

DIARY OF EVENTS

FRIDAY 8 JANUARY

Magdalen Hill Down: Work Party

Time: 10am - 4pm. **Meet:** top of track by cemetery (SU 512 295). **Enquiries:** Lynn Fomison (01962) 772251.

FRIDAY 15 JANUARY

Yew Hill: Work Party

Time: 10am - 4pm. **Meet:** at end of Old Kennels Lane (SU451 269) or join us on the Reserve. **Enquiries:** Lynn Fomison (01962) 772251.

WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY

Bentley Station Meadow: Work Party

Meet: 10am - 2pm. **Meet:** in NE corner of station car park (SU792 432) or join us on the Reserve. **Enquiries:** Lynn Fomison (01962) 772251.

MONDAY 25 JANUARY

“Wandering around Wight”

An illustrated talk at St. Barnabas Church Hall, Weeke, Winchester. Joint with Hampshire Wildlife Trust. **Time:** 7.00 for 7.30pm. **Speaker:** Brian Fletcher. Tel: (01962) 882746.

WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY

MAIN COMMITTEE

SATURDAY 27 FEBRUARY

Social Afternoon

Time: 2.00 - 6.00pm at St Barnabas Church Hall, Weeke, Winchester. See p.6.

SATURDAY 13 MARCH

Moth Conference

Time: 12.30 – 5.30pm at Littleton Memorial Hall, Littleton, Winchester. See p.7.

TUESDAY 6 APRIL

Bentley Station Meadow: Walk2Health

Leader: Lynn Fomison (01962) 772251. **Meet:** 10.45am in the NE corner of the car park at Bentley station (SU792 432) or park in Station Road. The Alton Walk2Health group is visiting BSM on the first Tuesday of each month up to and including 7 September. Come and enjoy a leisurely stroll in friendly company, interspersed with looking at nature. Wellington boots advisable.

WEDNESDAY 7 APRIL

Magdalen Hill Down: Wednesday Wander

Leader: Lynn Fomison (01962) 772251. **Meet:** 10.30am in gravel car park opposite the cemetery on B3404, Alresford Rd, Winchester. A regular walk on the first Wednesday of each month up to and including 1 September.

SATURDAY 24 APRIL

Photography Workshop at Longstock, Hampshire.

See p.9 for details.

Main Committee dates

Wed. May 5th, Wed. Sept. 1st, Wed. December 1st

WORK PARTIES

As we have missed a few work parties or had low attendance when poor weather prevailed, we hope our helpers can manage some of the above dates. If you are interested in coming to work parties but are not on the e-mail reminder list I send out, please contact me to add your name: we sometimes add in extra work parties.

Lynn Fomison (01962) 772251.

Chairman's Report

The year 2009 finished with a flourish for the Branch. After a much better season, we held our Annual General Meeting at Littleton Hall on 24 October. This was our second visit to this attractive venue and demonstrated how satisfactory it is for this event. We heard only two speakers instead of the usual three (or more): a very interesting and stimulating presentation by Professor R. Vane-Wright on an ABC of butterflies, followed by Dr. Sam Ellis, Director of Regions from Head Office, who talked about the regional structure and introduced a new major project to conserve the Duke of Burgundy. This project extends into Hampshire from the east and is one that your Main Committee is keen to support. We felt that this "two-speaker" format worked well, and feedback from the members present on the day was very favourable.

A short questionnaire on the development of the Branch website was presented at the meeting; the respondents were in favour of a Members' section being developed. This will be taken forward during the next few months. We will also be considering an increase in our use of e-mail – this is currently so limited that it might be more accurate to say that we will start using e-mail to communicate with Branch members who request us to use this method as an alternative to conventional mailings. As was pointed out at the meeting, we are an environmental charity and a move to reduce our paper use, when appropriate, should be considered wherever possible.

On 21 November we hosted the National AGM in the Stripe Complex of Winchester University. This was a most successful meeting thanks to the efforts of many Branch members to support an excellent programme arranged by Head Office. The venue was ideal and, perhaps unusually for a British University (I speak from years of experience), the lunch was excellent. I have received grateful thanks to the Branch from many who attended and from Head Office, who were delighted with the arrangements.

