grid squares; and local is the key. Who wants to travel big distances when fuel is so expensive and eco-unfriendly?

It is possible to locate some moth species during the day but others are more difficult to find without a night-time light source. Graeme Davis at Andover doesn't have a moth trap but has discovered a nifty solution to the problem by checking the several footpath underpasses around the town, which are lit at night. Graeme amassed a remarkable 426 moth records of 136 species between 6 February and 31 December 2011 just by occasionally checking the lights at these underpasses. He recorded double figures of several species, including 19 Winter Moth at the end of the year and 10 Dingy Footman on 30 July. He records micros as well as macros and has found *Udea lutealis* as well as the scarce elm-feeding pyrale *Pempelia formosa*. Ninety-nine species were recorded at just one underpass near Rooksbury Mill local nature reserve adjacent to the A303. Keep up the good work, Graeme.

**Tim Norriss, Moth Officer & Report Editor (Macro Moths)**

*A version of this piece was first published in UK Moths newsletter.*



## **A better future for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary in Parkhurst Forest?**

**P**arkhurst Forest lies to the north-west of Newport and comprises 395 hectares of ancient woodland, relic heathland and coniferous plantation. It is owned by the Forestry Commission and also incorporates a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The forest supports a large population of red squirrels and the Island's remaining colony of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (PBF).



**Photo by Ian Pratt, 21 May 2008, at Parkhurst Forest.**

The PBF was once common across the southern half of Britain but has declined significantly in more recent times. It is a butterfly of woodland clearings, and its decline has been linked to reduced levels of cyclical forestry. Over a period of 25 to 30 years from the mid-1980s Parkhurst Forest had become darker and less butterfly-friendly, and the plight of the PBF is evidenced by the low numbers reported. Just two adults were seen last spring in a year in which the PBF generally seems to have fared well elsewhere in the south-east of England.

The loss of the PBF to the Island is now a real and alarming prospect. But hope has not yet evaporated. The Forestry Commission regards the PBF as a 'flagship' species and the present forester, Mike Pittock, is strongly committed to the Commission's biodiversity action plans. Moreover, he has intimated a desire to engage local conservation groups in the enhancement of wildlife habitats within the Forest.

The survival of the PBF in Parkhurst ultimately depends upon the Forest's economic well-being. For many years it has suffered from a lack of local markets for its products, and the cost of exporting timber to the mainland far exceeded the price it could realise. Felling had accordingly almost ceased. But things are now changing: a rising demand for wood fuel has created new opportunities, and forestry operations have resumed. Rides have been widened: a more 'open' forest should be of benefit to all 30 species of butterfly found in Parkhurst. There are encouraging signs that the Grizzled Skipper is responding to the changes, and new colonies of Marbled White are also being recorded.

The status of the PBF remains uncertain; this coming season will surely either provide evidence of its rehabilitation or confirm its extinction. Pessimism has no place in the hearts of conservationists and the hope remains that the PBF still survives in Parkhurst. To ascertain its current status, the IOW Area Group is organising a comprehensive survey during its flight season; anyone interested in taking part in this survey should please contact Stuart Read on 07877 333734 or at [s.jread@btinternet.com](mailto:s.jread@btinternet.com).

***Stuart Read***



**Pearl-bordered Fritillaries – New Forest 2011**

## The threat of genetically modified moths

Through the network of County Moth Recorders my attention was drawn to a startling report in the *Daily Mail* on 15 December 2011. It can be seen in full at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2074319/Frankenmoth-Health-fears-plans-release-millions-GM-insects-designed-destroy-pests.html> An extract reads:

“A British company has proposed releasing a GM strain of the Diamond-back Moth *Plutella xylostella*, which it has developed, which would reduce the population of the vegetable-eating insects. Males carrying a lethal gene would be released which would cause their offspring to die almost immediately. The subsequent fall in their numbers could help increase yields for farmers.”

Oxitec, the company behind the idea, hopes to begin trials next year but faces opposition from groups who say the untested technology could threaten wildlife and human health. Dr Helen Wallace, the director of GeneWatch UK, who has sat on government advisory bodies, told the *Daily Mail*: “Mass releases of GM insects into the British countryside would be impossible to recall if anything went wrong. Changing one part of an ecosystem can have knock-on effects on others in ways that are poorly understood. This could include an increase in different types of pest. Wildlife that feeds on insects could be harmed if there are changes to their food supply.”

