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**April 2026**

Dear Branch Member,

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

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## 2025 Branch Butterfly Records

Although processing of last year's butterfly records is not yet complete, here is an update of the Hampshire County Council sites which had no records for 2024, but thanks to your efforts did have records for 2025:

- Avington Park
- Buckland Rings
- Castle Shore
- Castleman Trail
- de Havilland Monument
- Dunbridge Meadows
- Fort Nelson
- Gutner Point
- Kites Croft
- Rye & Hillside Commons
- The Kench
- Whiteley Woods
- Zebon Copse

That's a total of 13 sites so very well done and many thanks to all who took part.

In a future edition, I am hoping to produce both a Common Species Table, and a Scarcer Species Table for 2025 (similar to that previously published in our annual Butterfly Report).

**Footnote** – With **Large Tortoiseshell** prominently in the news recently, I can report that as of the week ending 21st March, 26 formal records within our BC Branch have been received (no doubt some of the same butterfly...). Only one on the mainland, thus far (Hengistbury Head). Also, it's been reported that **Purple emperor larvae** have been getting ready to feed since mid-March. This could mean yet another early emergence, as in 2025.

*Bob Annell (County Butterfly Recorder, Hampshire & Isle of Wight)*

## Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme (WCBS) update

Introduced in 2009, the WCBS is a recording scheme for monitoring butterfly numbers across the UK, especially suited perhaps to those new to butterfly recording or with limited available time to support Butterfly Conservation with their work. Importantly, the survey enables the collection of data from under-recorded habitats such as farmland, plantation woodland, uplands and urban spaces. WCBS Recorders help Butterfly Conservation to understand butterflies in their local area and, by extension, across the UK. They inspire people to better understand the butterflies that they see, contributing to scientific monitoring and supporting a major citizen science project – the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS).

Further information about the scheme and reports on previous years' surveys can be found here - <https://ukbms.org/wider-countryside-butterfly-survey>

To summarise, **volunteers are allocated a 1km OS grid square** that, while randomly selected for the purpose of the survey, is **geographically convenient to the surveyor**. The requirement is to **walk along two broadly parallel transect lines through the square at least once in July and once in August**, identifying and recording any butterflies. Walks need to take place in appropriate weather, the minimum requirements of which are clearly defined.

No experience is necessary, just an interest in butterflies, a willingness to learn, normal eyesight, and the ability to get to and from the square (and to walk the route safely, of course). Walking a WCBS survey can be enjoyable in itself or a gentle introduction to more formal butterfly surveying, recording and gaining experience observing butterflies. **Squares are selected randomly and may cover any type of habitat, including urban areas and farmland as well as 'more natural' areas**. The landowner's permission may be required before walks can take place.

There are over 25 squares across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight available for volunteers, some of which have been walked regularly and others of which require walkers to identify suitable routes for future surveys. Where it proves difficult to establish a route on new squares or access permission is refused by the landowner an alternative route can often be found in an adjacent square as part of the Survey scheme. Guidance, help and advice is available.

See the [Volunteering opportunities](#) section near the end of this e-Newsletter for information on (some of!) the available WCBS squares in Hampshire & IoW.

If you are interested in participating in the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey and would be able to undertake two walks a year in a square suitable to you, please contact me (see below), or click [this link](#).

