



Friends of Bentley Station Meadow Butterfly
Reserve
NEWSLETTER
Spring 2008

Dates for your Diary

Walks: All walks last about two hours and begin from the Car Park at Bentley Station. (SU792 432). There is usually space to park in Station Road, alternatively pay in the Car Park.

MONDAY 26 MAY **SPRING SAUNTER.**

Leader: Lynn Fomison. **Meet:** 10:30am for a gentle walk to see Spring flowers and butterflies. Kissing gates, but no stiles. Some wet areas so boots advised. Children and parents most welcome.

SATURDAY 12TH JULY **JOINT MEETING WITH HWT**

Leaders: Lynn Fomison and Mary Parker.

Meet: 10:30am. Following the walk in the meadow there is an opportunity for a lunchtime picnic in the Goose Green area of Alice Holt Forest hopefully to see Purple Emperors – if you would like to join this, please bring a packed lunch.

SATURDAY 19TH JULY **A JOINT 40TH CELEBRATION.**

Leader: Lynn Fomison. **Meet:** 10.30am. This is an event for BC members and friends and volunteers from Rowhill Nature Reserve Society. Both organisations are celebrating an important anniversary. It is also the start of National Save our Butterflies Week. We will have a walk around the reserve and in particular look at the habitat for Purple Emperor butterflies. If you wish to stay for a lunchtime picnic please bring a packed lunch.

THURSDAY 14 AUGUST **ENJOY BENTLEY STATION MEADOW**

Leader: Lynn Fomison. **Meet:** 10.30am. A walk to see summer flowers and butterflies. Children and parents most welcome.

For further information on any of the above events please contact Lynn Fomison on 01962 772251. Also get in contact if you would like a special visit for a group.

Work on the railway Line

Work is scheduled for August on the line near Bentley Station. It will take place mainly at night but also on the weekends of 9th/10th and 16th/17th August. At these times the crossing over the line may be closed and it will be necessary to use the bridge.

It is also likely that some work will be done in September on renewing the culvert that goes from the reserve under the railway line. This will necessitate an engineering firm having access onto our land by the ditch and sadly felling two trees by the line.

In the Meadow

Lynn loves to receive observations from in the Meadow, either by email or by transect walkers' notes on the weekly sheet. These details are so helpful in the compilation of the annual report.

Thelma Smalley wrote on 23rd April... "Have just walked the transect and managed to find the patch of Bluebells. There are now 3 small clumps in flower in the cleared area to the side. I have circled them with some sticks. Lovely and sunny, saw 6 pristine Commas and 6 Peacocks, 1 Green Veined White and a Small Tortoiseshell".

Sue Clark had an interesting visit on 3rd May, although she only saw 1 Red Admiral and 2 Peacock. She wrote: "Whilst there made a nice chance discovery of Adder's Tongue Fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. I counted 38 leaf blades, very hard to spot amongst the other unfurling vegetation but they have more growing to do yet, and there may be more. If you haven't come across them before they are very small with leathery leaf blades. Also another small patch of Herb Paris - 17 plants but only one flowering".

Close by Sue says she found a Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris* that has been planted by persons unknown – this has happened before and Lynn will be removing it soon.

Bees

If anyone is able to photograph bees the Bumble Bee Trust will identify them and record them on their map. www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk

The Meadow's Butterflies in 2007

Members will be able to read Lynn's full report in the Branch's 2007 Annual Report. BC members get a copy of this excellent book free each spring. It gives loads of information on how the County's moths and butterflies are faring. But here are some 2007 observations.

640 butterflies of 23 species were seen, in comparison with 1306 and 26 species in 2006. This represents a staggering reduction of just over 50%. The species not recorded on transect in 2007 were Brown Argus, Small Tortoiseshell and White Admiral.

The season started **SO** well with wonderful April weather. We had several reports of how beautiful the spring flowers were looking with butterflies nectaring on Blackthorn and Bee flies *Bombylius major* on ground ivy. The Bugle *Ajuga reptans* was really splendid and attracted Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth *Hemaris fuciformis* on numerous occasions to the delight of photographers. Mike Young was still seeing it on 16th May – the first sighting being on 30th April. This species uses Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* as a larval food plant and we are careful to preserve and enhance this plant when we undertake conservation management work.

However, despite the good spells of weather in April numbers of **Brimstone**, **Orange Tip** and **Green-veined White** were all lower than 2006. But worse was to come! Higher counts than in 2006 were only recorded for three species **Marbled White** (up from 14 to 17), **Green Hairstreak** up from one to two and **Holly Blue** from 3 to 6.

