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**December 2023**

Dear Branch Member,

Please find the latest news from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch...

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## Branch AGM 2023

There was a good attendance at the annual branch AGM on Sunday, 5th November. The branch chairman provided a brief report of the proceedings, on the branch website [here](#). Many thanks to all who attended. After the morning session business was concluded, the afternoon session featured some great talks...

- **Kate Barrett** (Head of Volunteering at Butterfly Conservation), who started-out at the Hants & IoW branch, provided some illuminating insight into the history of BC volunteering. Some interesting figures: Nationally in 2022, 205,984 hours (6,742 in our branch) of voluntary work - equivalent to 123 full-time staff!
- County Moth recorder **Mike Wall** presented a superb analysis of twenty years of (primarily anthropogenic) changes in abundance and distribution of Moth fauna, as interpolated from our county records.
- **Mike Slater**, from the Warwickshire BC branch, provided a fact-packed talk covering his branch's sterling work on some novel conservation strategies. A book "Butterfly Conservation The Warwickshire Approach" (*Slater, Warmington, Hoare*) is available now.
- **Dr Max Anderson**, Butterfly Conservation's South West Landscape Officer presented two fascinating papers - Bramble night-time pollinators, and The use of UV light to detect early stages of Lycaenidae butterflies.

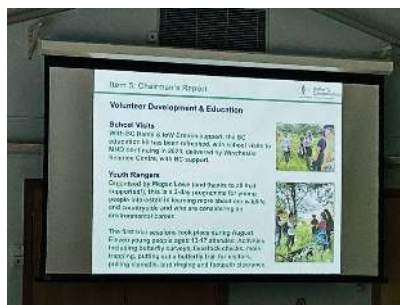
Thanks to all the volunteers who were involved in organising and facilitating the AGM and presentations.

And finally, a big thank you to all the Photo Competition entrants.

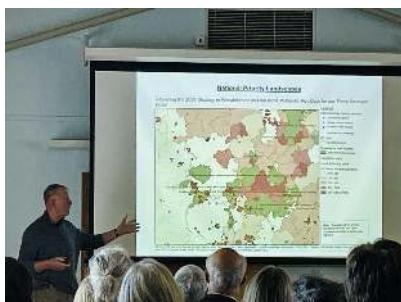
A selection of photos (© Suzanne Brown) from the meeting...



*The chairman's annual report, in the morning session*



*Kate Barrett on volunteering*



*Mike Slater (Warks. BC branch)*



*Mike Wall on moths*



*Dr. Max Anderson gave 2 talks*

*Ed.*

## Branch member's National award

You may have read the "Conservation heroes" article about the **Marsh Charitable Trust Volunteer Awards scheme**, in the Autumn 2023 BC Newsletter. Congratulations go out to branch member Suzanne Brown who won the Best Newcomer award (as well as being a 'Highly Commended' in the Community Engagement award).

*Ed.*

## New Forest Bee Fayre 2023

On August 26th, New Forest South Conservation Connection organised a second Bee Fayre on New Milton Recreation Ground, which the New Forest Butterfly Transect Group attended with a stall. The aim was to tell visitors about Butterfly Conservation and to recruit people who are interested in walking a transect.

The day got off to a bright and sunny start, and we managed to erect our gazebo and arrange the display material before the heavens opened. Not all stall holders were so fortunate...



*Our stall at the Bee Fayre, with New Forest Group Committee Member John French (photo © Trevor Bumfrey)*

Despite the heavy showers which continued on and off throughout the day, the stall attracted a number of visitors who had braved the conditions, and around 10 people expressed an interest in walking a transect. Some visitors didn't think that they would be able to commit to a regular walk, even as part of a team, but were interested in talking and learning more about butterflies in general. We encouraged people to download the iRecord app, so that their sightings could form part of the national records.

We are planning to take part in next year's Bee Fayre (August 24th 2024).

You can also catch up with The New Forest Butterfly Transect Group at the New Forest Volunteer Fayre on January 28th 2024.

For further information about the group, see [our page on the branch's website](#) (also accessible via the 'Area Groups' section of the branch website), and [our presence on the New Forest Park Authority website](#).

You can discover a selection of the group's wonderful photos from their Flickr Group in the branch October newsletter.

*Trevor Bumfrey (NFTG)*

## Reserves & volunteering News

### Magdalen Hill Down

The volunteer practical work season started in October with the Magdalen Monday volunteers back in action. They have cut back and cleared the chalk scrape, tackled sections of the daunting slope on the Hillside and cleared sections of fence-line. Newly trained on the brushcutter, we have volunteers who can now share the brushcutting. Tree poppers are an essential tool, helping pull out hawthorn regrowth, which covers a large part of the hillside. It's a real 'A-Team' effort, and they take-up the challenge as they work in different parts of the reserve each week.