Two items of note were agreed at our recent Main Committee meeting. An Area Group has been established on the Isle of Wight: more information on this welcome development is given on p. 7 of this Newsletter and on our website. Peter Eeles has agreed to become a Vice-Chairman of the Branch, joining Dave Green in this role.

Finally, please note that the social meeting preceding the start of the season will be held at St. Barnabas Hall, Weeke, on Saturday 27 February from 2.00-4.30pm (see p.6.). The meeting will have the same format as last year and will offer another excellent opportunity for the photographers amongst you to whet our appetite by showing some of your best images from 2009, be they home or away!

This is the point where I must thank all of you for the many and varied contributions you made during 2009. It has been a good year for the charity and for the Branch. I wish you all the very best for 2010; let us hope it is another good season for lepidoptera.

Roger Buchanan, Chairman

Reserves News

The year 2010 is a significant one for both Magdalen Hill Down and Yew Hill. It is 21 years since both the original Reserve at MHD and the Reserve at Yew Hill were acquired. It is our intention that this important anniversary is used both for celebratory events and for promotional purposes.

Yew Hill was the first to be acquired, on a peppercorn rent. The downland there was less invaded by scrub than at MHD but it was desperately in need of grazing. The boundary line had lots of work done on it, with the installation of fencing a priority. Brian Fletcher's photographic record shows 12 sheep grazing in December 1989. Not until 2003 were we able to institute an annual cattle-grazing regime, as it was only in March that year we got a water supply laid on and a trough installed. This was funded partly by a grant from Hampshire County Council's Grazing Project. The year 2003 was a landmark date for Yew Hill in another way too: we started renting nine extra acres adjacent to the Reserve from Southern Water. This not only makes the grazing of the Reserve a more viable proposition but also provides additional habitat for flowers, butterflies and other wildlife; it is developing well on what had been an agriculturally improved field.

In 1989 Magdalen Hill Down was acquired on a long lease from the Church Commissioners. At 26 acres it was five times bigger than Yew Hill and needed much more in the way of restoration work. A photograph of MHD in Hampshire County Council's publication *Chalk Grassland* had been used to illustrate downland in poor shape.

Fifteen years ago in 1995 the arable field to the east of Magdalen Hill Down was part-purchased, part-rented, and at 32 acres more than doubled the size of the original Reserve. And the expansion continued: five years ago in 2004 in a joint scheme with Hampshire County Council a further 55 acres were added to Magdalen Hill Down, again doubling its size.

The original Reserve now bears no comparison to the under-grazed, scrubby hillside that we acquired. The example I always use to illustrate Butterfly Conservation's dual policies of combining thoughtful scrub management and grazing is that of the Chalkhill Blue. It needs its larval food plant to be growing in a short sward but it also needs areas of taller vegetation to provide sheltered roosting spots and flowers rich in nectar. The transect count in 1990 recorded 437 Chalkhill Blues. In 1999 almost 2,000 were counted. This was followed by a couple of less good years, but then reached some real highs: 2,196 in 2003; 2,654 in 2005; and a fabulous 3,236 in 2006. That really is Butterfly Conservation working.

The reserves are great places to see butterflies and moths, and the wild flowers are truly spectacular as well. If you have yet to visit the reserves, then do come along in 2010 and wish them a "Happy 21st Birthday".

As ever, bookings can be made with me for groups to visit any of our reserves; this helps to raise useful grant income.

Lynn Fomison, Reserves Officer



Chalkhill Blue by David Thelwell

**PRE-SEASON SOCIAL AND PHOTOGRAPHIC
AFTERNOON**

**Saturday 27 February
2.00 pm at St. Barnabas Church Hall, Weeke, Winchester.**

You are all welcome. If you wish, bring along six butterfly or moth images (prints, 35mm slides or digital), preferably themed: eg Woodland Butterflies, Hawkmoths, Butterflies of Greece.

Digital images

Members showing digital images: please arrange with Roger Buchanan **to send your pictures on a CD prior to the meeting, or arrive with your CD as doors open at 2.00 pm.** As you will appreciate, as it takes a little time to load the data projector, we need the CDs in advance to ensure the meeting starts on time.

