

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch



Newsletter 110



Butterfly
Conservation

April 2021



Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch Volunteering Opportunities

The lifeblood of any organisation is its members. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch is one of the largest in the family of 32 branches of Butterfly Conservation countrywide. As a vibrant and committed conservation body, there are a number of widely varying opportunities within our Branch to volunteer and, reciprocally, for the Branch to tap into the energy, skills and enthusiasm of its membership.

Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme (WCBS)

If you can spare one afternoon in July and one in August, and are interested in learning more about counting butterflies, why not volunteer for walking one of the WCBS 1km squares allocated to the Branch? – see page 10.

Walking a regular butterfly transect

Do you have more time on your hands? If so would you like to walk and count butterflies once a week, and perhaps adopting a local transect route appeals – see pages 8-9.

Livestock ‘Lookers’

If you live within reach of one of our three reserves, at Magdalen Hill Down, Yew Hill and Bentley Station Meadow, where from time to time cattle, sheep and horses are grazed, why not volunteer to look in on the livestock? No previous experience of working with livestock is required – see page 7.

Work Parties on our nature reserves

Like working outdoors and enjoy a good bonfire? Then perhaps work parties are your cup of tea. These mostly run from October through to February, but unfortunately few took place last winter due to Covid-restrictions. However, there are other practical conservation tasks that take place throughout the year. Equipment and any training needed for the tasks in hand will be given on the day – see page 7.

Rather paperwork than fieldwork?

If your skill sets and enthusiasm are more at home with organisation and administration, then these current key vacancies may appeal:

- Branch Secretary
- Branch Organiser
- Chair of Information Sub-Committee
- Volunteer Development Officer

If one of these has your name on it, do contact our Branch Chair, Andy Barker – see page 32 for details.

...and meet new people, see new sites, enjoy more butterflies!

Why not enjoy a stroll on one or all of the wonderful field trips organised to some of the best, butterfly-rich sites across Hampshire and Wight? See the programme of walks – pages 11-19.

And don't forget the Wednesday Wanders and Friday Forays on Magdalen Hill Down – see page 7.



Chairman's Message

As the new Branch Chairman, with an entirely new Branch Committee, let me start by thanking members of the outgoing Committee for all their excellent work and achievements over recent years. Our AGM last November, like so many events over recent months, had to be a virtual AGM via Zoom, since restrictions meant it was not possible to have our normal indoor event. Whilst it was disappointing not to be able to catch up with friends in the usual way, the online meeting went smoothly and was well attended. I am pleased to report that our Branch is in a strong position and although a degree of rebuilding is taking place as a new Committee settles in, I am greatly encouraged by the support myself and the new Committee have received.

We were all saddened to lose Jayne Chapman, as our Senior Reserves Officer, after all the great work she had done, but looking to the future, I am very pleased to welcome **Fiona Scully** in the role of **South Downs Landscape Officer**. Fiona was appointed in early December and included in her role is responsibility for management of our Magdalen Hill Down and Yew Hill nature reserves. She comes with a wealth of experience in practical conservation and volunteer engagement and I'm sure, like me, you'll be keen to support her, and wish her every success. The other staffing change to report is that Kate Barrett who had been appointed in April 2020 as our part-time Volunteer Development and Engagement Officer, has from 1st January 2021 moved to a full-time role with Butterfly Conservation, doing similar work for the Head Office team. Although we are disappointed to lose Kate from her Branch role, we of course, wish her every success in her new appointment. She still lives locally and I'm pleased to say will continue to support the Branch as a volunteer in a number of ways.

It doesn't need me to tell you that it's been a difficult winter. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on all our lives. Sadly, many people have lost family members and close friends, and we've all had our lives greatly constrained through lockdown. There are, however, signs of hope. The vaccination programme is well underway, and by the time you receive this Newsletter, the first of the hibernating butterflies should have emerged to give us some brightness after a very grey winter. With all of us spending much more time at home, in our gardens, or doing local walks, we have become ever more appreciative of our local environment and the nature around us. I know many of

you will have enjoyed the natural world for many years, but I think we all started to recognise how little things, like seeing the first primroses in flower, hearing the first Blackbird sing, or watching the first Brimstone taking nectar, all meant so much more. Moments like this really uplift the spirit and contribute to our mental well-being. It's not just our enjoyment of the moment and its beauty, but it's that feeling of hope and optimism that new life and the new season brings. I'm sure, like me, you're all looking forward to the spring and summer months ahead, and all the wonderful butterflies and moths we are so lucky to have in our area.

With the continuing uncertainty and restrictions surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, the decision was taken that the Branch would not participate in any shows and events this year. Instead, our focus is going to be on **volunteer development and engagement**. We want to support our members as much as we can, and of course, we are always looking for new people to step forward and offer help with running the Branch. In late February and March we ran a series of online talks to give people a chance to join in with something. For those who participated, I hope you enjoyed them, and depending on availability of future speakers, our intention is to run more of these throughout the year. Something else we hope to do over the coming months is to strengthen our social media presence, as we know how much enjoyment and inspiration the various social media platforms bring to many members and supporters.

Although Covid-19 restrictions make it very difficult to plan a **programme of field meetings** for the year ahead, I am extremely grateful to Ashley Whitlock (Field Meetings Organiser, Hampshire) and Kay Shaw (Isle of Wight) who have arranged provisional lists, see pages 11-19. You can all appreciate that there is a strong possibility that these meetings might be affected, and could be cancelled due to Government restrictions, but let's be optimistic and hope that many are possible. Please check the Branch website regularly for the latest advice. Even if a trip is indicated as taking place it may be that advance registration is required if there are restrictions on numbers.

