



Butterfly Conservation
40 years of saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

**Hampshire and
Isle of Wight Branch**

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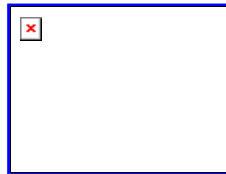
24th November 2007

Magdalen Hill Down

Today the 120 Black-faced sheep were moved from the section of Magdalen Hill Down North next to the Alresford road into the field at the top. The sheep are doing a good job nibbling their way through the vegetation. It was VERY cold up there today. Unlike Wednesday when I actually saw a butterfly - Red Admiral of course! Wednesday (21st) was a fine day not warm! but ideal for the work party. The Wednesday Conservation Volunteers and some of the Magdalen Hill Down regulars tackled the coppicing of a scrub block on the original reserve - these are cut on an 18-year rotation. Magdalen is being well grazed by suckler cows with their calves on the extension, 8 dry cows on the original & 120 Black-faced sheep on Magdalen Hill Down North. Photographs taken at this time of year with the setting sun about 3.45 over Winchester and the sheep in the foreground makes a lovely picture. Not that I have yet managed to take it! But watch this space..

Yew Hill

The winter season of work parties at Yew Hill got off to a good start on Friday 2nd November. The weather was quite amazing for a day in winter! An account from one participant read.. "We were pestered by Ladybirds that flew up from disturbed vegetation and were quite active in the warm November sunshine. Two species identified were the standard Seven-spot and the black background version of the Two-spot (*Adalia 2-punctata f sexpustula*). One of the latter landed on the back of my neck!" He added that "A pair of Red-legged and a lone Grey Partridge flew across during the lunch break disturbing respectively a serious discussion of solar induced energy in butterflies, and how species recover from serious area-wide population crashes." We enjoyed cake in the sunshine, cleared a lot of troublesome scrub and had a bonfire of some debris from last year. All in all a pleasant and fruitful time. Of course as well as work parties being essential to good habitat management so is grazing. Thankfully six young cattle arrived on 10th November and are now happily munching away. Our next Yew Hill Work party is Sunday 2nd December with Hampshire Conservation Volunteers.



Lynn Fomison Branch Reserves Officer >

19th October 2007

Bentley Station Meadow

Friday 19th October saw us making a great start to our winter work party programme.

The southern end of the meadow is pretty well sorted out for winter now. The bramble patches are really important for butterflies and they were given a light trim to keep them in shape. Numerous sycamores were sawn down and treated with amicide to prevent the nuisance of seeding.

As well as checking and clearing much of the fenceline - lower down the reserve fallen willow branches were cleared one dead tree and two badly damaged ones were marked up to receive attention when we have the tree felling done in the winter.

Ben Spraggon cut the scallops down the path side. The work we have done over the years means these are now full of flowering plants and we do not want them to get overgrown with brambles again. This cutting job was very welcome as we may not get cattle this winter.

We have lots of conservation work planned and I hope you will join us on a future occasion. Volunteers welcome for an odd hour - it all helps.

Lynn Fomison

31st July 2007

We used events at reserves to focus on Save our Butterflies Week from 20th - 29th July. We had a walk at each reserve and all three were well attended - over 60 people in all. And of course lots of butterflies. At Bentley Station Meadow on 20th July we saw just the one Silver-washed Fritillary. Nice - as this was one of the events to celebrate the Branch's Silver Jubilee.

At both Yew Hill and Magdalen on 24th & 29th respectively numerous Chalkhill Blues were seen, but the weather had obviously affected them & numbers were lower than normal.

It was also nice to mark SoB week with a practical exercise - Hampshire Conservation Volunteers came & cleared ragwort at Magdalen Hill Down.

There are still a few events to come at our reserves so check these out in Events.

We have also had lots of visits from groups this summer - if you belong to a group that would like a special visit - please contact me

Lynn Fomison
Reserves Officer

24th May 2007

Bentley Station Meadow

Our programme of group visits to the reserves is well underway. Members of Ludshott Photographic Club (www.ludshottpc.org.uk) really enjoyed a visit to Bentley on 24th May. Despite the lack of butterflies Lynn Fomison was able to convince them that butterflies and moths were worthy subjects being both challenging & interesting to photograph. Those present hoped to make good use of Lynn's hints and tips on butterfly photography on future visits.