A further extract from the *Daily Mail* article:

“The Oxitec team of scientists, based in Oxford, insist these modified insects are better for the environment than the harsh chemical sprays currently used to kill pests. The firm, which is supported by grants from the taxpayer, is developing a number of GM insects that would be used in Britain and around the world to protect crops and combat disease in humans.”

Oxitec has contacted the Health and Safety Executive to ask what controls, if any, should be imposed on GM moth trials. A scientific paper written for the HSE's Scientific Advisory Committee on Genetic Modification describes how trials would work. There are a number of scenarios, ranging from open release into fields to a more controlled experiment using polytunnels with insect-proof screens at each end.

Dr Wallace has accused Oxitec of trying to sidestep regulations designed to police GM technology. But the company appears to have the support of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which has raised no objections to open-field trials. This raises questions about the role of Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman, who is a long-term supporter of GM technology.

The scientific paper points out that the proposals would effectively circumvent the policing regime – the Deliberate Release Regulations – set up to

scrutinise the release of GM organisms. It then admits that approving trials through the HSE 'raises difficult legal and policy issues'. Usually, GM trials have to be approved by Defra.



Releasing the moth may cause new diseases to evolve. Significantly, the paper makes clear that Defra has not objected to open-field trials, providing there are guarantees for the safety of humans and the environment.

Oxitec says all the GM moths carry a lethal gene and would die within a few days of release. This is known as 'biological containment'; Oxitec argues that it is so successful there is no need for any physical barriers to stop the insects flying away. The paper states: "For an 'open' release to go ahead the extent of the biological containment would have to meet two legal tests. First, it should be sufficient to limit contact with humans and the environment. Secondly, it should provide a high level of protection to humans and minimise the risk of harm to the environment." A Defra spokesman said that while its officials and advisers have discussed Oxitec's plans, there has not yet been a formal application for a trial. Consequently, the Department has not reached a view on whether it should go ahead.

Without knowing the detail of how the genes have been modified it is difficult to comment on the dangers, but I share the widespread concern that this report has generated. What I find most disturbing is the apparent belief that no bio-containment would be necessary in any trials to stop insects flying away. All lepidoptera will migrate given the right weather conditions, and the Diamond-back Moth is a known migrant.

***Tim Norriss, Moth Officer***

## Moth Conference Report

The Branch's third Moth Conference was held at Littleton Memorial Hall on Saturday 14 January. Dan Hoare welcomed over 70 people to the conference and gave a perspective on 2011 and on mothing in the Branch area.

Tim Norriss presented "The Mothing Year", highlighting early emergence dates, and high numbers of moths caught or observed: Glynne Evans's 5,550 moths in one trap was the most remarkable mothing experience. Another awe-inspiring sight for several people had been the vast numbers of *Adela reaumurella* flying around trees in May. Tim also drew attention to the first county records for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and showed a graph comparing the number of new records in each of the last 16 years. He concluded with accounts of the migrants that had been found mainly during the splendid autumn weather.

Jon Stokes of the Tree Council spoke on "Trees, Hedgerows and Moths". Whilst having great sympathy for anyone affected by a death caused by a falling tree, he deplored the unnecessary felling of trees. To put that into perspective: he estimates that there are six billion trees in the country and that in an average year six deaths are caused by tree-related incidents. However, after every storm trees are felled as possible hazards. His slide illustrating this showed the sad sight of a line of old oaks felled from a roadside hedgerow. He also quoted statistics indicating that too few new trees are getting planted or established in hedgerows. He suggested that the decline in the number of hedgerow trees, as well as eroding the beauty of the landscape, would cause a problem for many moths by reducing their habitat and their corridors across hostile intensive agriculture. He also reported that very few horse chestnuts were now being planted owing to the horse chestnut leaf miner *Cameraria ohridella* and that the state of the leaves of affected trees caused many to be felled as unhealthy. On the positive side, he mentioned schemes to tag hedgerow trees to avoid them being felled and the relatively new idea of planting fruiting hedges.