Photographs and slides

It would also be appreciated, to help with the planning of the event, if members showing slides or bringing photographs could contact Roger Buchanan before the meeting.

Programme

- 2.00 Doors open
- 2.30 UK butterflies
- 3.00 UK moths
- 3.30 Refreshments
- 4.00 Butterflies and moths from Europe and further afield
- 4.30 Close of meeting

Contact details

Roger Buchanan, 23 Grosvenor Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, SO53 5BH.
Tel. (023) 8025 2963. Email: **roger@roger-jane.co.uk**.

JANUARY 2010

New Area Group

The Isle of Wight now has its own Area Group. We are currently in the process of arranging a programme of butterfly and moth events for 2010. Our meetings are open to the public, and we hope that closer links can be established with our BC colleagues on the mainland.

Our first field trip is scheduled for Thursday 22 April, meeting at 12 noon in the churchyard of St. Catherine's Church, Ventnor (SZ 562 775). The target species is the Holly Blue.

Among our many aims is to establish Ventnor as a "butterfly town" (see the Spring 2010 edition [no.103] of *Butterfly* for more details).

For further information about the new group, please contact Rob Wilson, Flat 10, Boniface Court, 84 Mitchell Avenue, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, PO38 1DU. Tel (or text): 07766 906718.

Email: caroline_dudley@btinternet.com

Rob Wilson, Isle of Wight Area Group Coordinator

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Moth Recorders Conference

Saturday 13 March 2010 has been set for the next Butterfly Conservation Branch Moth Recorders Conference: please put the date in your diary now. The venue is Littleton Memorial Hall, Littleton, near Winchester. Doors will open at 12.30 and the event will close at 5.30pm.

Tea will be provided. There will be plenty of opportunity to meet and chat with others, and a good range of speakers is being finalised. Would those planning to come over from the island please let one of us know so that we can arrange transport at this end.

Tim Norriss / Mike Wall

John Langmaid – a lifetime achieving

At Butterfly Conservation's Annual General Meeting and Members' Day, held at Winchester University on 21 November, the Marsh Award for Lifetime Achievement in Lepidoptera Conservation was presented to John Langmaid.

No one is more worthy of recognition for lifelong effort; for one so self-effacing, I hope it is not too embarrassing for you to be congratulated again, John!

Mike Wall, County Micro-Moth Recorder

Late Sightings

(from the website)

Throughout November there were regular sightings of Red Admiral and Painted Lady, and from the Gosport area Clouded Yellow and Holly Blue. Russell Wynn had a Small Copper at Brockenhurst on 15 November, and on the 19th David Tinling reported the last Holly Blue together with a Red Admiral and a Speckled Wood. Steve Mansfield saw a Peacock at Lasham on 28 November.

In December only Red Admirals were reported with the latest (from several sites) on 10 December.

Jenny Mallett, Branch Organiser



Watch Out for Early Sightings

January is the time we all hibernate and do not bother looking for butterflies and moths. Well, just to inspire us all not to switch off too much, the following sightings account has just been received by Tim Norriss.

On the morning of Monday 28 January 2008 a Hummingbird Hawkmoth was seen nectaring on winter-flowering honeysuckle in Andover. Yes, it was the usual story: the lady who spotted it thought it was a hummingbird and phoned the RSPB. They put her right but unfortunately did not tell her how incredible it was not only to see a Hummingbird Hawkmoth in January, but an active one into the bargain! The only other January record in the Branch database is Phil Budd's 18 January 1995 sighting of one hibernating in a shed in Southampton. February sightings are pretty uncommon too.

Perhaps the thought of seeing these delightful creatures and the chance to add valuable records to our database might just rouse you from hibernation!

Lynn Fomison, Reserves Officer

Photography Workshop
Saturday 24th April 2010 from 10.00am to 5.00pm
Longstock, near Stockbridge, Hampshire
Cost: £10.00 per head

2010 sees the return of the UK Butterflies photography workshop, in association with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch of Butterfly Conservation. The purpose of the workshop is to gather together enthusiasts to share their photographic experiences, with an emphasis on Lepidoptera.

