



Butterfly Conservation Friends of Bentley Station Meadow Butterfly Reserve

Dates for your Diary

Conservation work parties:

Friday 19th October 2007
Wednesday 14th November
Friday 7th December
Tuesday 8th January 2008 *
Sunday 20th January
Wednesday 20th February

*with Blackwater Valley Conservation
Volunteers and a 10.30am start.

We meet at 10:00am in the car park at Bentley Station (SU792 432), or join us later on the reserve. We usually finish about 2:30pm. Parking is available in Station Road, or in the station car park which has a pay and display machine.

Bring stout shoes or boots to wear and gardening gloves. If you wish bring a packed lunch too. Tools are supplied but bring a favourite pair of secateurs or loppers if you like.

Conservation Work Parties are very important to help maintain the habitat for flowers and butterflies, as well as being very enjoyable. Please come along if you can, even if only for an hour or so. Every hour worked really counts and is very much appreciated.

For any further information please contact Lynn Fomison on 01962 772251

An invitation

Members of Hampshire & IOW branch of Butterfly Conservation will have received the September newsletter with details of this years' Branch AGM and Members Day on Saturday 10th November, being held at St Barnabas Church Hall. **Non-members welcome.** There is a good selection of talks to be heard and there will be displays etc. The traditional Afternoon Tea will also be available.

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

Newsletter – Autumn 2007

Our Reserves - Their Beauty & Diversity

This is the title of the talk I am giving at Members Day on 10th November. I would like some of the images I show to be members' favourites.

So if you have a digital image of a view or flowers, or moths or butterflies, or anything else at any of our reserves please contact me. (Lynn Fomison)

Butterfly Transect

We need to add another person to the rota of people who record butterflies each summer at the Meadow. Can you spare an hour or so on about 6 occasions in the period April to September?

Transect records are immensely useful to us and the help that volunteers give with this activity is very valued.

Thelma Smalley is our transect co-ordinator and also one of the transect walkers. She will be happy to tell you more about what helping with transect entails. (01962 734328)

Promoting the reserve

We have had twenty walks since 1st October 2006 – some public walks and some visits arranged for specific groups, like the Ludshott Photographic Society, Frensham Brownies, Medstead Beavers and several horticultural societies. When we host visits under the Natural England scheme of Educational Access it raises £100 per visit in grant income for us. So if you belong to a group that would like to make a visit contact Lynn. Bookings being taken now for 2008.

We have also sought to promote the reserve to local people by having the reserve display at local events. This year we have been at Bird World and at Forest Lodge's Gardening for Wildlife Weekend on 6th & 7th October, and on Sunday 14th October we will have a stand at the Blackmoor Apple Tasting Day.



In the Meadow

Sue Clark wrote: "Had a 20 minutes walk around BSM the morning of 15th March. Birdsong lovely. 3 Chiff Chaff singing, 3 Goldfinch in and out of stream, Bullfinch male heard and seen, 2 Nuthatch calling, one looked to be excavating a hole up in oak but I couldn't see properly and didn't want to disturb it by getting closer. Chaffinch, Wren and Robin in full voice, Blue and Great Tits, Blackbird, G S and Green Woodpeckers, 1 Cock Pheasant, 1 Roe Deer, 2 Rabbit along west field boundary, 2 Comma and 1 Red Admiral. The male Pussy Willows seem to be producing a wonderful display everywhere."

And here are a few accounts from the web site to remind us how lovely April was!

Friday 6th April. Martin Angel reports from Bentley Station Meadow seeing 4 Brimstone, 3 Peacock, 2 Comma (at opposite ends of reserve). He says, "The butterflies were feeding on Blackthorn blossom. Bee flies, *Bombylius major*, were also very abundant, feeding on ground ivy especially beneath the Blackthorn near the reserve entrance. It was a warm sunny day".

Thelma Smalley has reported that Sue Clark walked the transect on 9th April and said that she met several people who said how lovely it all looked.

Thelma also reports for 16th April transect, when 2 Small White, 4 Orange-tip, 4 Peacock and 4 Comma were seen. Mike Young walked the transect. He said, "The Commas and Peacocks were constantly sparring with each other. Also there was a lot of bird activity including a pair of Mandarin ducks by the stream".

Wednesday 25th April Thelma reports from a visit to Bentley Station Meadow on 22nd April, there being seen 3 Orange-tip and 1 Brimstone off transect. Elizabeth Tunnah walked the transect, she said "Lovely day, lovely walk but a shortage of butterflies. The violets looked wonderful and there are now at least seven false oxlip plants".