I mentioned earlier that we are always looking for people to help with the running of the Branch, since it only functions thanks to the help of many volunteers. If you would like to play a part, no matter how small, I would be very pleased to hear from you (contact details on back page). The role of **Branch Secretary** is a specific vacancy, as is the role of **Shows and Events Organiser**. The latter would really start from 2022, but it's always good to have some lead in time. These are just two examples of volunteering vacancies, but if you feel you'd like to

play a part, I'm sure we can find something to fit your skills and interests.

Finally, let me finish by saying that this year's Branch AGM and Members' Day has been arranged for **Sunday 7th November**. We have booked our regular Littleton Hall venue and are hoping that the Covid situation is much improved by then, and that such indoor gatherings are possible. If this turns out not to be the case we will revert to a Zoom event, but whichever option prevails, it would be great to see you all, so please mark the date in your diary.

With very best wishes for the coming season; stay safe and enjoy nature!

Andy Barker,
Chair



Small Blue.
Rosemary Powell



Conservation News

South East England Region

Butterfly Conservation is halfway through delivery of our 10-year UK Conservation Strategy and delivery of our Regional Action Plan 2016 to 2025. This 2021-midpoint provides a nice opportunity to review how things are going.

The most important factor for these documents is that they relate to real action on-the-ground, and I'm really pleased to report that they are indeed doing that.

Of the ten highest priority butterfly species in South East England, the populations of nine have been maintained or increased over the last five years. Of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight species, the Duke of Burgundy, Adonis Blue and Glanville Fritillary populations appear to be secure and currently stable; Silver-studded Blue and Pearl-bordered Fritillary have increased; and the Marsh Fritillary has been reintroduced to the county, thanks to much hard work from Clive Wood, Andy Barker and others.



*Magdalen Hill Down.
Fiona Scully*

The conservation successes are the result of the combined work of Butterfly Conservation, our Branches and other volunteers, and also conservation partners such as the RSPB, Natural England, National Trust, Wildlife Trust, National Park teams, Hampshire County Council, Forestry England, and the MOD. Working in partnership with these and other organisations is essential to continuing the conservation success stories. Large, private estates and other landowners and managers are also an important element in conservation delivery, and it is so often our dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers that are inspiring these people to work with us.

The Region's priority butterfly that hasn't shown more positive signs and is causing concern is the Grayling. This species was once recorded all along the South Downs and into west Hampshire but is now largely restricted to the heaths of the New Forest, Weald and Thames Basin. Thankfully though, in Hampshire, the Grayling population appears to be currently stable, the New Forest to Dorset Heaths landscape being one of the UK's Grayling strongholds.

Moth priorities are also included in the plan. In this regard, too, we have made progress with almost all of the highest priority macro-moths in the South East Region. A partnership of the Wildlife Trust, the AONB, Natural England, Isle of Wight Zoo and Amazon World continue to work to save the Reddish Buff – one of the UK's rarest moths. Shoulder stripe moth (*Earophila badiata*) surveys continue in the New Forest. On the Hampshire Downs 375 Striped Lychnis caterpillars were counted in 2020. This year we plan to undertake a thorough survey in the north of the county for the rare Drab Looper moth.

The surveys, recording and monitoring of butterflies and moths is key to us knowing how populations are faring and enabling us to prioritise action. Hampshire remains the best-surveyed and recorded county in the UK, thanks to the outstanding work of the Branch and the dedication of butterfly recorders across the county and on the Isle of Wight, too. Every butterfly record is valuable and contributes to the local, regional and national picture. A new UK State of Britain's Butterflies report is now in production which will present a comprehensive and statistically robust evidence-base to continue to inform decision makers at high levels.

Thank you to everyone who records butterflies and moths and to the volunteers and conservation organisations delivering conservation action on the ground.

We're five years into the delivery of this action plan. I hope the next five years produces lots more positive action and enjoyable activity to save butterflies and moths and generates some superb and inspiring stories that we can highlight and celebrate when we get to 2025.

If you'd like to know what the highest priorities for conservation action are in your local area, do please contact me: swheatley@butterfly-conservation.org

Steve Wheatley
Regional Conservation Manager, South East England



Reserves News

Magdalen Hill Down and Yew Hill

Hello! I have recently joined Butterfly Conservation to continue the exceptional work that's been achieved in the management of Magdalen Hill Down and Yew Hill over the past years. I have yet to see them bloom in all their glory, so as I sit here reading past articles and population trends of both rare and common butterfly species, the anticipation of what's to come is really building.



Magdalen Hill Down. Fiona Scully

We had one volunteer task in December at Magdalen doing scrub clearance and then everything was stopped, due to further Covid-19 restrictions. All the best-made plans for hedge-laying with students and volunteer tasks were gone. So the year started with some disappointment but, more encouragingly, cattle and sheep returned to graze Magdalen Hill Down. The livestock are owned by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) and as before a team of Livestock Lookers volunteer to carry out essential daily checks. So it's good to see the livestock helping with our management of the grassland. I'm impressed with the grazing compartments and fine tuning of the rotation of grazing across the site using hardy, native breeds. The transects will reveal progress in maintaining the right conditions for specialist species such as the Adonis Blue that have come to rely on Magdalen. And as always, the unpredictable weather will also be a key factor in the season ahead.

There are some species I haven't seen yet – such as the Silver-spotted Skipper, which apparently seems relatively common on sites in Hampshire. I'm hoping that volunteers familiar with the sites and with local knowledge can show me the hotspots... I certainly have my checklist ready!

I realise the strength of the transect data is from the 'Labour of Love' and dedication given to the task by volunteers and their incredible knowledge. I'm hoping very much to meet you at some point whenever it's possible.