The £10 charge, payable on the day, is to cover the cost of the hall and any other expenses incurred in running the event. All profits will be donated directly to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch.

Please bring your own lunch (coffee and tea will be available in the hall). Detailed directions and instructions will be provided in due course.

Agenda

The workshop content is still under discussion, but it will be a day of presentations, mixed in with some practical work. In terms of content, we anticipate covering the following at a minimum:

- **Photography basics** (parameters such as shutter speed, aperture and depth of field)
- **Trade-offs** (film v digital, tripod v handheld, flash v natural light etc.)
- **Macro photography** (challenges specific to macro photography and the different types of equipment to use)
- **Digital photography** (the assumption is that most people will be using digital; this section includes a discussion of the different types of digital camera, setting up the camera, and RAW v JPEG)
- **The "digital darkroom"** (post-processing, including image manipulation)
- **Composition**

Registering for the event

If you would like to attend, please contact Pete Eeles by e-mail at pete@ukbutterflies.co.uk or by phone on 07796 331061. You will receive confirmation by reply. We look forward to seeing you!

Bryophytes of the Chalk Grasslands

I have been investigating the bryophytes (mosses, liverworts and hornworts) of calcareous grassland in Hampshire as a module of my part-time course in Ecology and Conservation at Birkbeck College, University of London.

I am attempting to find out what effect the different grazing regimes have on the bryophyte layer, and part of this investigation has involved some survey work at Magdalen Hill Down and Yew Hill.

Bryophytes are an often-overlooked group of plants and are excellent niche fillers that generally prefer damp and cool places. In calcareous grassland, therefore, you are likely to find many more species on north-facing sites than on south-facing ones. Magdalen Hill Down is south-facing and Yew Hill east-facing: in the cooler, damper conditions at Yew Hill I found more species and greater abundance than at Magdalen Hill Down. The old gully trackways at Yew Hill provide additional sheltered sites where bryophytes can thrive and are perhaps the best places for the beginner to start looking for a few of the commoner species.

Where the sward is short you will be able to see bryophytes making up components of the surface layer even at Magdalen Hill Down, where this is most obvious on the upper slopes in areas 1, 2 and 3 of the original Reserve. Other likely places to look are on or near ant hills or on patches of bare earth where small, low-growing bryophytes will be found (usually general *Bryum* or *Didymodon*).

The table shows a few of the commoner species found at both sites and where they will be found. As identification in the field can be difficult, a good field guide and hand lens are essential. Many species can be identified only with the use of a microscope, but this is not necessary for the species I have listed in the table. The small booklet by Crawford (available at www.nhbs.com) is a good starting point and lists most of the common species found not only in woodlands. The book in the *New Naturalist* series by Porley and Hodgetts is an excellent guide organised by habitat and is available through the Hampshire Library Service.

I hope to provide a second article for the summer Newsletter. My thanks to Lynn Fomison for all the information she has provided and to Phil Budd for his help in improving my identification skills.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Features</i>
Neat Feather Moss Pseudoscleropodium purum	Abundant at both sites.	Robust yellow green plant with leaves appressed to stem. Looks like a small fat cigar.
Pointed Spear Moss Calliergon cuspidatum	Abundant at YH, uncommon at MHD.	Leaves appressed to branch in a smooth spear like point, the tip of which may appear whitish.
Yellow Feather Moss Homalothecium lutescens	Common at YH, rare at MHD.	Yellowish green long leaves. Shoots appear tufted, branches are long and straight.
Springy Turf Moss Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus	Uncommon at YH, rare at MHD.	Leaves make a star shape at the tip and are bent back at 90° to the base. Red stem.
Comb-moss Ctenidium molluscum	Sheltered grassland sites. Yew Hill, in the tracks.	Small closely branched tufts, leaves tightly recurved, tips appear whitish. An indicator of a good quality site for bryophytes.
Common Pocket Moss Fissidens taxifolius	Uncommon at YH, rare at MHD.	Small, leaves in regular pairs either side of the stem. Often deep in the sward in small patches.

