



Butterfly
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Hampshire and
Isle of Wight Branch
Celebrating our 40th Anniversary!
1982 - 2022

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch
E-newsletter

December 2022

Dear Branch Member,

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

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Branch Committee changes

There were a couple of **changes to the main committee at the recent AGM...**

Andy Barker stood down as Chair, with Pete Eeles, a previous Chair, taking on this role once again. Andy will remain on the main committee and will continue to act as the Chair of the Conservation & Records Subcommittee.

Our Treasurer, Nick Radford, has also stood down from his role and the main committee, with Graham Nicol taking over. Suffice to say, we would all like to thank both Andy and Nick for their contributions to the branch over many years, and wish Pete and Graham all the best in their new roles.

The updated committee structure can be found on [the branch website](#)

e-Newsletter Editor

Congratulations to Ashley Whitlock

Branch members will be delighted to hear that **branch stalwart Ashley Whitlock has been awarded the prestigious Outstanding Volunteer Award at the Butterfly Conservation AGM in Huddersfield**. There is fierce competition for this award and is in recognition of Ashley's sterling work for the branch over the years. Andy Barker's endorsement of Ashley is worth repeating here:

Ashley has been an active BC volunteer for over 30 years. He has served on the Branch Conservation Committee during some of this period, but his main contribution has been survey work for priority butterfly species, liaison with landowners, and public engagement, through a very active social media profile and by organising and leading an annual programme of field meetings.

Ashley has submitted butterfly records and contributed to the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Annual Butterfly Report since at least 1990.

He is the Species Champion for Duke of Burgundy and Purple Emperor, and has written annual species accounts for these butterflies since 2005. For several years he has co-authored a detailed annual report and site dossier for Duke of Burgundy in Hampshire.

He has given numerous guest presentations to local societies, over several decades, inspiring others to get involved, whilst also raising funds.

In 2016 he co-authored the very popular and informative "Hampshire & Isle of Wight Butterfly Walks" book.

Ashley has organised the Branch field meetings for more than a decade, leading the majority (c. 20 per year!) himself.

There is no doubting Ashley's passion and commitment to the recording and conservation of butterflies and moths in Hampshire and Isle of Wight. Through his field meetings, publications and presentations he has contributed greatly to our understanding of butterflies in the area, whilst freely sharing his knowledge and inspiring others to get involved.

For all of these reasons, we regard Ashley as very worthy of the Outstanding Volunteer Award.

Pete Eeles (Hants & IoW Branch Chair)

Needed – Volunteer Transect Walkers

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

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

If you fancy becoming a transect walker please get in touch with: Iain McIntosh
iain@bay-trees.co.uk 07795 374075

Isle of Wight Group update

In my role as County Moth Recorder, a reminder please to **send me your Isle of Wight moth records for 2022 by the end of January 2023**. I am happy to accept the records either electronically or in paper format. I have an excel spreadsheet which I can forward to you for completion or I can access your records from iRecord, iNaturalist or Living Record. If you enter your records via MapMate, please contact me to arrange a 'sync'. email: wightmoths@gmail.com

Looking ahead to 2023, the Group will again be running a **table at events on the island** and I would welcome any volunteers to help run the table. If you can spare an hour or two and would be interested in assisting me, I would be delighted to hear from you.

On the surveys front, I am always looking for **volunteer surveyors to help with the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS)**. This is a weekly survey which runs from the start of April to the end of September. You need to have good ID skills to be able to identify and count the butterflies which you will encounter during a transect walk of up to around 2km. The surveys generally take between 1-2 hours to complete.

I am planning to start a **White-letter Hairstreak survey on the island during 2023** and would welcome anyone interested in helping me to survey the disease-resistant LUTECE Elms, and any remaining Wych Elms, to establish if the species is still on the island. To my knowledge, there have been no records submitted since 2020 although this may be due to a lack of observers as it is not the easiest species to find. This is likely to continue beyond 2023.



White-letter Hairstreak (Photo: Andy Butler)

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

Reserves & Volunteering News

Magdalen Hill Down

The arrival of 10 cows for the winter grazing symbolises the wet and wintery weather ahead. We were provided with slightly fewer cows this year, but they have settled in well. Being at Magdalen, you can't help but fall in love with the animals. They breathe such life into the reserve during a bleak and empty time when the flowers have faded and gone. We now have 13 cows in total. Sadly we lost one in a freak accident and it had to be put down - very upsetting to all involved...

There are currently 36 Whitefaced Woodland sheep, with the loveliest faces, incredibly friendly and the best browsers on all that scrubby vegetation. They are grazing the Hillside to keep the chalk downland turf short and help reduce scrub encroachment.

After the hot summer and sensational number of Chalkhill Blues, the focus is now on maintaining the habitat with our hardy and dedicated volunteer team. There is a work party every Monday doing various practical tasks across the reserve, mostly clearing and digging up bramble, clematis and young hawthorn from the grassland. We had additional help from MACE, a corporate group, who give a day volunteering in their community.

We'll be targeting the scrub edge along the bottom of the Hillside in January and February, with the help of contractors.



MACE volunteers



Winter heavy grazing machinery



Whitefaced Woodland sheep

Yew Hill

The 15 Shetland sheep were on the main reserve for two months, but with the rain and mild weather the grass seemed to grow faster than they were eating it. The sheep are back grazing Hill Top and will return to Yew Hill around February.