As well as Lepidoptera, I am very much into plants. Magdalen and Yew Hill are both a botanical utopia making them such a success for butterflies. I know over the coming months volunteers and everyone who cares about these sites will be keeping a watchful eye. Please do get in touch with any concerns or issues you may have. I am familiar with chalk grassland management and conservation grazing, but I am new to both nature reserves and will welcome all your local knowledge, expertise, advice and suggestions. I'm looking forward to joining you this summer and taking part in transects and surveys, including those who specialise in running moth traps.

Butterfly Reserve Walks 2021

Please check details on the Branch website for details of the **Wednesday Wanders** and **Friday Forays**. These will start from May, providing coronavirus restrictions have been lifted.

These dates are *provisional* and details are TBC:

At Magdalen Hill Down

- Wednesday 19 May
- Wednesday 23 June
- Wednesday 21 July
- Friday 6 August

At Yew Hill

- Friday 11 June
- Friday 9 July
- Wednesday 18 August

Also look out for **Monday Magical Meadows** work parties. Numbers may have to be limited.

I hope that volunteers who previously helped lead the walks are still able to do so.

Volunteers

I would be very grateful to volunteers or anyone out there familiar with the sites to join me and share their local knowledge – it would be hugely appreciated!

I will be looking for volunteers to help survey areas including around Yew Hill so we can ensure land is managed wherever possible to help link nature reserves in the wider landscape. This project is in the making with Andy Barker lighting the way and I'm sure there will be plenty of updates on progress.

You can contact me on fscully@butterfly-conservation.org or phone 07918 073651.

Thank you.

Fiona Scully
South Downs Landscape Officer



Butterfly Transects 2021

As detailed in the “Transect Summary” on page 10 of the 2020 Branch Butterfly Report, the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on butterfly recording. Adhering to Government guidelines, butterfly monitoring did not start until week seven of the transect season. As such we have incomplete data for Orange Tip, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, and other species that peak early in the season. Furthermore, 16 transects were not walked at all in 2020 for Covid-related reasons.

At the time of writing, in late January, shortly after the announcement that the present lockdown will endure until at least 8 March, it is impossible to predict whether we will be able to start the 2021 butterfly transect season on 1 April. We all hope that we will, but we just need to be patient and make the most of whatever situation arises. By the time you receive this Newsletter, transect walkers should probably have been notified whether butterfly transect walking can proceed as normal or whether there might be restrictions. We will also post updates on the Branch website. If the start is delayed, please don't give up hope. Last year people made a tremendous effort and although overall counts were down, and some sites were unable to be recorded, the collective effort was excellent, as you can see from the Annual Butterfly Report. We very much appreciate the work you all do in collecting this vital data, which identifies trends for species and helps guide our conservation actions, both locally, regionally and nationally.

We are always looking for additional volunteers to help with butterfly transect monitoring, either at sites that need a few extra people, or new sites that target under-represented areas, or have priority species. Shawford Down near Winchester is one site where we would like to get a transect started this year, but there are bound to be other places as well.*

If you would like to get involved with transect monitoring, please contact me stating which geographical area you would like to cover: lindabarker4@btinternet.com

Andy Barker has just updated the 25-year butterfly trend graphs for Hampshire and Isle of Wight species, 1996-2020 (the examples illustrated: Common Blue and Chalk Hill Blue). These graphs, which plot Annual Indices year-on-year, can be viewed under ‘Transects’ on the Branch website. For each species there is a graph showing the average trend for Hampshire and Isle of Wight,

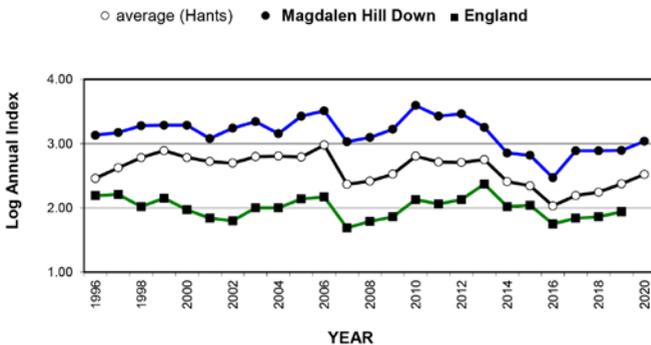
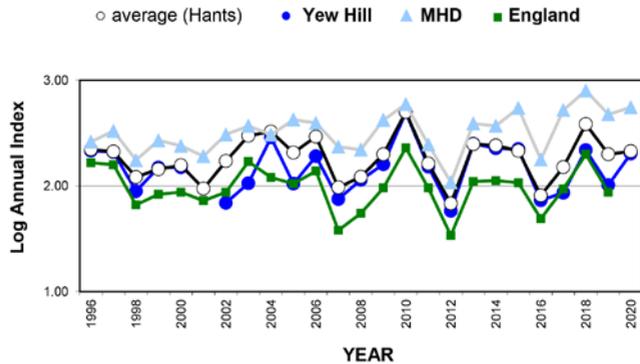
compared to the all England trend (data up to 2019). For many species a representative trend for a specific site is also shown. You will notice that for many species, the average Hampshire/Wight trend mirrors the national one, but that is not to say all sites are the same. These graphs show how important transect monitoring is in understanding the nature of change for each of our butterfly species. The strength of the data lies in the method, which is a fixed route, walked under controlled conditions, weekly, from the beginning of April to the end September. Not only is transect monitoring an enjoyable activity, but doing it the same way, year after year means data are directly comparable between sites.

We wish you all the best for a successful and enjoyable butterfly recording season.