CRAWFORD, C. 2002. *The Bryophytes of Native Woods*, The Natural Resource Consultancy.

PORLEY, R. & HODGETTS, N. G. 2005. *Mosses and liverworts*, London, Collins.

SMITH, A. J. E. 2004. *The moss flora of Britain and Ireland*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

WATSON, E. V. 1981. *British mosses and liverworts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Andrew Sanders <andrew.sanders@vernsoft.co.uk>

ELM STUDY NEWS

Isle of Wight AONB Elm Planting Project

Andrew Brookes attended the inaugural AONB Elm Project meeting at the Innovation Centre, Newport, on 11 November to present the case for planting DED-resistant hybrid cultivars such as Lutèce. No objections were raised to the new cultivars *per se*, but a broad-brush replacement strategy across the AONB was felt unwarranted. Planting a range of the new trees in parks, gardens and arboreta was widely endorsed, as was planting at specific sites in the countryside in support of the White-letter Hairstreak. The Forestry Commission representatives were also sympathetic to the inclusion of elm cultivars in the 5% amenity planting it is undertaking as part of its reforestation programmes. There was also much enthusiasm for the proposal to cut and layer the miles of English Elm hedgerows to make them unattractive to the bark beetles, thereby restricting the spread of Dutch elm disease.

Ian Boyd of the *Island2000* Trust hailed the success of the Trust's 'Lutèce' planting initiative funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund but lamented the failure of the elm sanitation strategy under which all diseased stock would be cut and burnt on discovery, the project proving simply too big for the Trust's resources.

New elm cultivars

This winter sees the conclusion of the Study's accessions with the import of two of the very best American elm cultivars, 'Prospector' and 'Patriot'; a case of last but definitely not least. Both were raised by the USDA's National Arboretum and, very significantly, released to commerce *without* licencing restrictions. Ergo: the trees can be freely propagated and sold by any nursery or individual in the UK, obviating the problem of supply which has dogged the wider establishment of all the Dutch and Italian cultivars here.

'Prospector' is a clone of the Japanese Elm, *Ulmus davidiana* var. *japonica* (a close relative of the European Field Elm, *Ulmus minor*), which never exhibited any symptoms of DED after inoculation with the causal fungus. The particular advantage of this clone to butterfly conservation is that the species is a known host of the White-letter Hairstreak in the UK, as witnessed at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and at Kew, as it is in its native Japan. Moreover, it is the best adapted of all the 22 Asiatic species to the winter-wet ground conditions typical of the UK, being endemic to alluvial plain forest, much of which, alas, has now been lost to intensive rice cultivation. 'Prospector' is not an unqualified success, however, being comparatively weak-wooded and thus unsuited to exposed positions; as it is unlikely to grow much higher than 20m (65ft), it could never be an aesthetic substitute for the Wych and English Elms lost to the landscape.

‘Prospector’ is a parent of the second new accession, ‘Patriot’, the other being ‘Urban’, a complex American hybrid imported by the Forestry Commission for its own trials, aborted in the 1980s. ‘Urban’ had some fine attributes but was not a success, being poorly shaped and with an inadequate rootstock making it vulnerable to gales. The selected ‘Patriot’ clone however appears to have inherited all the right genes and has been widely commended in the USA for its fast growing attractive form and deep-green foliage. In time, it is hoped the Branch’s trials can confirm its attractiveness to the White-letter Hairstreak as well. No more releases are planned in the USA, which leaves the Italian quango IPP as the only organization still raising elm cultivars.



**Andrew Brookes, Leader, SE Area Group,
126 Castle Street, Fareham PO16 9QH**

NEW BRANCH MEMBERS since September 2009

The Branch is delighted to welcome the following new members. We hope you will join in some of the Branch’s activities – why not join us at the Social afternoon on 27 February?