Thelma walked the transect in perfect weather on 29th April but saying "not many butterflies were seen. Heard the first cuckoo of the year and the carpets of Bugle made the meadow lovely to look at"

Monday 30th April Mike Young reports "I spent two hours this afternoon in the North meadow from 16.45 -18.45 and saw Holly Blue 4 males, Orange-tip 5 males, Small White 2, Large White 2, Speckled Wood 1, Comma 2, Peacock 1, Brimstone males 3. Also a couple of fresh Broad-bodied Chaser Dragonfly females and last, but not least, a lovely Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth nectaring on

Bugle. I managed a few very poor shots but they at least serve to confirm ID".

[Web master wrote, "I think all visitors would agree that these are stunning shots Mike!" - Pete Eeles]

Lynn was pleased to see a Green Hairstreak on 1st May.

Wednesday 2nd May. Mike Young saw Brown Argus 1, Green Hairstreak 1, Common Blue 1, Holly Blue 5, Small Copper 1, Orange-tip Males 3, Red Admiral 1, Peacock 2, Comma 4, Large White 2. "A couple of hours this afternoon (16.00-18.00hrs) in the North meadow again proved rewarding with fresh sights of the Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth nectaring on the Bugle which has been a mass of flower this year, though it's just starting to go over now. Also my first male Beautiful Damsel of the year was seen next to the railway line, and a Cuckoo constantly calling nearby was a real treat, as was the sighting of a female which flew through the meadow and into the forest".

On 8th May Sue Clark walked the transect. She said, "it was sunny but very windy and did not expect to see much". However she did see "1 large Red Damsel in the south meadow and 3 more near to Nellie's seat".

And then at that end of the first week of May it started raining. And it rained and rained and rained! Remember??

Thelma Smalley reports on 16th May when Large White 1, Green Hairstreak 2, Small Copper 1, Red Admiral 1 and Speckled Wood 1, were seen. Mike Young walked the transect during a brief respite in the weather saying "The Hairstreaks were seen along the left shortly after entering the meadow".

Fortunately the weather dried up a bit for the first two weeks of June enabling...

Thelma to report on 17th June seeing Large Skipper 1, Red Admiral 2, Comma 2, Silver-washed Fritillary 2, Meadow Brown 10, noting "After six weeks of disappointing transects it was good to see the Silver-washed Fritillaries in week 12."

But then it rained and rained and rained and although we continued to see butterflies and other wildlife somehow the weather dampened everyone's enthusiasm and no further reports were made to the web site of sightings in the meadow.

Lynn loves to receive observations from in the meadow, either by email, on the website or by transect walkers' notes on the weekly sheet. These details are so helpful in the compilation of the annual report, of interest in this newsletter and, of course, most helpful in planning our management of the reserve.

Purple Power

Lynn reports that she did get one view of a Purple Emperor – high and fast in the Oak trees on the western boundary. Fortunately some visitors were with her and for all of them it was a first sighting of a Purple Emperor. They then went to Goose Green and had good views there through binoculars.

Summer Work

Patrick Fleet undertook the usual summer work of keeping the path around the butterfly transect cut. Volunteer Ben Spraggon cut some of the larger areas of small bramble and scrub in the grassland with his “munching mowing machine”.

Sue Clark has also commented that the Devil’s-bit Scabious seems to do better in these areas that received an early cut.

Winter Work

We are still implementing the plan to fell a number of Turkey Oak, Ash and Sycamore trees in the Meadow, in line with a conservation strategy agreed in 2005, to let more light onto main areas of the meadow.

We hope to get the cattle on the reserve once the current outbreak of foot and mouth disease is under control.

Snippets

To Lynn’s knowledge there have been no further problems with people cycling in the reserve, but if you see anyone please contact Lynn.

Lynn has been approached by contractors working for Network Rail – they are going to have to do work to renew the culvert under the railway line by the reserve.

Dr June Chatfield has led several groups of specialist natural history societies around the reserve and has provided Lynn with species lists.

Email from Patrick Butler:

“You may already be aware of www.aliceholt.org which is a community website for those interested in Alice Holt Forest and its wildlife. We started it originally when there was the threat of a Campsite being constructed in the Lodge Enclosure, and we’ve kept it going as a more general site.