*Kelvin Richards – junctionfive@gmail.com – is always looking for help with transects in the Hook and Yateley areas.

Linda Barker

Common Blue
(*Polyommatus icarus*)



Chalk Hill Blue
(*Polyommatus coridon*)

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS)

The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey is a nationwide 'light touch' recording scheme designed to monitor butterfly numbers across the UK, with results feeding into national statistics. Unlike transects, which tend to focus on sites that are good for butterflies, WCBS takes a random sample of 1km OS grid squares, which include urban and agricultural areas as well as more butterfly-rich countryside. Volunteers take 'ownership' of a square, with two walks along an agreed route required each year, once in July and once in August, identifying and recording any butterflies seen. Walks need to take place in good weather, between 10.45am and 3.45pm and use similar methodology as for butterfly transects. Further details about the scheme can be found at www.ukbms.org/wcbs

Hampshire and Isle of Wight has a good record in covering the squares allocated to it, and many thanks go to all those who currently walk squares for their dedication and support in achieving this. We still have a number of squares that currently need 'owners' and a list of these can be found on the Branch website www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/wider_countryside.php

If you are interested in monitoring butterflies but don't have time to commit to a transect, can you help with a WCBS square? Support is available both on the methodology required for walking the squares and on butterfly identification.

If you are interested in getting involved in this scheme, please contact me on 023 8081 3671 or via email to jackyna7579@gmail.com and I will be happy to provide further information and support.

Jacky Adams



Branch Field Trips Programme 2021

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic these field trips are ALL provisional.

They can only take place in accordance with the Government and Butterfly Conservation guidelines on field meetings in place locally on the date of each planned walk.

Please check **the Branch website** regularly for the latest advice. Even if a trip is indicated as taking place it may be that advance registration is required if there are restrictions on numbers.

Alternatively, and nearer the time of each field trip, do check postings on social media and in particular the Branch **Facebook** site:

www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationHampshireAndIsleOfWight

If the weather is looking dodgy...

If inclement weather is forecast, then please phone the leader of the event. Field trip dates may change if the five-day forecast suggests a planned meeting is likely to be affected by rain and/or stormy conditions.

Field trips are for everyone. Walks have been arranged across both counties at a variety of interesting sites, aiming to see target species associated with each location at the optimum time in the season.

These field trips can be enjoyed by everyone, whether butterfly-novice or expert. Photographers, children (with adult supervision) and first-time field trippers, **YOU ARE ALL WELCOME!** Please wear suitable footwear, and it is often desirable to bring a packed lunch.

Rough ground over fields and woods could, most regrettably, make access difficult for those with mobility issues. Please check with the walk leader if in doubt.

The Hampshire field meetings programme is organised by **Ashley Whitlock**; the Isle of Wight programme by **Kay Shaw**. Contact details for each are given respectively at the end of each programme listing and in the Useful Contacts directory on page 32 of this Newsletter.



Hampshire Walks 2021

The Branch is grateful to the site owners/managers of the nature reserves visited in our walks for maintaining public access and safeguarding these very special places of wildlife interest.

Note: the grid reference given is for the parking location/meeting point which is *not always* at the site of the walk's focus.

Sunday 18 April, meet at 10.30am

Matley Heath, New Forest (SU332073), site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the FC Matley Heath car park, on the B3056 between Lyndhurst and Beaulieu Road Station. Bring a packed lunch.

NB This venue may change at short notice as car park may close in early spring due to ground nesting birds in the vicinity.

Aiming to see: Emperor moth.

Sunday 2 May, meet at 10.30am

Ramsdean Down and Grandfather's Bottom, Butser Hill (SU712201), site: Natural England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the hilltop car park at Butser Hill (Pay and Display). This is a strenuous walk over uneven and very steep slopes. Bring a packed lunch.

Aiming to see: Duke of Burgundy, Grizzled and Dingy Skipper.

Wednesday 5 May, meet at 09.30am

Beacon Hill NNR, Exton (SU598227), site: Natural England; and **Stephen's Castle Down**

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the reserve car park, which is approx. 1¼ miles west of Warnford and a similar distance north-west of Exton, both off the A32. **NB There is no parking at Stephen's Castle Down so a car will have to ferry field trippers to the site from Beacon Hill. Please note the meeting time as this could take some time!** Bring a packed lunch.

Aiming to see: Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus.

Wednesday 12 May, meet at 10.30am

Ivy Wood and New Copse Inclosure, New Forest (SU316024),

site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the car park at Ivy Wood on B3055, about 1 mile east of Brockenhurst. In the afternoon the walk will be extended along the Lymington River looking for dragonflies and other invertebrates so bring a packed lunch.

Aiming to see: Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Sunday 16 May, meet at 10.30am

Stockbridge Down (west car park SU374346), site: National Trust

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Stockbridge Down is 1 mile east of Stockbridge and 6 miles west of Winchester on the B3049. Bring a packed lunch.

Aiming to see: Duke of Burgundy, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Grizzled Skipper and Brown Argus.

Wednesday 19 May, meet at 10.30am

Broughton Down (SU304327), site: HIOWWT

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: To avoid rough track up to the reserve (SU296325), park in Buckholt Road, west out of Broughton, or in the village, from which walk along Queenswood Road, bear right along the B3084 then go left along Buckholt road; where this ends take the middle of the three ongoing tracks to climb to the reserve.

Aiming to see: Adonis Blue; and, possibly, Duke of Burgundy.

Sunday 23 May, meet at 09.30am

Martin Down NNR, Lower car park, Sillen Lane (SU058192),

site: Natural England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: **NB change of car park this time!** Meet in the nature reserve's lower car park, along Sillen Lane, about ½ west of Martin village.