Reverend M Bagg, Winchester; Mrs GI Bathe, Woodgreen; Miss S Boak, Northington; Mr S & Mrs C Brand, Chandler’s Ford; Mr G Clewley, Ash; Mr AG Cox, Totland Bay; Mr MD Duckworth, Stafford; Mr S & Mrs G Easter, Fleet; Miss J England, Wickham; Mr S Goodwin, Oakley; Mrs P Jeffreys, Winchester; Ms LJ Lewis, Ventnor; Mrs C MacKenzie, Whitehill; Ms S McInnes, New Milton; Mr A Mitchell, West Meon; Mr P Morrison, Bishops Waltham; Mr JJ Nicholson, Fareham; Mr J O’Brien, Binsted; Mr & Mrs S O’Leary, Basingstoke; Mr KI Oram, Southampton; Mr G Palmer, New Milton; Miss S Richards, Southampton; Miss H K Rouse, Havant; Mr M Russell, Newport; Mr S Sewell, Southampton; Mr AM Smith, Forest, Guernsey; Mr JH Sprott, Romsey; Mr J Starling, Farnborough; Miss KL Talbot, Privett; Ms C Toms, New Milton; Mr D & Mrs J Vickers, Micheldever; Master G Wake, Upham; Mrs D Wharmby, Newport; Mr EJ White, Southsea.

Painted Ladies I

From your Paris Correspondent

On 23 June 2009 my wife and I flew out to Paris to watch tennis at the French Open Championships. As the tickets were for the Monday we decided to spend Sunday at Versailles. The train from Paris had been crowded and hot and, looking at the throngs of people queuing to get in to the main Château, we elected to visit the park and the Petit Trianon Palace first, and come back later when things were quieter. It was when we were walking across the main terrace that I realised we were in the middle of a major butterfly event. Unobserved by the mass of international tourists heading for the Grand Canal café and a mid-morning snack were hundreds of Painted Lady butterflies streaming north past the fountains and the flowerbeds and out into the park.

We took the land train to the Petit Trianon. Painted Ladies overtook the train as we headed up the wide sunny avenue; feeling somewhat humiliated, I also sensed an opportunity. Leaning forward, I tapped the driver on the shoulder and cried, “Vite! Vite!” clutching my chest and pointing to an elderly lady huddled in the last carriage. The driver turned, nodded his understanding and pressed his foot to the floor, eyes fixed on the Petit Trianon Information & Ticket Office in the distance. As we surged forward over the cobbles, I kept a close eye on the speedometer. As the velocity of the train increased, butterflies passed us more slowly, until at 21 kilometres per hour we were neither catching up on those ahead nor being overtaken by those behind. An excellent estimate of Painted Lady straight-line flying at 13 mph!

When we reached the Petit Trianon there was a delay, which provided an opportunity to observe the incredible determination of these butterflies to continue flying north. They were not deflected from their course by noisy crowds, flashing lights or sirens, or even by a short scuffle between our driver and an American tourist. They flew doggedly north, across the courtyard, through the colonnades of the palace, and out into the wider park beyond. We sat on the edge of a grassy lawn so that my wife could update me on a short history of the Palace and the fate of its owners. The lawn, bathed in sunshine, extended to a row of tall lime trees, against which the Painted Ladies were illuminated as they flew past at about 4 to 8 feet above the ground. By the time Louis Napoleon had been elected democratically and then made Emperor, which took about 20 minutes, I'd counted 724 Painted Ladies, indicating a fly-by rate of about 36 per minute. Pacing out the lawn shortly afterwards, I measured the distance to the trees as 180m. Given that the length of the north French coast from Cherbourg to Dunkirk is about 350 km, a quick mental calculation indicated that over four million butterflies were heading north every hour and that Britain was facing a major threat of invasion.

Painted Ladies continued to pass by all day and they were still flying through central Paris on Monday morning. The Philippe Charrier stadium at Roland Garros was packed; we sat in the upper tiers slowly cooking in temperatures of 35°C, but I continued to monitor butterfly movements discreetly, although I was somewhat distracted by chatting to a rather pretty young girl from Milan who happened to be sitting on my right. It was obvious that most of the Painted Ladies were entering the stadium over the southern rim and disappearing through the flag poles on the north side and that fewer were coming from the east and travelling cross-court and out through the west exit. Some of the butterflies flew once or twice around the arena: a careful count showed that 89 out of 122 flew around the court clockwise rather than anticlockwise, which I put down to the spin of the earth. I explained this to my new friend, but she suggested it was more to do with which way the wind was blowing. I don't know who was playing tennis, some chap called Raymond Federa or such like, but what a marvellous location to watch butterflies and at the same time improve one's Italian.

