



**Butterfly Conservation
Friends of Magdalen Hill
Down Butterfly Reserve**

**Newsletter No 24
Autumn 2005**

Winter Work Parties

Meet up track by Magdalen Hill Cemetery on the B3404 (approximately ½ mile west of Percy Hobbs Roundabout. Grid reference SU 511 295) Usually 10am to 4pm but helpers welcome for part of day. An odd hour helps so please come!

Friday 23rd September and Friday 7th October

We are starting work parties early in the season. Patrick hopes more of you might come along if there is the prospect of seeing butterflies! We hope a sunny September and October might yield Clouded Yellows and Small Coppers, in addition to the Red Admirals that are usually lured to the ivy flowers. At both these work parties there will be light work available in cutting wild clematis off the stock wire. We also have plans to clear flowering clematis out of shrubs and trees and there may be a bit of ragwort in need of pulling. We shall be working mainly in Area 4 of the original reserve.

Friday 4th November

Wednesday 14th December

On the hill - What people have been seeing

Our guided walk on 23rd April was a victim of bad weather but four of us enjoyed seeing the cowslips, a Holly Blue and two female Orange Tips, roosting on Jack-by-the-hedge, and thus exhibiting their superb camouflage.

At that time the sheep were grazing the extension and avoiding eating too many cowslips. Patrick saw a Small Copper on 29th April - the earliest he can remember seeing. The other good news butterfly wise is that many more Grizzled and Dingy Skippers have been seen than usual. Later on Patrick (and several visitors) saw a number of Small Blues. We are undertaking conservation measures to encourage these four species of butterfly and are interested to hear of your sightings at MHD or indeed any of our three reserves.

On 4th May Lynn saw a hare on North Down, Mike Green found plovers nest and on 5th May Richard Desborough found leveret. (The latter two were contractors undertaking work on ND & being very

careful not to disturb the wild life. John from the cemetery also saw plover chicks.

Mike Edwards has been conducting an entomological survey. This is what Mike found on 6th July

Robber Fly *Machimus rusticus* RDB 2 -Chalk grassland species

Bee *Melitta haemorroidalis*, Nationally Scarce b. Associated with Campanula flowers

Spider-hunting Wasp *Aporus unicolor*, Nationally Scarce a. It is a predator of the Purse-web Spider *Atypus affinis*, which must be present and is also noteworthy. Mike added "Paul Toynton came up with me today and was full of praise."

Mike did a further survey on 3rd August and will do a third day in April 2006 to complete his report. He commented after the August visit "The grasshoppers are rapidly moving in to the newest re-gen and are everywhere in the other areas. No sign of Stripe-winged Grasshopper, *Stenobothrus lineatus*, which I would have expected on the oldest area in the bare/very short turf. It is possible that I am loosing the ability to hear this species and would be interested to know whether you have current records of it".

John Davis (from Head Office) heard a Rufous Grasshopper on the extension on 28th July

On 12th August the walk was for parents and children and it was a real thrill for them to see a Wasp Spider with a web (containing Chalkhill Blue wings!).

On 5th September it was a MHD Management mtg (where 5 of us walk around the down to discuss how everything is doing & what work etc we need to be doing. We were thrilled to find a few Autumn Ladies Tresses in Area 1 where they had not been seen before to our knowledge. Andy Barker mentioned that Pyramidal orchids are getting more widespread too. We rarely have news of sightings of orchids from people but would welcome these next year.

Phil Budd wrote on 6th September

I counted 20 Autumn Ladies Tresses in Area 3 recently and found an interesting shield bug - the Scarab Shieldbug - 2nd smallest British species on the North Down recently. I have 2651 Chalkhill Blues from week 15 to 23 inclusive on the Original Reserve. I have 42 so far on Extension.

Lots of Clouded Yellows have been seen and photographed!

Entries to the above summarised by Lynn.

Common Bird Census survey.

Ron Cooke completed this survey in 2005. In comparison to the 2002 census the number of species recorded increased by one from 29 to 30 and the number of territories by 31 from 182 to 213. Four new species were recorded in territory:- Pheasant, Sparrowhawk, Coal tit and Linnet. However three were lost:- Lesser Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Jay. The Robin remained easily the dominant species with Wood Pigeon, Wren and Dunnock sub dominate. Notable increases were recorded for Wood Pigeon, Wren, Goldcrest, Blue Tit and Great Tit. The only significant decrease was for Blackcap. The increase in territories compared to 2002 was entirely due to more breeding species being recorded along the boundary hedgerows on the extension. Footnote from Lynn. I guess though that the increase in species of tit can be attributed to the nest boxes erected by pupils from Leigh House Hospital in 2004.

Warden's Notes

Patrick Fleet writes...

At least 15 Grizzled Skippers seen along the bottom of Area 4 during May. And on the extension at east 6 Dingy Skipper sightings. On 10th June I saw 7 Small Blues on the original reserve – the highest number I have ever seen at the same time. On the 24th June I saw 4 Privet Hawk moths including one pair on the top fence posts. On 4th July I saw a Festoon moth at the ash trees between the original & the extension and a Scarlet Tiger on comfrey.

Grazing

Cattle will be arriving on both the original reserve and the extension late September/early October. The ones on the extension will have their calves with them which were born this Spring.

We are planning grazing Area 4 of the original reserve (the compartment nearest the extension) with sheep January/ February and we would welcome the services of a volunteer to check the sheep daily. Obviously this is a job a few people could share on a rota. It is likely to involve a bit of walking & hunting around to check all the sheep are there and not stuck in bushes! **Can you help please? Ring Lynn.**

Newsletter

This newsletter is produced on behalf of Butterfly Conservation Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch & is provided free of charge to friends of the reserve. Lynn has written the majority of this newsletter - apologies for any errors/omissions. Items welcomed from you. Please send any items for the Autumn Newsletter to Lynn by 15th March 2006. Let her know if you would like it by email to save us the cost of postage

North Down

It is almost a year since North Down was sown with a mixture of native grass and wild flower seeds. As many of you will have seen there was a wonderful show of poppies during June. Sadly these had to be topped off to enable the seedlings of the grass and wild flowers to grow. Early indications are that the sowing has worked well and a number of species have been seen to be flowering like kidney vetch, oxeye daisy and scabious and knapweed. An enormous effort has been made to clear flowering ragwort. We have had help from Wednesday Conservation Volunteers and Hampshire Conservation Volunteers plus a number of volunteer work parties of our own members. In addition regular help has been given by groups from Hampshire Probation Service serving Community Service Orders. **A big thank you to all concerned.**

Visit by Andy Byfield of Plantlife and John Davis to North Down on– Andy was thrilled to see a number of the less common arable plants flourishing. We found Venus's-looking-glass, Cornflower, Corn Chamomile, Night Flowering Catchfly.

The new butterfly transect has been started on North Down mainly with new volunteers. We have seen some good species on this new area including Clouded Yellows, Chalkhill Blues and Small Coppers.

The majority of work for this scheme has been finished. There is some work left to be done on gates and also the area around the trees and shrubs at each end is to be sown with native grass and wild flowers.

Magdalen Hill Down Who's Who

Who's Who....

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nb This list is shorter than usual to save space!