Aiming to see: Marsh Fritillary, Adonis Blue, Small Blue and Brown Argus; and, possibly, Duke of Burgundy.

Wednesday 26 May, meet at 10.30am

Bentley Wood (SU258291), site: Trustees of Bentley Wood

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet at Bentley Wood car park, just across the Wiltshire border, reached along a track signed off Scouts Lane, which runs between West Dean and Middle Winterslow to the east of Salisbury. Bring a packed lunch.

Aiming to see: Pearl-bordered, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, and Argent and Sable Moth.

Sunday 30 May, meet at 10.30am

Holmsley and Brownhill Inclosures, New Forest (SU231006),

site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet at the Old Station Tea Rooms car park, Holmsley.

Aiming to see: Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Sunday 6 June, meet at 10.30am

Portsdown Hill, Fort Widley (SU662064), site: Portsmouth City Council

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet at Fort Widley car park, off B2177, just east of Fort Widley.

Aiming to see: Small and Common Blues; and, possibly, Wall Brown.

Wednesday 23 June, meet at 09.30am

Abbotstone Down (SU584360)

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet at the Abbotstone Down and Oliver's Battery Settlement car park signposted off the B3047, north of New Alresford and south-east of Swarraton. Bring lunch.

Aiming to see: Marbled White and Dark Green Fritillary; and, possibly, Purple Emperor.

Sunday 27 June, meet at 10.30am

Hawkhill Inclosure and Hatchet Moor, New Forest (SU350019),

site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the Hawkhill Inclosure Forestry England car park, off the B3055, west of Hatchet Pond between Brockenhurst and Beaulieu. Bring lunch as the plan is to walk Hawkhill Inclosure in the morning and Hatchet Moor in the afternoon.

Aiming to see: Dark Green Fritillary, Silver-studded Blue, Grayling and White Admiral.

Sunday 4 July, meet at 09.30am

Abbotts Wood Inclosure, Alice Holt Forest (SU810410),

site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet at the Abbotts Wood Inclosure car park off Dockenfield Street, just south-east of the Halfway House pub.

Aiming to see: Purple Emperor, White Admiral, and Silver-washed Fritillary.

Wednesday 7 July, meet at 09.30am

West Wood, Crab Wood and Pitt Down – Farley Mount (SU420292),

site: Forestry England and HCC

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in Spindle Trees car park, signed off Sarum Road on Pitt Down, one of several Farley Mount Country Park car parks. Bring a packed lunch. In the morning we will circumnavigate West Wood and look in on Crab Wood, and walk on Pitt Down in the afternoon.

Aiming to see: Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Dark Green Fritillary, and Scarlet Tiger Moth.

Saturday 10 July, meet at 09.30am

Micheldever Wood (SU529363), site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in Micheldever Wood car park, which is off Chillandham Lane, which is about 2½ miles south-east of Micheldever and 2½ miles west of Swarraton. Bring lunch.

Aiming to see: Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary.

Wednesday 14 July, meet at 09.30am

West Harting Down (SU739156), site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the lane just over the railway bridge east of Charlton village. From the A3 take the Butser Ancient Farm exit and at Charlton turn left before the Red Lion and then cross the railway. The lane (to Ditcham Park School) is immediately left with limited parking on the left-hand side.

Aiming to see: Purple Emperor, Silver-washed, Dark Green Fritillary, and Hummingbird Hawk-moth.

Sunday 15 August, meet at 09.30am

Shipton Bellinger (SU229456)

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the village hall car park. Bring a packed lunch as there will be a visit to another local site in the afternoon.

Aiming to see: Brown Hairstreak and Wall Brown.

Wednesday 18 August, meet at 10.30am

Soberton Down and River Meon (SU611166)

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in Soberton Village Hall car park, off Long Lane, by the crossroads with Chalk Hill, along which the walk begins. Bring a packed lunch as in the afternoon the walk will take in the River Meon where Brown Hairstreak sites have been found in recent years.

Aiming to see: Brown Hairstreak.

Sunday 22 August, meet at 10.30am

Beaulieu Heath, New Forest (SU350019); site: Forestry England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the Hawkhill Inclosure Forestry England car park, off the B3055, west of Hatchet Pond between Brockenhurst and Beaulieu. Bring lunch.

Aiming to see: Grayling.

Wednesday 25 August, meet at 10.30am

St Catherine's Hill, Winchester (SU471249), site: HLOWWT

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the Shawford Down car park, Shawford, just west of Shawford railway station. The walk will pick up the Itchen Navigation towpath from the car park and head northwards to St Catherine's Hill beside the canal/river. St Catherine's has steep hillside paths. Bring a packed lunch.

Aiming to see: Adonis Blue and Silver-spotted Skipper.

Wednesday 1 September, meet at 10.30am

Beacon Hill NNR, Exton (SU598227), site: Natural England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the reserve car park, which is approx. 1¼ miles west of Warnford and a similar distance north-west of Exton, both off the A32. Bring a packed lunch.

Aiming to see: Silver-spotted Skipper, Brown Argus and Clouded Yellow.

Sunday 5 September, meet at 10.30am

Old Winchester Hill NNR (SU645214), site: Natural England

Leader: Ashley Whitlock, Tel: 02392 731266; Mobile: 07752 182340

Directions: Meet in the nature reserve's car park, which is signposted off the A32 at Warnford. Steep hillsides in places.

Aiming to see: Adonis Blue, Silver-spotted Skipper and Clouded Yellow.