Illness prevented Zoë Randle from coming along to speak on "Moths and the Media"; this was a shame as she and the Moths Team have achieved much positive publicity to advance the interest in moths and promote their conservation.

In her place Lynn Fomison talked on "Gardening for Moths". She ascertained by a show of hands that around 75% of the audience were already making their gardens moth-friendly. She advocated the three-S approach: shelter, sustenance and sympathy. Provision of shelter is easy with walls or fences clad with climbers, and native shrubs such as goat willow, wild privet and hawthorn, along with cultivated lilac, buddleja and hebe on other boundaries. All these species also help to provide sustenance by way of nectar or larval

food plant or even both. Sympathetic gardening techniques included reduced hoeing and providing log piles. Records both of moths hibernating in gardens and any caterpillars found will be welcomed by Tim.

“Bats and Moths – An Evolutionary Arms Race” was a very interesting talk by Paul Hope; all present will have learnt many new things about bats. Paul described how different species of bat hunted and located their prey and the tactics that moths had evolved to avoid being caught and eaten. Interestingly, some moths have auditory organs and can hear bats and some species emit clicks to jam the bats echo-location.

Glynne Evans recommended mothing in under-recorded squares by the approach “Over the Garden Fence - Chatting up the Neighbours”. By locating good gardens through friends and other contacts, Glynne had run his trap in 15 different gardens within a few miles of Chilbolton. He described the location and nature of the gardens and the most interesting moths found there. This had been very effective in achieving coverage of squares that would not otherwise have been possible. It was hoped that it would be taken up by others; the map showing the squares with few or no records can be found in Newsletter No 17. on the Hantsmoths website.

Mike Wall reported on the success of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Moth Weekend on 22-24 July 2011 and made the awards that had been promised:

- Richard Dixon for the most significant record
- Elaine Rice for the most new 10km-square records
- David Evans in recognition of his considerable effort in targeting a great number of tetrads near Christchurch and submitting over a thousand records.

Mike also mentioned the importance of records for the new moth atlas for the two counties which is currently being planned. The likely publication is 2017, using records up to 2015.

*Lynn Fomison*

## **Breaking News – More Moth Events 2012**

Friday 25 May. New Forest Bioblitz event. Pete Durnell will be running moth traps in the woods at the New Forest Reptile Centre. He will be setting up from around 9 pm. All welcome.

Friday 1 June. Pete Durnell will be running moth traps at Martin Down as part of Hampshire Moth Weekend. He will be at the Sillens Lane end of the reserve setting up from around 9 pm. If the conditions are right this location can be spectacular. All welcome.

Pete Durnell **Tel:** 01590 610021

## Reviews

***The Butterfly Isles*** by Patrick Barkham  
ISBN 9781 847081278 pub. Granta, 2010, £20 hardback.

This is one of the best butterfly books I have read. It is a substantial hardback, the text covering 337 pages. It has a further 32 pages listing species seen in 2009, outlining butterfly families, giving details of recommended sites to visit, and expanding on notes from the text. In addition to acknowledgements and the index, a comprehensive list of 'recommended reading' covers a wide range. Two sections of colour plates are included, one of mounted specimens and the other of the author's photos. Attractive line drawings of different species, by Helen Macdonald, preface each chapter.

The text is eloquently written. I particularly enjoyed the succinct but memorable description of some species: the English Wood White is described as 'an elegant drop of pearl'. The challenge of seeing all of Britain's 59 species in one year is interspersed with much humour and many references to the often bizarre actions of the 'old collectors'. The author's on-off relationship with his girlfriend adds a further dimension and right from the start he admits he is not a butterfly expert.

His quest in 2009 meant performing a fine balancing act between his job as a features writer at *The Guardian* and the need to travel widely. However, this literary connection probably helped in enlisting the active support of 'the great and the good' lepidopterists. He also wisely decided to utilise the great strength of BC, and its active and well informed Branch members, in his search for rarer species. He starts in winter searching for Brown Hairstreak eggs under the expert guidance of David Redhead. From here chapters cover the challenge chronologically, with a numbered list of species included seen at the end of each chapter. Jeremy Thomas and Matthew Oates feature frequently, and there is a very full account of the Large Blue's complicated life cycle, its extinction as a native species and the ongoing successful reintroduction.