Nigel Straw

Painted Ladies II

Southward Migration of Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* Crete, October 2009

We arrived on Crete on 13 October and noted small numbers of Painted Ladies in the first three days of our stay near Chania on the north-west coast. On 16 October we were at the top of the Topolia Gorge, one of several gorges in western Crete that run in a north-south direction, searching for *Cyclamen hederifolium* and the diminutive *Narcissus serotinus*, when we became aware of a steady stream of Painted Ladies, about 60-80 per hour, flying south along the road towards the gorge at 4.00pm.

Increasing numbers were seen next morning at breakfast in the mountains at Milia again all heading south in the early morning sunshine until 10.00am when it became overcast with drizzle and the migration stopped. The maximum count was 100 in five minutes across 50m. A few were seen later in the afternoon flying in light rain, but no further migration was noted that day.

On 18 October further southerly migration was noted all morning, and a count at the northern end of the Topolia gorge produced a rate of 400 per hour through the gorge at midday.

The following day, our last full day on the island, we met up with Henry and Felicity Edmunds and they kindly took us out to the slopes of Mount Ida (Psiloritis) in the centre of the island. Whilst enjoying a wonderful picnic amongst the Kermes Oaks, a five-minute count across 50m at 2.15pm produced 26 *cardui* (312 per hour), all heading determinedly due south. By 4.30pm we were down on the south coast at Agios Galini where hundreds of *cardui* were found nectaring on flowering tamarisk trees on the beach. Despite the numbers present, no visible migration was seen; we speculated that this was due to an unwillingness to set off over the sea that late in the day. By 5.00pm they had gone to roost among the tamarisk. We like to think that they made the flight safely across the southern Mediterranean to Africa over the following days.

Lynn Fomison and Tim Norriss

A fortnight in Provence – the sequel!

In the April 2009 Newsletter I wrote about recording over 30 butterfly species in the immediate vicinity of a holiday villa in the Var region of Provence in two weeks in August 2008, and speculated whether 2009 would prove as productive.

We spent a fortnight in the Haut Vaucluse region in late June/early July. The closely cropped lawns of our villa proved less to the taste of the butterflies than to a visiting hoopoe, and the surrounding well tended vineyards were more notable for a small colony of bee-eaters than for butterflies. We were, however, visited regularly by Common Blue, Painted Lady, Large and Small Whites and Marbled White, all common throughout the region, plus Long-tailed Blue and the occasional Scarce Swallowtail. Around the nearby roadside verges and hedgerows were found Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper and Green-veined White, together with the odd Wall Brown and Mallow Skipper.

A little further afield, the nearby hilltop villages were awash with Silver-washed Fritillaries, accompanied by Cleopatra, Great Banded Grayling, Holly Blue and the more common species, while European and Scarce Swallowtail fought for dominance above the world-famous wine village of Châteauneuf du Pape.

In the Dentelles du Montmirail, a nearby range of forested limestone hills, the more exotic species began to appear among the familiar browns, whites, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Large and Small Skippers. These included Spotted Fritillary, Blue-spot Hairstreak and the first major identification challenge on a roadside scabious, which turned out to be an Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper. In a woodland clearing ten or more Ilex Hairstreak nectared

on an unfamiliar white flowering plant, while a Pale/Berger's Clouded Yellow flew by. We recorded Chalkhill Blue and Marbled Fritillary by the side of the road overlooking the dramatic Nesque gorge, and the extensive lavender fields around the Sault region were covered with whites and swallowtails. Geranium Bronze, a species just as much at home in crowded city centres in southern Europe as in any other habitat, given the presence of the odd pot of its favourite plant, duly turned up in the town of Orange.