The volunteer work parties are being held fortnightly on Thursdays, changed from Wednesdays. Although just a small group of 3 or 4 people, it makes a big impact in keeping the grassland open and free of scrub. Contractors are booked to clear the scrub thickets on the Southern Water reservoir meadow at the start of next year.

Following the death of a sheep in 2021 after a dog attack, we have asked dog walkers to use alternative footpaths around the reserve when the sheep are on site. This request seems to have been mostly respected. The reserve is quite small so it shouldn't be a problem. A huge thank you to all dog walkers who avoid walking through the reserve when the sheep are grazing there. This reduces stress levels for the sheep and we really do appreciate your help in ensuring we can continue to graze sheep here.



Volunteers at Yew Hill

Bentley Station Meadow

See separate news item, from Steve Lockett.

Volunteer events

Thank you to Colin Stride for organising a hearty pub meal at The Dolphin, Hursley. It was such an enjoyable social occasion, meeting volunteers who contribute so much to all the survey and recording work, the livestock lookers and practical reserve volunteers, who dedicate their time to make sure the reserves remain a sanctuary and stronghold for our wildlife. It was great to catch up with you all.

Volunteer Christmas BBQ – unfortunately the cows are grazing in Extension field so there's no parking available at Magdalen Hill this time.

Volunteer Task Days reminder

Every Monday, until March at Magdalen Hill Down; and from 5th October at Yew Hill.

Keep dry, stay safe and well and keep count of the number of Red Admirals you see flying through the winter!

Fiona Scully (BC South Downs Landscape Project Officer)

Bentley Station Meadow Reserve update

Cattle have returned to BSM a little later than usual due to some logistical challenges. We have 4 Black Angus bullocks doing their stuff for as long as the ground can take it.



You may have heard I will not be able to continue my role as Volunteer Reserve officer at Bentley. During my time we've cleared lots of bramble and scrub which was in danger of engulfing the grassland. There have been school visits and a chance to establish links with local wildlife groups. Thank you to all our volunteers and transect walkers.

If you think you'd like to be involved in the future management of BSM please get in touch. It would be great to keep the ball rolling! Email: posteve@hotmail.co.uk & mobile: 07530 044278

Steve Lockett (Reserves Advisory Group; Volunteer Reserves Officer, BSM)

A message from the County Butterfly Recorder

We are regularly seeing numerous accounts of butterfly sightings on social media such as Facebook, also on our own website 'News' page. **Such sightings do not make their**

way into our formal records unless the recorder also adds to one of our accepted recording methods. As well as our regular Hampshire/Isle of Wight species it is particularly useful to receive formal sightings of occasional scarcer migrants which seem to be increasing these days.

Recording and monitoring programmes are the foundation stones of conservation. They are an essential first step in identifying which species are most threatened. No projects would progress successfully without recording and monitoring data, and insects make up the largest proportion of wildlife - their abundance and distribution are the first signs of environmental change. Of the insects, butterflies are the most visible. They also have rapid life cycles and limited distribution due to larval foodplant requirements. As such they are particularly vulnerable to environmental change.

The firm favourite for recording these days is **iRecord** with opportunities to include all biological records. Alternatively, use the **iRecord Butterflies App** (from Apple Store or Google Play). Please see our branch website [Recording page](#).

Your help is vital and every record really does count!

Bob Annell (County Butterfly Recorder)

Occasional Members' contributions

Bye-bye to the Flutterbyes by Sheila Williams

Sadly the 2022 butterfly season is coming to an end, but I have so enjoyed searching for them. There are about 60 species of butterflies that can be spotted in the UK and since April this year I have been visiting reserves, forests and meadows in search of finding the 46 that can be seen in Hampshire. We are lucky to have the habitat to attract such a large number in the county, in fact more than can be spotted in the whole of Wales (although not nearly as many as there are in the rest of Europe, where nearly 500 species can be seen).

It has been a good year searching with the long periods of hot weather we have had - sometimes far too hot though even for the butterflies, who love the sun... Finally, in August I had spotted 45 out of the 46 and was really delighted, but what about the 46th you might ask? Well, it was sad that I didn't see a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary this year. I had spotted three in June 2021, in one of the last places they are seen in Hampshire, but this year, after many visits I didn't see one - hopefully the ones I found last year won't be the last but the deterioration of suitable habitats is concerning. However, ever the optimist and with all my fingers crossed I hope I might get lucky and find one next year and complete the 46, I will definitely be out there searching and hope that they have not left Hampshire for good.

I shall miss my countryside rambles sometimes on my own and also joining Ashley Whitlock's brilliant field trips where I have made many new friends. It is so captivating looking for butterflies and the delight you have when, after many hours of searching you spot just one ... so I shall look forward to 2023, to start again - and judging by the mating pairs I have photographed this year looks like next year might be a very good season too...



45 of the 46, this year (Photo: Sheila Williams)

Sheila Williams

Dates

First sightings (since August 2022 e-Newsletter) see the website [Events > News](#) page

August 9	Scarce Swallowtail ¹	Burley, New Forest
August 14	Long-tailed Blue	Lee-on-Solent
August 15th	White Admiral (2 nd brood)	Pamber Forest

¹ *Unconfirmed*

Work parties, etc. (see the website [Events > Work Parties](#) page, for latest info)

**Note: Steve Luckett is at Bentley Station Meadow most Tuesday mornings. If you're available to help, contact him first (email posteve@hotmail.co.uk / tel. 07530 044278)*

Social Media links

