



**Butterfly Conservation
Friends of Bentley Station
Meadow Butterfly Reserve**

Newsletter – Autumn 2005

Dates for your Diary

Conservation Work Parties are an important aspect of achieving habitat improvements for flowers and butterflies. Do come along and help if you can – an odd hour is a BIG help.

Sunday 30th October “Make a Difference Day”
This is a day when we try to get new volunteers along but old regulars needed too. Do you have a friend you could ask to come with you?

Sunday 15th January – Conservation Work Party

Friday 3rd February – Conservation Work Party

We meet at 10am in the station car park or join us later on the reserve.

As usual we have got ambitious plans for what we want to achieve. The work volunteers do really does make a difference. We need to continue the work that we did last year in the Oak copse by the railway line. This has been particularly effective in encouraging Silver-washed Fritillaries. It is likely we will be having some more large trees felled to reduce the amount of shading in the meadow

For further information on any of the above events please contact Lynn Fomison on 01962 772251

Saturday 12th November – Hampshire and IOW Branch Members Day. (Non-members most welcome). An interesting programme to include a selection of talks; “The Not-So-Secret Life of the Brown Hairstreak” by David Redhead from Upper Thames Branch; “Migrant Moths and New Colonisers of Hants and Isle of Wight” by Rob Edmunds; “Conserving Butterflies and Other Wildlife in the New Forest” (speaker TBC) and Peter Eeles, our Webmaster, will be talking about “The Branch Website”. Plus the usual favourites; a super tea, displays, sales and members’ slides.

St Barnabas Church Hall, Fromond Road, Weeke, Winchester. Doors open at 1.00pm for AGM at 1.30pm and the talks are scheduled to start at 2.30pm.



Cattle Grazing

From October to December we have cows grazing in the reserve. This year two arrived on the 28th September both Belted Galloways, Flick (dun) and Extra (black). On 7th October Arielle, an Irish Moiled with cataracts, joined them together with a calf called Iowa. The fifth cow is Rose. Phil Smith who works nearby will keep an eye on them as usual.

The cattle are rare breeds and are owned by Elizabeth Millers’ “Millers Ark Animals”, an enterprise that encourages the positive interaction between farm animals and people, especially children and those with special needs. Elizabeth now has a charitable enterprise called Animal Touch to bring the beneficial effects of animals to those in need. Her animals are very good-natured and we are pleased to welcome them to the reserve. (01256 701847 – www.millersark.co.uk).

In the Meadow

The following are a selection of reports that Lynn has received – it’s always pleasing to share notes of pleasant visits with others so do keep writing! These reports give us all an indication of what we can see and when.

On the 2nd April Derek Mills recorded at least four Chiffchaffs singing with Bullfinch, Nuthatch, Great spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, and various members of the Tit family being seen.

On 11th April Sue Clark compiled a list of eighteen species of birds seen and listed wild flowers blooming:- Ground-ivy, Common Dog-violet, Primrose, Wood Anemone, Blackthorn, False Oxlip, Gorse, Wood Sorrel and Barren Strawberry, but no Lady’s-smock yet. However one Orange-tip was seen along with Brimstone, Peacock and Comma butterflies.

“Brian and I were in the Meadow during the warm, sunny afternoon of 21st April”, wrote Maureen Thomas, “and were full of admiration for all that has been achieved recently. We saw male and female Brimstones, male Orange-tips, Peacock, Comma and Large White. There was also the usual quick, brown blur - probably a Small Copper.

Enough to lift the spirits after the dimly cloudy morning, anyway”.

On **22nd April** Elizabeth Tunnah was able to produce a bird list very similar to Sue's of the 11th but with the addition of Blackcap singing

Thelma Smalley wrote of walking the transect in Week 10. She saw a Green Hair Streak which she reported to the website. Elizabeth also saw it in Week 11, **10th June**, but had to abandon the transect due to a weather change. However, she then walked a full transect on the 13th but did not see it again. Lynn adds; “We see so few GHS at BSM it is thrilling to hear of these sightings”.

On the **6th May** Sue noted Bugle to be well in flower – it's a great nectar source. Sue examined fourteen Lady's-smock plants and found nine had eggs of Orange-tip butterflies.

It was pleasing that Thelma had a good view of a Brown Argus on the **7th June**. On the same day she noticed that the Orchids, Ragged Robin and Trefoils were all starting to look lovely.