*Chris Piper (Regional WCBS Champion, Hampshire & Isle of Wight)*

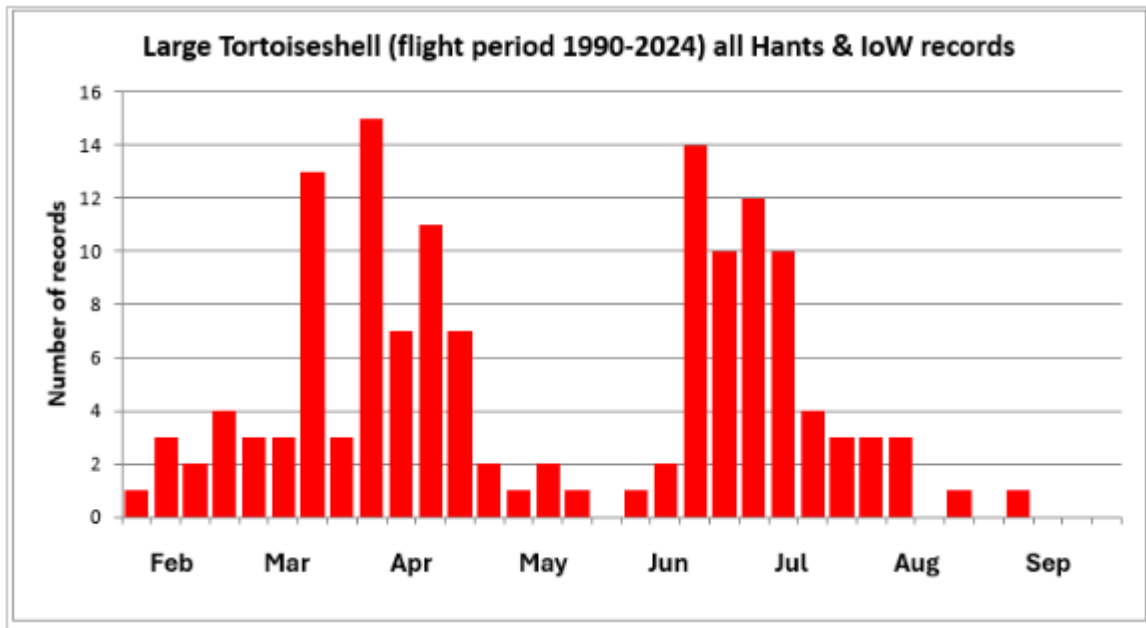
*Email: [chris.piper@butterfly-conservation.goassemble.com](mailto:chris.piper@butterfly-conservation.goassemble.com)*

# Large Tortoiseshell

Some news on the [Large Tortoiseshell \(\*Nymphalis polychloros\*\)](#) in our local area... (see also the final para. of [Bob Annell's article](#) , above)...

**From Andy Barker (Transect Co-ordinator, Central Hampshire):**

Following the [spate of Large Tortoiseshell sightings across southern England](#), including a few in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, I thought it would be worth a short news item to encourage everyone to keep an eye out for this rare migrant and former UK resident. The graph below summarises the flight period based on 1990-2024 Hampshire and Isle of Wight sightings. As you'll notice, there are two clear peaks, the first in March/April following hibernation, and a second from mid-June to early August representing the summer brood emergence (plus migration from the continent).



Although I've seen Large Tortoiseshell in Europe on a few occasions, I've yet to see one in Hampshire, so I wish you all the very best of luck.

**From Nikki Kownacki (Branch member, IoW):**

We must have all heard the exciting news over the last couple of weeks that the Large Tortoiseshell is now recognised by Butterfly Conservation as resident in the UK and is no longer classified as extinct ([see here](#)). This is my write-up of personal encounters I have had with Large Tortoiseshell butterflies over the last few years.

The first Large Tortoiseshell I spotted was in 2020 and it was just a couple of hundred yards away from where we live, in West Wight. It was near a path where I walk frequently. Luckily, I always take a camera out with me as I like to record wildlife and you never know what you may see. I spotted a large, colourful butterfly in a sunny glade and I remember being very excited as I took photos and began to recognise that this was not a Small Tortoiseshell as I had first thought. Thankfully it kept very still with wings wide open as I photographed.

I messaged Jim Baldwin (who we have sadly now lost but will be long remembered) with the photos as soon as I got home and he confirmed that this was indeed a Large Tortoiseshell. He also added that he had never seen one before and thought this was maybe a release. Subsequently, on iRecord there were five records of the Large Tortoiseshell on the Isle of Wight in 2020.

Over the next couple of years there were fewer sightings on the Island. In fact, I had to wait until 2023 until I saw one again, when I spotted one in our garden for the first time,

and two in other locations (both public parks in West Wight). That year there were nine records in total on the Island. To have seen three in one year, one being in our own garden(!) was such a thrill.

Then in 2025 I made seven different recordings of Large Tortoiseshells over the year - **all** within our garden. The first was on 30th March when I saw 2 together, with the last being 23rd June. **This is when I first suspected that there was a breeding colony in the area.** However, on the Island there were only two other verified recordings on iRecord, that year. Later in the year I emailed Butterfly Conservation to say that we might have a small breeding colony on the Island, in West Wight.

This year I recorded the first Large Tortoiseshell sighting in the UK for the year, on 24th February. This was again in our garden and two were seen together. First Sightings emailed me to let me know that this sighting was recognised and would be added to the First Sightings listing of breeding butterflies in the UK for the very first time. What a great record!

So far this year I have recorded a Large Tortoiseshell nine times, all within the confines of our garden. What a great start to the year. There were at least seven distinct individuals, as I have gone into detail and compared markings of the butterflies with my photos for reference. I am very hopeful that there will be even more in the summer, if these butterflies breed successfully.