In the diary of events (under “Forest News” section) we have included forthcoming Butterfly Conservation work parties at Bentley Station Meadow”. He added that contributions from anyone at Butterfly Conservation will be welcome, either regular e.g. monthly sitings during the season, or one-off reports e.g. photos, species list, or generally the insect life of the Alice Holt area. He can be contacted on 01420520483 or by email via web site

Looking back in time

Lynn writes of a pleasant surprise she had whilst walking in the meadow in August. She met someone who had known the meadow and immediate area for many years.

May 1943 found Bob Burdett arriving at Bentley for the first time. He had been brought up in Guildford by his grandma, but when he was badly in need of recuperation after his RAF unit had had a really bad spell, he came to stay with his father who worked at Old Hatch (now Bentley Hall).

Bob has vivid memories of the evening he arrived. His father had told him to head from the station across the field towards a picket gate and line of Chestnut trees. (Bob recalls that the area at the end of the avenue of Chestnut trees was an area of mown grass known as “The Croquet”. His mother was convinced it was haunted by a nun!) He was captivated by the view of beautiful Hampshire countryside and this, coupled with the song of nightingales, was a blissful short escape from the rigours of war.

Bob so loved this area that he eventually returned and had a house along the Blacknest road for many years. He remembers our Meadow in the 50’s and 60’s. Mr Penn was the farmer using this and other local fields. However, as he grew older he ceased to use our Meadow for much at all and it, in agricultural terms, “went to pot”. But then when agricultural subsidies encouraged the maximum use of land all the scrub was bulldozed out – probably in the 1960’s.

But Bob recalls the Meadow soon re-asserted its wildness! And aren’t we glad it did. By the time we acquired the Meadow in 1990 it had had time to really revert to the sort of wild area butterflies, moths and other wildlife so love.

We are always pleased to have peoples’ recollections of our meadow in time gone by. Wouldn’t some old photos be lovely!

PS. Bob had other stories too, of cottages in the forest and a Roman pottery. More about these in future newsletters

Promoting butterflies - A nice Christmas present

Sandy Harman wrote to me saying that the summer of 2007 has been the worst he can ever remember! But he has had the consolation of being able to enjoy watching his footage of earlier much better summers to cheer himself up this winter, and to remind him of what he hopes to observe next year. The great thing is ... you can enjoy Sandy's video clips too.

Version 5, on DVD, is still available, price £8.00 and if you would like a copy of this evocation of a proper summer, just send a cheque payable to S Harman at 31, Upper Manor Road, Milford, Godalming, Surrey GU8 5JW and a copy will be sent to you by return. The 90-minute DVD contains images of 58 species of butterfly that can be seen in Britain, many in stunning and detailed close-ups. Some are shown in the four main stages of their life cycle. The butterflies are identified by discreet captions, as are most of the other subjects. The latter include moths, dragonflies, birds and wild flowers. All accompanied by the natural sounds of the countryside. Each DVD sold raises at least £6 for Butterfly Conservation and they make super presents for friends.

Over the years the sales made by Sandy have raised over £2300 for Butterfly Conservation and brought the joy of butterflies close up into many homes.

Mr Michael Galpin

Janet, in her role as membership Secretary for the Branch, was notified in April that Mr Galpin had died. We were reminded of a lovely letter that he had written to Janet in May 2003 in response to one of her regular enquiries when she asks people if they still want to receive this newsletter.

He explained that other demands on his time prevented him from attending events at the Meadow but assured us of his continuing interest, writing, "I love the English countryside. I lived in Bentley village for a good number of years and worked there, as my father did before me, and it was the purchase and conservation of the meadow that attracted me to join Butterfly Conservation in about 1993"

He concluded that he wanted to keep getting the newsletter saying "I get pleasure from knowing that you are doing a good job at Bentley".

Do you still want this newsletter?

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, or would like to receive it by email or access it on our website, please tell Janet.

Newsletter

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

Items are welcomed from anyone who visits the Meadow. Please send any items for the Spring 2008 Newsletter to Lynn by 15th March 2008.

Bentley Station Meadow Who's Who

Reserves Sub-committee Chairman

Mrs Jenny Mallett – Tel: 01329 832177

Branch Reserves Officer

Lynn Fomison – Tel 01962 772251
Mount Pleasant, Parkstone Road, Ropley,
Hants SO24 OEW

Reserve Warden

Patrick Fleet – Tel: 01256 398471

Management Adviser

Ken Willmott

Transect Co-ordinator

Thelma Smalley – Tel: 01962 734328

Newsletter Editor

Janet Jones – Tel: 01252 842174

Branch Website

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

National Web site

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