On the **13th June** Elizabeth saw both Beautiful and Banded Demoiselles, and by the **18th June** Sue was describing the orchids as “superb”!

At the public walk on **10th July** a White Admiral was seen in Oak Copse by the railway line. On the same day Thelma met a visitor who had seen two Purple Emperors while he was sitting on Nellie's Seat. It was also a good day for Silver-washed Fritillaries – Thelma saw ten of them.

However this count was surpassed on **7th August** with eleven being seen with a further two off-transect.

By **16th August** Sue was lamenting the lack of Peacocks – none seen on transect that day, but the flowers made up for it with the following in flower: Sneezewort, Agrimony, Fleabane, Wild Angelica, Water Mint, Upright Hedge Parsley, Pepper Saxifrage, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Meadow-sweet, Betony, Rough Hawkbit, Devil's-bit Scabious (just) and Orpine.

Lynn visited the Meadow on Tuesday **20th September** to prepare for the arrival of the cattle. Immediately on entering the reserve she was thrilled to see a Small Copper nectaring on Devil's-bit Scabious. Other DBS flowers yielded two Commas. A third Comma was investigating dried-up Blackberries at the Southern End. A Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and Red Admiral were also seen. It was really sunny and warm and the last of the flowers were delightful, the Wild Mint and Fleabane were also being a useful nectar source. Wild Angelica was still flowering as well

but there were no butterflies on it. Matthew Oates mentions it in his book “Garden Plants for Butterflies” as a nectar source. Have others seen it used?

Thelma Smalley walked the Bentley Station Meadow transect on the **24th September** and saw a Small Copper, a Red Admiral, and a very tatty Speckled Wood. She says “Being the last transect of the year it was nice to see these as there were no sightings for the previous two weeks. Had a wonderful view of a low flying Buzzard.”

Initial indications are that the Meadow's butterflies have had a good season with Orange-tip, Comma, Peacock, Marbled White, Meadow Brown and Silver-washed Fritillary all showing an increase on last year. And despite two weeks when no butterflies were seen on transect in September overall numbers are only 22 down on last year with a total of 1,104 butterflies recorded on transect. We know for sure at least one Purple Emperor was seen – did you see any? Visitors are invited to send their observations to Lynn for inclusion in the Branch's Annual Report.

Management Meeting

On the 5th October Lynn, Jenny Mallett and Patrick Fleet met for the Annual Review.

One of the main things we considered was the suggestion we had had from Clive Carter to reduce the amount of shading in the meadow by felling some of the trees like Turkey Oak, Sycamore and Ash that have grown up in the fifteen years we have owned the reserve.

We also planned grassland management. It was pleasing to note that Patrick saw Broad Bordered Bee Hawk moth nectaring on Bugle this year – we noted that this moth needs Honeysuckle growing in sunny grassland to breed on.

We are aiming to keep more grass in a short state through the summer to encourage species like Brown Argus.

Educational Programme

Six public walks for groups including Bentley Cubs were held in 2005. We receive funding for these from Defra.

Bookings are being taken now for 2006. Special walks can be arranged for groups as part of our Educational Programme – Cubs, Brownies, schools, photographic societies and Women's

Institutes, etc. Tell the groups you belong to please, as these visits earn us cash under the Defra Educational Access Scheme. Contact Lynn to fix a date.

Summer Work

Patrick Fleet undertook the usual summer work of keeping the path around the butterfly transect cut. As well as making it safer for walkers we find the butterflies like these shorter areas too. He also tackled bracken and docks and did selective cutting of nettles.

We are grateful to Ben Spraggons for cutting several areas of the meadow with his mower, this is helping to reduce Bramble and producing good habitat for Common Blue and Brown Argus to breed. This cutting also yields a few more flowers in the autumn

Vandalism

Sadly there have been a few incidents of the leaflet box being damaged, notice boards being wrenched off and Hampshire County Council footpath signs pulled out.

Lynn is grateful for the help given by Maureen and Brian Thomas, David Walton and HCC in repairing the damage.

Newsletter

Lynn has written much of this newsletter - apologies for any errors/omissions.

Items welcomed from anyone who visits the Meadow. Please send any items for the Spring 2006 Newsletter to Lynn by 30th March 2006. Contact details in "Bentley Station Meadow Who's Who".

Bentley Station Meadow Who's Who

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Branch Website

<http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk>

National Web site

<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org>