An unusual high spot to the end of the visit were several sightings of two weasels scampering up & down the platform at Bentley Station! And just before that the group had a lovely sighting of a hare!

14th April 2007

Lynn Fomison writes ... "Here are the sheep & cowslips at MHD Extension, taken on 13th April. The sheep moved in on 12th April having spent the previous month grazing MHD North. As you can see they are very photogenic and I am just hoping they won't eat the cowslips before our first public walk of the season on 21st April! It is important that the sheep graze the extension at this time of year to control the coarser grasses like false oat grass".



This lovely photo from Sue Clark shows the beauty of spring flowers at Bentley Station Meadow. Much of our conservation work has been targeted at increasing primroses and violets so nice to see its working! Both plants are good nectar sources for butterflies and the violets are essential for Silver-washed Fritillaries to breed.



On 4th April we had help from staff and a volunteer from the Blackwater Countryside Partnership in brushcutting bramble under the oak trees. This ongoing management is effective in controlling bramble & increasing the primroses and violets.

2nd April 2007

Yesterday 1st April saw the start of the transect season. As far as our 3 reserves are concerned the information gathered during the course of the season is important for two reasons. The fluctuations in butterfly numbers sometimes help us decide on appropriate management. For example when Small Copper number dropped at MHD we implemented a bare ground strategy - areas of sparsely vegetated ground where their larval food plant sorrel would thrive without too much competition & where the areas of bare ground would provide the warm conditions that the species likes.

Secondly when transect figures demonstrate a huge increase in butterfly numbers we can use these in publicity to achieve the recognition that Butterfly Conservation deserves for its success in helping butterflies. Did you know the transect on the original reserve at Magdalen Hill Down started in 1990. 437 chalkhill Blues were recorded. We were thrilled when in 2003 numbers broke the 200 mark with 2196 recorded and imagine our delight when the 2006 figure was 3236!

A third good use of transect data is show us if our reserves are being colonised by other species.

From time to time we need new people as transect recorders. We aim to have a team of 5 for each transect - 5 of these in all - 3 at MHD, one at Yew Hill and one at Bentley. Sharing the weeks on a rota basis means each person does about 5 weeks through the period April to September. If you think this is something you would like to help with in 2008 and if you feel in need of training in 2007 we can arrange for you to walk the transect of your choice a few times with one of the existing recorders.

If you feel unable to make a commitment for rota-ed attendance there are opportunities to visit reserves to look for specific species - often those present in low number and difficult to pick up on transect - like Green Hairstreak at Bentley, White-letter Hairstreak and Small Blue at Yew Hill, Duke of Burgundy & Small Blue at MHD.

Do contact me if you would like to help in gathering important data for our reserves.

I am also pleased to hear from anyone who can run moth lamps at reserves particularly Magdalen Hill Down

Lynn Fomison 01962 772251

27th January 2007

On Sunday 21st January myself plus Patrick Fleet & three other Hampshire volunteers went to a work party at Butterfly Conservation's Alner's Gorse reserve in Dorset. This was a return visit as a Thank you for the visit Dorset members had made to Magdalen Hill Down in December. There is a further visit from Hampshire to Alner's Gorse on Saturday 10th March. Do go if you can. It is a relatively new reserve with lots of work to be done with trees being felled & gorse cleared away to create flower rich grassland.

The highlight of the trip was seeing the invaluable help given by the pony - well trained to track trees to the fire. All the large wood is being saved to be sold as fire wood or to be made into charcoal.



At the Alner's Gorse work party on 21st January Nigel Spring felled many conifer trees to help to expand the butterfly habitat.



We have just had some major tree surgery done on trees at Magdalen Hill Down on the boundary between the original reserve & the extension.

Volunteers at the work party on 24th January helped burn up the debris & stack the logs into nice habitat piles. we even got some help from the cattle who devoured the ivy off the felled branches. They were SO keen on it we stacked the majority in brambles on the original reserve and excluded the cattle. Whilst a little ivy does no harm gorging themselves on it is not recommended . Besides which we were mindful that pupa of Holly Blues were likely to be present in the stems.

As the picture shows the winter view from MHD is quite pleasing - do join us on our last work day on Friday 23rd February.



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