There have been other sightings on the Island this year as well. Some have been recorded by friends of mine who have seen a Large Tortoiseshell for the first time. All great news as seeing this beautiful butterfly is a real privilege. I hope that even more people get to see them over the next few years, if they keep on increasing in numbers. Keep your eyes open!

A footnote about our garden. It has been managed over the last six years or so to have areas of wildflower meadow, and these wild flowers have been increasing in range and quantity. They are all native to the UK, and most began growing naturally - although we did sow Yellow Rattle to help keep the grass down. We have also planted over 1,500 natural hedging plants, and planted many other individual trees, including disease-resistant elms. Because of this, and my husband Paul's hard work, I have now recorded 36 different species of butterfly in the garden. We are so very lucky! I'll finish-off with a few photos...



2020 - first sighting!



5th April 2025



14th March 2026

All photos © Nikki Kownacki

## Hampshire & IoW BAMS Inaugural AGM

The inaugural meeting of the **Hampshire & Isle of Wight Butterfly and Moth Society (BAMS)** is taking place at the Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall, Hall Way, Littleton, Winchester, SO22 6QL from 10.00 to 13.00 on Sunday, 26th April (all welcome, no booking required). Presentations will include:

- British and Irish Butterfly Rarities, by Pete Eeles
- New surveying and monitoring approaches that inform Duke of Burgundy habitat management, by Dr Sue Clarke
- Reviews of the 2025 butterfly and moth year.

See <https://hampshire.butterflyandmothsociety.org/> for further details.

*Rupert Broadway*

## Reserves report

### Volunteer work days schedule

The volunteer work party dates are on the [Hampshire Branch website](#) (summarised in the Newsletter [here](#)). In essence: **Mondays at Magdalen Hill, first Wednesday of each month at BSM and fortnightly Thursdays at Yew Hill.** **NOTE: 2025/2026 work parties are now completed!**

### Butterfly Walks on the Reserves

Please keep checking for updates on [the branch website](#).

Current planned walks are [in the Dates section](#) of this e-Newsletter (below).

*[Fiona Scully \(BC Reserves Officer, South East England\)](#)*

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

## Snippets

- Apologies! The branch Annual Butterfly Report didn't make it in time for this issue - hopefully in the June edition!...
- If you have any comments or suggestions for your regular e-Newsletter, please email me, the editor ([enewsletter@hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:enewsletter@hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk)).
- The first of our 2026 Branch Field Trips is almost with us - [see below](#).

## Dates

An electronic calendar (.ics), covering all Field Trips & Reserves Walks, is available from [the Butterfly Walks webpage](#), or just copy/paste this link into your Calendar application, to **subscribe** (don't 'download' - you won't get automatic updates, if events change): [https://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/BC\\_Hants\\_walks.ics](https://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/BC_Hants_walks.ics)

### [Branch, and branch-related Events \(check website for updates\)](#)

2026 Events to be announced.

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### [Branch Field Trips 2026 \(check website for updates\)](#)

Hampshire walks and Isle of Wight walks...

When	Where	Target species
Sat 18 Apr	Parkhurst Forest	Orange-tip, Brimstone, Comma, Peacock
Wed 29 Apr	West Meon - Park Hill	Small Tortoiseshell, Holy Blue, Orange-tip
Sat 2 May	Thorness Bay fields	Orange-tip, Brimstone, Green-veined White, Skippers
Sun 3 May	Portsdown Hill	Wall
Wed 6 May	Butser Hill - Ramsdean Down	Duke of Burgundy, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Emperor Moth
Sun 10 May	Queen Elizabeth Country Park - Coulter's Dean	Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Grizzled Skipper
Wed 13 May	New Forest - Ramnor & Pig Bush Inclosures	Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Cuckoo, Raft Spider, Emperor Moth
Sat 16 May	Mottistone Chalk-pits	Glanville Fritillary, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper
Wed 20 May	Martin Down	Marsh Fritillary, Adonis Blue, Emperor Moth, Forester Moth
Sat 23 May	Compton Chine	Glanville Fritillary, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Adonis Blue
Wed 17 Jun	New Forest - Hawkhill Inclosure	Dark Green Fritillary, Silver-studded Blue, Clouded Buff Moth
Wed 24 Jun	West Wood / Pitt Down	Dark Green Fritillary, Marbled White, Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary
Sat 27 Jun	Newtown Meadows / Walter's Copse	White Admiral, Marbled White, Brown Argus, Ringlet
Sun 28 Jun	Creech Wood / Forest of Bere	Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral
Wed 1 Jul	West Walk / Forest of Bere	Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral
Sat 4 Jul	Mottistone Down	Dark Green Fritillary, Brown Argus, Chalk Hill Blue
Sun 5 Jul	Basing Wood	Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral
Wed 8 Jul	Abbotswood Inclosure	Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary
Sun 12 Jul	Micheldever Road / Abbotstone Down	Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary (ab. Valesina)
Wed 15 Jul	Queen Elizabeth Country Park / West Harting Down	Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary, Hummingbird Hawk Moth
Sat 18 Jul	Kemphill Moor Copse	White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary (inc. ab Valesina), Purple Hairstreak
Sat 1 Aug	Mount Joy, Carisbrooke	Chalk Hill Blue, Common Blue, Wall, Brown Argus
Wed 5 Aug	Old Winchester Hill NNR	Clouded Yellow, Silver-spotted Skipper, Adonis Blue
Wed 12 Aug	Shipton Bellinger	Brown Hairstreak, Magpie Moth, Wall Brown
Sat 15 Aug	Brading Downs	Chalk Hill Blue, Brown Argus
Wed 19 Aug	Noar Hill	Brown Hairstreak, Common Blue, Clouded Yellow
Wed 2 Sep	Beacon Hill at Exton	Clouded Yellow, Silver-spotted Skipper, Brown Argus
Sat 5 Sep	Thorness Bay fields	Clouded Yellow, Wall, Brown Argus, Small Copper