The dominant feature of the area is Mont Ventoux, a 1900m limestone peak, which formed the penultimate stage of the Tour de France a week or two after our return. We took the easy way up (by hire car!), stopping at a roadside café, where a Black-veined White nectared on knapweed, a Brimstone flew by and High Brown Fritillary and Turquoise Blue paddled in damp mud beneath a dripping tap. The summit temperature was some 13°C below the surrounding valley, which was almost entirely devoid of vegetation; but this didn't put off the Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow to be found there: probably no coincidence that these are widespread and/or migratory species.

500m or so below the summit lies the ski area of Mont Serein, which proved a wonderful location for butterflies. We saw more Black-veined Whites and a Small Copper in an area of meadowland by the ski slopes. Large Wall Brown and Great Sooty Satyr nectared on the flower beds around the chalets, but the unexpected star was a papery-looking translucent butterfly, the size of a swallowtail, that came drifting by – unmistakably an Apollo.

As we walked towards the surrounding forest, the trackside wild flowers became more abundant, as did the butterflies. Some of the identifications had to wait until our return, aided by photographic evidence, the Collins guide and some very helpful websites pointing out subtle differences between similar species. Arran Brown were both abundant and distinctive, with Lesser Marbled Fritillary, False Heath Fritillary and Sloe Hairstreak providing more of a challenge. The path ended in a breathtaking view over the surrounding area, where more of the curiously ungainly Apollo struggled to find flowers that would bear their weight. I confidently identified a Violet-shot Copper flying around our feet, only to find out later there's no such species (it was actually a Purple-shot Copper), while a Dusky Heath posed on a rock.

Altogether we recorded 45 species in two weeks, 15 of which I had never previously encountered, although this year we had to travel to find them rather than the other way round!

Rupert Broadway

BOOK REVIEW

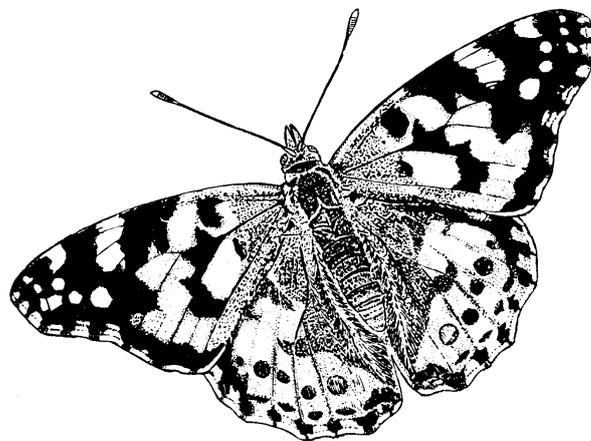
Flowers of the Forest - People and Plants in the New Forest National Park.
Clive Chatters. ISBN 13:1903657199 . WILDGuides. £25 (softcover only).

Published last autumn, *Flowers of the Forest* describes itself as “an exploration of past and present plants and people of the New Forest”. The book comprises 245 pages, with over 300 mostly colour photographs, and is an engaging mix of botany and history. As Chatters declaims at the outset, “*This is a partial and personal account.*” and indeed the emphasis is overwhelmingly on the Forest’s rarer flora. Quoting Thomas Johnson (1663), he excuses a more comprehensive record as “*..tedious to you, laborious to me, and beneficial to neither*”. Chatters’s authority is beyond question: resident in the Forest for nearly a quarter century, he cut his teeth at the Nature Conservancy Council and Hants & IoW Wildlife Trust before ascending to the chair of the New Forest National Park Authority.

The book is subdivided by habitat (grasslands, scrub, etc.), with notes on the human activity which has helped shape them through the ages and spiced with old photographs of traditional practices such as charcoal burning. The maps and indices are generally excellent; neither botanist nor casual visitor could ask for more.

Niggles? A few: the main cover photo of a pony grazing around some urban sprawl does little justice to title or content. The significance of the Forest’s flora for its fauna, even its rarities, is largely ignored; birders are left to savour a single allusion to the Dartford Warbler; lepidopterists ..., you leave with nothing.

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Many thanks to all contributors for their articles. The deadline for the April 2010 Newsletter is 25 March.

Juliet Bloss, Editor

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



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JANUARY 2010