Ashley Whitlock, Field Trips Organiser

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e-mail: ashleyrwhitlock@virginmedia.com



You never know what you might see on a field trip! Kevin Freeborn



Isle of Wight Walks 2021

The Branch is grateful to the site owners/managers of the nature reserves visited in our walks for maintaining public access and safeguarding these very special places of wildlife interest.

Note: the grid reference given is for the parking location/meeting point which is *not always* at the site of the walk's focus.

Saturday 22 May, meet at 1.30pm (or, if wet, Sunday 23 May)

Mottistone chalk pits (SZ419845); site: National Trust

Leader: Graham Sherratt, Tel: 07788 881408

Directions: Meet in the Jubilee Car Park, Lynch Lane, Brighstone. A downland walk with uneven ground, steep slopes and chalk pits.

Aiming to see: Glanville Fritillary, Dinky and Grizzled Skipper.

Saturday 29 May, meet at 10.30am (or, if wet, Sunday 30 May)

Compton Chine (SZ351856); site: National Trust

Leader: Sue Davies, Tel: 07702 151312

Directions: Meet in the National Trust Afton Down chalk pit car park off the A305 Military Road. On the No. 12 bus route. Some steep steps and uneven ground.

Aiming to see: Glanville Fritillary, Green Hairstreak, Small and Adonis Blue.

Saturday 26 June, meet at 1.30pm (or, if wet, Sunday 27 June)

Newtown Meadows and Walter's Copse (SZ423906); site: National Trust

Leader: Nikki Kownacki, Tel: 07929 614423

Directions: Meet at the entrance to the Meadows Butterfly Walk on Town Lane, parking at the NT car park (charge) close by.

Aiming to see: White Admiral, Marbled White, Ringlet, Brown Argus.

Saturday 10 July, meet at 1.15pm (or, if wet, Sunday 11 July)

Kemphill Moor Copse, Havenstreet (SZ558910); site: Forestry England

Leader: Kay and Colin Shaw, Tel: 07562 974343

Directions: Meet at Firestone Copse car park (OS National Grid reference above) as limited parking available at the site. Transport provided to Kemphill Moor Copse. This is a woodland ride walk.

Aiming to see: White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary and Purple Hairstreak.

Saturday 24 July, meet at 1.30pm (or, if wet, Sunday 25 July)

Mount Joy, Carisbrooke (SZ496883)

Leader: Graham Sherratt, Tel: 07788 881408

Directions: Meet in Whitepit Lane, Carisbrooke, by the fish and chip shop near the junction with Elm Grove, and close to the junction with footpath N24, along which the walk up to Mount Joy proceeds. Some steps are encountered on the route.

Aiming to see: Chalk Hill and Common Blue, Brown Argus and Wall Brown.

Saturday 31 July, meet at 1.30pm (or, if wet) Sunday 1 August)

Tennyson Down, Totland (SZ324856), site: National Trust

Leader: Kay and Colin Shaw, Tel: 07562 974343

Directions: Meet in the National Trust car park at the end of Highdown Lane, Totland. The Needles Breezer open top bus stops at the High Down Inn. This is a downland walk with some uneven ground. **NB that if the weather is bad on the day, this walk may be rescheduled for Sunday 2 August.**

Aiming to see: Chalk Hill Blue, Dark Green Fritillary and Jersey Tiger.

Kay Shaw, IoW Field Meetings Organiser



*Descending Tennyson Down towards Freshwater Bay, with Afton and Compton Downs beyond.
Kevin Freeborn*



Know your Blues

Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*)

This is usually the first Blue on the wing, typically from early spring into May, with a second brood in August, and characteristically seen around bushes and hedgerows.

Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

The most widespread Blue across Hampshire and Isle of Wight and found on a wide variety of grassland habitats, typically seen in May with a second brood in August. Females are brown, but larger than Brown Argus, and often with bluer bodies or blue at the base of the wings.

Brown Argus (*Plebeius agestis*)

This is chalk grassland species with similar flight periods to the Common Blue. Both sexes are brown and smaller than the Common Blue.

Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*)

Our smallest resident butterfly and typically found in small colonies on sheltered grassland sites where there is Kidney Vetch. It roosts communally in long grass. The main flight season is May and June but in good years there can be a second brood in August.

Adonis Blue (*Polyommatus bellargus*)

Males are the most amazing electric-blue; females are brown but dusted with blue at the base of the wings. This butterfly favours close-cropped downland turf and has two broods, in May/June and mid-August into September.

Silver-studded Blue (*Plebeius argus*)

Found on heathland in Hampshire, males are a shimmering silvery blue and females are brown. They are a high-summer species and like most of the Blues fly close to the ground.

Chalk Hill Blue (*Polyommatus coridon*)

As its name suggests, this Blue loves chalk downs and in good years it can be seen in profuse numbers in July and August. Males are a pale blue with darker wing margins; females are brown and typically spend their time concealed in grassland and so are less frequently seen than males.

Illustrated by Rosemary 'ain't got the blues' Powell



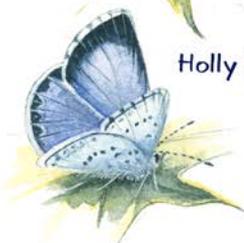
Adonis Blue



Holly Blue



Common Blue



Silver-studded Blue



Chalk Hill Blue



Small Blue



Brown Argus





North Baddesley Butterflies

As we all know, 2020 was a strange year for everyone. My North Baddesley reserve was a godsend during the lockdown and I do not know what I would have done without it.

Luckily nature was not affected. Although I have read reports about poor numbers of certain butterflies in 2020, every species here has done better than previous years. Numbers are rising every year, hopefully in response to my increased efforts with planting, and management of the existing habits.