The South Downs National Park volunteers had a day clearing the footpath at the bottom of Extension field, along the hedgerow. Being a part of the transect route, I was concerned to see how much clematis and blackthorn scrub had smothered a large area.



Volunteers from *Mace*, a construction company, came for two days with 15 volunteers each day. The bank below the permissive footpath was superb as a species rich grassland, but there were a worrying number of hawthorn trees pushing through everywhere. Handed a tree popper, they amazingly cleared most of it - a big relief to see it pulled up and taken away. We are composting a lot of what we clear but will burn some of it, as there are huge amounts of cleared vegetation.

There are currently 18 cows on Extension field and we are still waiting for more sheep to complete the number of grazing animals for this winter.

Dan Hoare pointed out the Earth's Tongue fungus on Pathfield - an indicator of low-nutrient, short-turf grassland. This highlights the success of the incredible arable reversion project, and the ecological transformation of the site from intensive wheat production back to species rich grassland.

The photo (right, © Rupert Broadway) is of an Oak Eggar caterpillar, from MHD 'Area 4'.



### Chilcomb sports ground scrape

The chalk bank needs its first cut, and once done by Winchester City Council, we will rake it up, if required. Just to stand in that corner of the sports field and see the wildlife benefit not just of the scrape and chalk bank, but the area of long grass, against the sterile lawn of the amenity grassland, makes you realise every little bit counts!



A few photos of recent activity at MHD. From L-R: Brush cutting in Area 4; The Mace volunteer team; Some precarious work in Area 4. (All photos © Fiona Scully)

## Yew Hill

Twenty little Shetland sheep finally returned to Yew Hill in November. They need to have big appetites as there is a lot of grass to get through! In hindsight, I should have asked for double the number. The volunteers have been clearing hawthorn scrub, freeing anthills, and cutting and raking the Southern Water meadow.



Scrub clearance (12 Oct)



Volunteer team (9 Nov)



Shetland sheep (23 Nov)

All photos © Fiona Scully

## Bentley Station Meadow

Not being daunted by the amount of bramble and blackthorn scrub, the volunteers have stuck in with tree poppers and brushcutters to clear the worryingly large amount of scrub encroachment. The SDNP Rangers have been fantastic. After sending their volunteers to Bentley, they saw how much needed doing and have offered further support. They provided 3 more brushcutters and a Ranger with a big truck to help us out. With two volunteers now trained to use the brushcutters they were off, and it was a good feeling to get so much done. Some woodland management work was carried out, creating standing dead wood on two small oaks that were being overshadowed by larger oaks. The log piles and brush were left on site.



The photo (right) shows a 'pair' of Brown Hairstreak eggs on Blackthorn.

## Volunteer work days

- **Magdalen Hill Down** - every Monday, until March, excluding Christmas and New Year.

Meet at 10am, up the track to the right of the cemetery entrance, off Alresford Road, Winchester SO21 1HE

- **Yew Hill** - Dec. 14th; Jan. 11th, 25th; Feb. 1st, 15th, 29th

Meet 10am at the bottom of Old Kennels Lane, Olivers Battery SO22 4JT

- **Bentley Station Meadow** – Dec. 6th, 20th; Jan. 3rd, 17th; Feb. 7th, 21st

Meet 10am at Gravel Hill Road car park, near Alice Holt Lodge (or 10.30 at the reserve)

See [our Facebook page](#), for latest updates. For those not already on the list, who would like to volunteer, please email me: [fscully@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:fscully@butterfly-conservation.org)

I look forward to seeing you out on the reserves soon.

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

## Dates

### Reserves Volunteering

Mondays (excl. 25/12 & 01/01)	Magdalen Hill Down	<a href="#">Fiona Scully</a>
14/12, 11/01, 25/01, 01/02, 15/02, 29/02	Yew Hill	
06/12, 20/12, 03/01, 17/01, 07/02, 21/02	Bentley Station Meadow	

## Branch, and branch-related Events

28th January, 2024	New Forest Volunteer Fayre - meet the New Forest Butterfly Transect Group	
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### [Branch Field trips](#)

Full details of Hampshire walks 2023 [here](#). Full details of **Isle of Wight** walks [here](#).

TBA		
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### Accompanied Reserves Walks

TBA		
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### [First sightings \(since August e-Newsletter\)](#)

**Note: Data extracted from [Branch 'News' webpage](#)**

August 6	Long-tailed Blue	Havant
August 13	Silver-spotted Skipper	Broughton Down

## Social Media links, etc.



Branch FB



Our Reserves FB



Branch X  
(Twitter)



Branch Insta



Branch WWW