Many pages are devoted to 'The Curse of the Purple Emperor', making me feel he was riding the 'Britain's premier butterfly' bandwagon, to the detriment of other species. The elusive Purple Hairstreak gets peripheral attention, and the Grayling, a nationally declining species with one of the most intriguing and sophisticated courtship displays, is covered in just five lines. Obviously a book of this length will have some errors but I found only a few: for example, twice the difference between Essex and Small Skipper was wrongly described; and the assertion that 'barely 500 people' had seen the Queen of Spain Fritillary in Britain in the last 300 years seemed to be to be a puzzling underestimate.

He also states that this species definitely bred at Minsmere in the mid-nineties, for two years; in reality 'definitely' should read 'probably'.

My main concern is with Patrick Barkham's comments about our largest butterfly, the Swallowtail. Admittedly he does say that there is 'something wrong about my relationship with this stunning butterfly', but to see just one at Hickling Broad, in the company of friends 'for whom butterfly-watching was definitely a novelty' was unfortunate, as was his final implied criticism: 'Are Swallowtails showy but shallow?' He should have gone to the meadows at How Hill, where Swallowtails nectar on marsh thistles, or watched them feeding high up on buddleja at Strumpshaw Fen. I also found the book's subtitle peculiar: *A Summer in Search of Our Emperors and Admirals*. The search in reality took at least three seasons to complete, with 60 species seen, not three. The author certainly picked a good year, with millions of Painted Ladies and thousands of Heath Fritillaries at Blean Woods.

Despite my criticisms, this book is highly recommended. I liked the fine but successful balance struck between his frustrations, disappointments, hard-earned sightings and sudden unexpected discoveries. It is currently available at Amazon and other outlets at less than half price.

**Richard Stewart (Branch Member)**

## ***Ireland's Butterflies***

by David Nash, Trevor Boyd & Deirdre Hardiman

**I**reland's Butterflies, contains some 350 photographs, drawings, maps and charts. It describes all 34 species of butterfly regularly seen in Ireland together with their eggs, larvae, pupae and distributions. The rarer vagrant butterflies to Ireland's shores are also illustrated. Site descriptions are complemented by a selection of photographs.

The chapters include a history of the study of butterflies in Ireland, geology soils and climate, conservation, gardening for butterflies, species accounts, and sites of interest; there are appendices with supplementary information. Unique to this publication is the chapter on *The Butterfly as an Insect*, which illustrates and gives details of the behaviour, function and form of the butterfly.

ISBN 978 0 9530037 2 3. Hardback. All colour printing, 272 pages.

Publication date is late February 2012. The book may be ordered at: [http://www.butterflyireland.com/book\\_orders.htm](http://www.butterflyireland.com/book_orders.htm) or by post. Price: RRP €18.

## Which Buddleja?

This essential doyen of the butterfly garden has received much horticultural attention worldwide in recent years; so much so that there are now over 100 known cultivars of *Buddleja davidii*, the classic Butterfly Bush, alone. The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) held trials at Wisley from 2008 to 2010 to assess the popularity of the newcomers with insects and humans alike.

The RHS trials found the rare and oddly named *B. davidii* 'Orchid Beauty' to be the favourite with insects generally, not just butterflies, hotly pursued by the even more obscure clone 'Foxtail', which no longer seems to be in commerce in the UK. 'Orchid Beauty' has panicles of lavender-blue flowers, 30–40 cm long; sweetly scented like most buddlejas, the secret of its attraction remains elusive. The four top buddlejas in the RHS insect-attraction trial were of three different hues: two violet, one white, and one blue. So the answer more probably lies in the nectar. The constitution of buddleja nectar is variable, that of the common *davidii* often comprising nearly all sucrose whilst the hybrid x *weyeriana*, for instance, has almost equal proportions of sucrose, fructose and glucose, rendering it far more attractive to bees than butterflies in the author's garden. 'Orchid Beauty' is sold by Longstock Park Nursery near Stockbridge, one of the three Plant Heritage national buddleja collection holders.