Three new species appeared on my reserve for the first time. Male Chalk Hill Blue, Small Heath (which I hope will colonise here), and the biggest surprise and shock of all was a Wall Brown on the 28th September! I have never seen a Wall Brown anywhere before and thought I never would.

A total of 31 species of butterfly were seen here in 2020, which is an increase of two on the previous year.

500 new plants were introduced in the autumn and 2kg of seed was sown. Hopefully this will help consolidate the butterfly colonies already here and build further the numbers of species in the coming seasons.

The reptile population on the reserve is being monitored by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Amphibian and Reptile Group (HIWARG). Last year was the best so far for Adders; seven being the most seen on one count. We also had two Grass Snakes, 29 Slow-worms and three Common Lizards. The transect records can be found on HIWARG's website.

If any of you would like to come and record any of the wildlife here (the more records, the better), please let me know.

Not surprisingly visitor numbers were down (still plenty though) and no BC trainee transect recorders visited. Hopefully, 2021 Covid-19 restrictions will ease as the upcoming season unfolds.



*Chalk Hill Blue,
Small Heath,
Wall Brown.
Rosemary Powell*

You are all very welcome to come and have a look round and my contact details are given below.

Kevin Ross
Email: spark.ky@hotmail.co.uk
Telephone: 02380 733995



Monks Walk, Gosport – an unlikely butterfly haven

As a kid in 1960s Gosport I could not visualise Monks Walk as a butterfly haven. Indeed, for a time the area was the borough's landfill for household waste! In the early 1970s today's designated butterfly meadow was a huge car breaker's yard with wrecks standing three high all over the oil-soaked site. Today all that has gone and nature once more returned for the benefit of the public.



Swans on the foreshore. Francis Plowman

19th-century maps show the area as part of Frater Farm, with orchards and chicken houses as well as arable fields. Gosport's first isolation hospital at the end of Frater Lane became a youth hostel in the 1950s and is now a gymnasium. By 1914 the area was bisected by the War Department (MoD) railway linking the armaments depot at Bedenham to that of Priddy's Hard. Much of the railway line now forms the new road, Heritage Way. During World War II, two concrete pill-boxes were sited on the harbour shore and provided great dens for children. Only one remains although completely obscured by scrub.

Gosport Borough Council (GBC) acquired the Monks Walk area – covering some 32 acres (13 hectares) – in four transactions completed in February

Since 2015 I have been walking this area and sending annual sightings to the Countryside Officer of GBC as well as contributing statistics to Living Record and posting reports and photographs on the Branch website.



White-letter Hairstreak on bramble blossom. Orange-tip mating pair. Francis Plowman

In 2020 I recorded 28 butterfly species here including White-letter Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary and – a first for me here – both sexes of Chalk Hill Blue! Essex and Small Skipper are found in good numbers as are Speckled Wood, Large, Small and Green-veined White. Common Blue and Brown Argus obligingly populate the butterfly meadow with Ringlet, Gatekeeper, and Comma owning its scrubby borders. Feral Buddleia in the meadow attracts Peacock and Red Admiral, often seen in competition with Meadow Brown and Marbled White. Painted Lady has been recorded from March to September, but I have yet to note Clouded Yellow here.

The area is sensitively managed and regularly monitored by GBC countryside officials. It is an easily accessible site by road with the nearby Brockhurst Gate shopping centre offering fast refreshment and comfort facilities. Small and understated Monks Walk always manages a surprise, or two!

Francis Plowman

If you have an unlikely butterfly haven in your local neck of the woods, or a surprisingly butterfly-friendly patch of seemingly unmanaged ground near you, do please contact me with a brief description and some photos, just as Francis has done, and Kevin Ross on page 22, and I'll consider featuring your piece in future editions of the Newsletter. Ed.



Bumblebees in the Garden

Last spring during lockdown I embarked on a big replanting project in the garden. My aim was to attract pollinators – bees, butterflies, moths, hoverflies, etc. by planting a wide variety of nectar-bearing flowers. It turned out that the most numerous/obvious visitors were bumblebees, and being fairly easy to identify, I kept a log of the species that I saw and the plants that they favoured.

There are 22 species of bumblebee in the UK, but of these only seven are likely to occur in the average garden; the rest are restricted in range or found in more specialised habitats such as flower-rich chalk downland.

When you think of bumblebees you probably envisage a large furry black, yellow and white striped bee, which in early spring (Feb/March) would be either a Buff-tailed (*Bombus terrestris*) or White-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lucorum*) queen, according to the colour of its tail. The smaller workers, which appear a bit later, resemble the queen except that, confusingly, Buff-tailed workers have white tails and are hard to distinguish from White-tailed workers. You might also expect a Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*) (Mar/April), both queen and workers all black except for a very red tail.

Two additional Bumbles are easy to identify: Tree Bumblebee (*B. hypnorum*) is a recent colonist (2001) and has a ginger thorax, an all-black abdomen and a white tail. Unlike the others mentioned, which nest in old mammal burrows underground, this one often takes over bird boxes or natural holes in trees. Finally, a later-emerging Bumble (April/May) is the very common Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*), smaller than those already mentioned, with bright ginger or yellow/brown hair all over. The other two species which you could expect are Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum*) and Garden Bumblebee (*B. hortorum*), both black and yellow, Early Bumble with an orange tail.

There are two types of bumblebee: “true” and “cuckoo”. Cuckoo bumblebees (about six species) do not collect pollen. They predate the nests of true bumblebees, killing the host queen and laying their eggs in the nest, to be raised by the host workers. A cuckoo resembles its host in appearance but is distinguished by small details, including dark wings. I have only ever identified one type in the garden, late in summer, *B. vestalis*. Its preferred host is the very common Buff-tailed Bumble.