## [Accompanied Reserves Walks \(check website for updates\)](#)

Email [Fiona Scully](mailto:Fiona.Scully@ntsb.gov.uk) to book a place on a Reserves walk.

When	Where	Target species	Information
Fri 12 Jun, 11:00-13:00	Magdalen Hill Down	Marbled White, Green Hairstreak, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper, and Burnet moth	
Thu 16 Jul, 10:30-13:00	Bentley Station Meadow	Purple Hairstreak, Silver-washed Fritillary, and summer flowers	Booking essential!
Wed 12 Aug, 11:00-13:00	Magdalen Hill Down	Chalkhill, and Adonis Blues	

## [First sightings \(04/02/2026 - 05/04/2026\)](#)

**Note: Data extracted from [Branch 'News' webpage](#) (so, NOT official!)**

4th February	Peacock	North Baddesley
24th February	Small White	Leigh Park
24th February	Brimstone	Emsworth / Eagle Head Copse, IoW
25th February	Comma	Gosport / Enham Alamein
18th March	Speckled Wood	Rownhams
19th March	Large Tortoiseshell	Yarmouth, IoW
21st March	Small Tortoiseshell	Enham Alamein
23rd March	Orange-tip	Church Crookham / Marwell
23rd March	Holly Blue	Church Crookham
26th March	Green-veined White	Fishlake Meadows

## Volunteering opportunities

We need help with the following:

### Transect walkers required

Site	Parking	Contact	Background info
Ashford Hill (between Kingsclere and Tadley)	OS grid: SU558608 What3Words: feel.lodge.headings	<a href="#">Andy Bolton</a>	The transect is approximately 2.4km long and split into 6 sections which cover grassland and ancient semi-natural woodland, with Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral present in the woods and Small Copper, Small Heath and Common Blue in the meadows. This would be the 20th year in its present form, so it would be a shame for it to stop, especially as the site is a National Nature Reserve

For enquiries please email [transect@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:transect@butterfly-conservation.org) - as per Andy Barker's article in the February 2026 e-Newsletter, whilst we now have full coverage for Hampshire there is still a vacancy for a Transect Co-ordinator for the Isle of Wight. Any offers would be most welcome.

### [WCBS square surveys \(a selection - there are more!\)](#)

Where (postcode)	NGR co-ords
Sparsholt (SO21)	SU4132
Ecchinswell (RG20)	SU5060
Ropley Dean (SO24)	SU6231
Kingates & Whitwell area, Isle of Wight (PO38)	SZ5177
Wootton Common, Isle of Wight (PO33)	SZ5291

Blackheath Down, Tidpit (SP6)	SU0717
Shelley Common (SO51)	SU3118
Leigh Park (PO9)	SU7108
The Warren, Horndean (PO8)	SU6813

For further info, contact [Chris Piper](#)

## [Reserves Volunteering \(check website for updates\)](#)

**Please check the website for updates.**

2025/26 season ended	Magdalen Hill Down	Please contact <a href="#">Fiona Scully</a> for details.
2025/26 season ended	Yew Hill	
2025/26 season ended	Bentley Station Meadow	

## Social Media links



Branch FB



Our Reserves FB



Branch X  
(Twitter)



Branch Insta



Branch WWW