Attractiveness to humans produced a very different set of results. In the 2008 open poll of 448 members of the public, first and second prizes went to 'Miss Ruby' and the dwarf 'Blue Chip' respectively. Both derived from complex hybrids, they were the only entrants (out of 125) raised by the J C Raulston Arboretum in North Carolina: a remarkable American 'double'. Both plants are now available at Longstock, and claimed by inventor Dr Denny Werner to be irresistible to butterflies.

Full details of the trial can be found on the internet:

<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/planttrials/TrialReports/Buddleja%202010.pdf>

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### **New Members Day: 23 June**

Invitations will be mailed out to all new members to attend this event. There will be a notice on the website and if the event is not fully subscribed anyone else interested in attending can contact Peter Eeles.



## **New Members**

**64 members have joined since**  
**28/08/2011**

**W**e welcome the following new members and hope to see many of you on our walks or at our events.

Mrs C Bainbridge, Denmead; Ms MM Barka Namurtha, Southsea; Mrs R Batty, Hamble; Mr T & Mrs I Beaumont, St. Clement, Channel Islands; Mrs S Bell, Littleton; Mrs TJ Bennett, Tadley; Mrs E Brown, Sandown, IOW; Mr B & Mrs J Cartwright, Andover; Miss JT Chapman, Old Alresford; Mrs J Cleal, Guernsey, Channel Islands; Mrs PJ Clements, Newport, IOW; Mr CR Cuthbert, Alresford.

Mrs J M Dann, Denmead; Dr WL Duffy, Southampton; Mrs L Flux, Ryde, IOW; Mr C W Foster, North Waltham; Miss E Gardner, St. Lawrence, Channel Islands; Mr MD Goss, Lee-On-The-Solent; Mr BS Griffiths, Wickham; Miss J Hallmann, Winchester; Ms D Hertz, Hannington; Miss J Hewitt, Yateley; Mr JA Holden-Dye, Southampton; Ms S Holloway, Whitehill; Mr A Howe, Hedge End; Mr R & Mrs R Humby & Family, Woolston.

Mrs L Joynes, West End; Mr P & Mrs M Konitzer, Sherfield-on-Loddon; Mr C Lansley, Newtown; Mrs L Lee, Southampton; Mr D Lee & Mrs D King, Wellow, IOW; Miss M Lewis, Cowes, IOW; Mrs A Lockley, Arford Common; Ms P Long, Southampton; Mr P R & Mrs A R Maddison, Waldringfield, Suffolk; Mrs CE Mansbridge, Shirley; Mr R Matthews, Romsey; Mr AMT McCullough, Soberton; Mrs J Merrifield, Ryde, IOW; Mr N Montegriffo, Sherborne St John; Mr R Needham, Havant; Mr T Noycee, Freshwater, IOW.

Mr P & Mrs S Pearson & Family, Bassett; Mr M Phillips, Beaulieu; Mr TP Pugh, Church Crookham; Mr N Radford & Miss J Crosse, Winchester; Mr R & Mrs V Rayner, Sway; Mr WP & Mrs L Roberts, Winchester; Mr C Robinson, South Ham; Mr C Robinson, Basingstoke; Mrs J Salmon, East Cowes, IOW; Lord Selborne, Selbourne; Miss C Shanley, New Milton; Mrs K Silman, Southsea; Mrs A Smith & Mr J Stacey, Little London; Mr ADJ & Mrs A Stevens, Chandler's Ford; Mr P & Mrs I Stewart, Tadley; Mr R & Mrs J Stone, North Waltham; Mrs E Susans, Cliddesden.

Mr M & Mrs S Thomas & Family, Netley Abbey; Mr R Walker, Ryde, IOW; Mr T & Mrs S Walker & Family, Andover; Mrs R Wash, Titchfield Common; Mr G Witts, Freshwater, IOW.

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## Newsletter Deadline

**M**any thanks to all contributors. The deadline for the autumn Newsletter is 14 September 2012.

We now use Arial 10pt for text, 12pt for headings; paper size A5; bold for emphasis (not underlining). It is helpful (but not essential) for contributors to format their offerings in this way.

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The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Hampshire and IoW Branch.



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