Bumblebees can also be divided into those which have long tongues, and those with shorter ones, determining which flowers the bee prefers to feed on. The long-tongued species, e.g. Garden Bumble, or Common Carder Bee, prefer tubular flowers such as foxgloves, comfrey, vetches, honeysuckle, snapdragons, or penstemon, whereas those with shorter tongues prefer open flowers like marjoram, cosmos, single dahlia, ivy, cotoneaster, clover and many garden plants. Some short-tongued bees rob tubular flowers by biting a hole at the base of the tube to access the nectar, thereby avoiding pollinating the plant.



When the first queens emerge from hibernation in late February/early March they urgently need to find nectar. Gardeners can help by growing early flowers such as Pulmonaria (lungwort), crocus, primrose, winter flowering heathers, or hellebore. The important thing is to keep the supply going right through the season, certainly until November. Planting in groups or drifts helps the bees to feed more efficiently and is better than having plants dotted around. It is also important to have a variety of flower shapes to cater for all sorts, and to keep everything well-watered, as nectar production depends on this. Not every plant attracts bees; some are sterile and produce no nectar (e.g. *Lynchnis coronaria*), others refill only slowly after being visited. Plants to avoid are bedding plants such as pansies, double begonias, or any double flowers, which have little nectar. Blossom-bearing shrubs and trees are important sources of nectar. I often have a Buff-tailed Bumble on a winter-flowering Mahonia 'Charity', and Cotoneaster *horizontalis* on a sunny wall attracts particularly Tree Bumble and Common Carder Bee.

Studies have shown that as a bee approaches a flower, a tiny electric field is created between plant and pollinator which may signal that the plant's nectar supply has been temporarily depleted, thus warning the bee to forage elsewhere and not to waste valuable feeding time. Some plants renew their nectar in a matter of 20 minutes, some take a full day. A real star in this respect is Borage, which is said to take only two minutes to refill. Plants which have a number of blooms on one stem, such as Alliums and flowers in the daisy family are popular with short-tongued bees, allowing them to feed



Red-tailed, Buff-tailed and White-tailed Bumblebee. Juliet Bloss

continuously without journeying elsewhere; bees with long tongues appreciate deep flowers like Honeysuckle which have a lot more nectar per bloom. Some very successful plants in my garden last year were Pulmonaria and Aquilegia in spring, with Foxglove, Hebe *salicifolia*, Nepeta 'Six Hills Giant' and Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) later in the season. These latter two were never without a bee. Alliums, lavender, and knapweed were also popular.

By the end of the season I had listed all the above-mentioned species in the garden, the commonest being *B. terrestris*, *B. lucorum*, and *B. pascuorum*. My project for 2021? To oust a number of less popular plants and try out some others. Thank goodness the garden centres are open.

Juliet Bloss



Rare Nail Fungus found on Magdalen Hill Down

Being an active member of the Fungus Conservation Trust, I have been recording fungi on Magdalen Hill Down for some ten years. Following the introduction of Exmoor Ponies to the Reserve, I met Jayne Chapman in spring 2019 (Senior Reserves Officer at that time). She said her team was looking out for the rare Nail Fungus, a small coprophilous fungus which grows on horse dung.



Nail Fungus. Graham Mattock

In the UK the Nail Fungus *Poronia punctata* is a Biodiversity Action Plan species. Once abundant, the Nail Fungus is now rare in modern times due to the decline in the use of horses; the deployment of farming herbicides, plant pesticides and synthetic chemicals used in the worming of horses has also seriously impacted its distribution. The Fungus Conservation Trust's database currently holds 192 records for *Poronia punctata*; 90% of these records are from the New Forest, which until recently was the stronghold of the Nail Fungus. Fortunately following the practise of using horses and ponies for conservation grazing, as on Magdalen Hill Down, the Nail Fungus is slowly becoming more

widespread. In early December 2020 it was pleasing to see and record clusters of the Nail Fungus growing on the Magdalen pony dung.

The Nail Fungus looks like one of those flat headed nails used to fix roofing felt on shed roofs. With a black stem deeply embedded in the dung substrate and a paler flat cap measuring 5-15mm, it is easy to see how this fungus got its common name. The black dots on the cap surface are the pores through which the spores are released.

Graham Mattock



Inspires artists too! Nail Fungus - New Forest. Dan Powell



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Newsletter Deadline

Do keep your butterfly, moth and Nature-related features coming in. New contributors are especially welcome. I want to continue to reflect the very deep interest in butterflies and moths, the work and events that support our Branch, and encourage articles representative of the wider conservation interests throughout Hampshire and Isle of Wight.

Please send your Lepidoptera-related newsworthy pieces and features to Kevin Freeborn ... and you don't have to wait until August!

The deadline for the autumn Newsletter, edition no. 111, is 20 August 2021

Lepidoptera Tale Piece ... your story behind the picture

The background is that I am also interested in butterflies of Germany, specifically the Mosel region. I report sightings as I do within Hampshire, though to a German point of contact. I was having difficulty in identifying certain skippers and received confirmation via my contact from one Martin Albrecht who is, apparently, the relevant expert in Germany.

“Hello Francis, here is the answer from Martin Albrecht, who is probably one of the best thick-headed butterfly experts in Europe.”

Grammatical nuance lost in translation, perhaps, but it still makes me smile now!

Francis Plowman

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



Hampshire
County Council



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SC039268).
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Lepidoptera Tale Piece ...

... for the full story, go to the inside back cover.

Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper (Pyrgus americanus), taken in early September 2020, at Ingendorf in the Rhineland-Pfalz, Germany – Francis Plowman