Species that fared particularly badly were **Common Blue** (down from 40 to 2), **Small Copper** (down from 22 to 2) and **Silver-washed Fritillary** (down from 65 to 14). **Ringlets**, a species known to tolerate the wet, showed a decrease of about 19% and **Meadow Browns** 35%. **Gatekeepers** did not tolerate the conditions well at all and were almost 80% down.

We hope for better things in 2008!!



Butterfly Transect

Much of what is written in the annual report comes from the figures collected on the weekly transect. From time to time we need new people as transect recorders. We aim to have a team of five for each transect - five transects in all - three at MHD, one at Yew Hill and one at Bentley. Sharing the weeks on a rota basis means each person does about five weeks through the period April to September. If you think this is something you would like to help with in 2009 please let Lynn know. If you feel you would need some training we can arrange for you to walk the transect of your choice a few times this summer with one of the existing recorders.

Visitors can help too with butterfly records in the Meadow by reporting all sightings on our branch web site (address at the end of this Newsletter).

Humming-bird Hawk-moth and Painted Lady online survey with BBC Radio 4

Lynn received this information from head Office in March. Sounds good! Let's hope it is a great year for migrants!

Butterfly Conservation has developed an exciting online survey of these two migrant species in association with Radio 4's major series **World on the Move** and as part of the **Garden Moths Count** initiative. The survey will run throughout 2008 on the Butterfly Conservation website and gives us a great opportunity to raise awareness and engage with the general public. Anyone who sees a Humming-bird Hawk-moth or Painted Lady butterfly can use the simple but amazing interactive mapping on the website to zoom in on satellite images (down to the scale of your own garden) and log their sightings. This will enable us to track the arrival in the UK of these wonderful creatures on their journey from North Africa and southern Europe, and then to map their spread here during the summer. We are also keen to hear observations of interesting behaviour (such as courtship, mating, egg laying, plants used for nectaring, reverse migration in the autumn or hibernation), which can be recorded in a comments box in the online recording system. What we do know about the migration of these spectacular insects comes from observations over the centuries from amateur recorders, but there is still much to learn and we hope that the public will help in 2008.



His Imperial Majesty

Those with a passion for Purple Emperors (and there are a few of us around) who have access to the internet might care to follow PE news on its very own web site www.thepurpleempire.com

Purple Emperors **are** seen every year in BSM and we hope that during July lots of you will be out looking for them and reporting your sightings.

Winter Management Work

Tree felling work has continued to let in more light and to create dappled instead of heavy shade in the Oak copse by the railway line. Violets are starting to grow well in there now and it is an important breeding place for Silver-washed Fritillary.

It is pleasing to report that we achieved all the work that we had planned and that the reserve is looking in great shape. A number of people regularly came to work parties, which was a great help. The Blackwater Valley Conservation Volunteers joined us on one occasion, making a work party of over 20 people that day.

Due to foot and mouth restrictions affecting the movement of cattle there was no grazing this winter. However loss of grazing for one year is not a serious matter and the spring flowers are looking really beautiful.

Summer Work

Patrick Fleet will undertake 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 will also tackle Bracken and Docks, and selective cutting of Nettles.

We plan to keep several areas of the Meadow mown again. 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



Promoting the Meadow

Last year we had our BSM display at the Wildlife Gardening Weekend at Forest Lodge. The latter was really well organised by the Garden Centre. They had specially bought in lots of butterfly plants and we had a lot of visitors, both old friends and those showing a new interest in butterflies.

In October we had our gazebo at the Blackmoor Apple Tasting Day and used this as an opportunity to promote BSM as Butterfly Conservation's local reserve in the area. If you would like to be one of the team who helps at this event please contact Sue Clark on 01420 23520. This year the event will be held on Sunday 12th October. Sue will explain precisely the help we need but basically it is chatting to visitors to our gazebo (sounds exotic!) and spending an hour slicing up apples for the apple tasting.

Another way we promote the reserve, and indeed the work that Butterfly Conservation is doing to help butterflies and moths, is through Group Visits arranged under the Educational Access Provisions of our Countryside Stewardship Agreement. A total of 15 public walks and group visits are planned for the Meadow this year. If you belong to a group that would like a guided visit please contact Lynn. The visits are free to the group, but we are able to claim grant income of £100 per visit.

A Rose by any other name...

Would smell as sweet. Or so the saying would have us believe, but would a butterfly?

Sue Clark lent me an old book in the "Shown" series – "Butterflies and Moths". It did not have a publication date but had been owned by Margaret Ami in 1937.

One fascinating thing in it was the different names for butterfly species. Holly Blue was then called Azure Blue and Adonis, Clifton Blue. Small Blue was Little Blue or Bedford Blue. Speckled Wood was also called Wood Argus. It reminded Sue and I that Peter Beale (Warden at BSM for many years) called Orange Tip "Lady of the Woods". And according to recent BBC coverage of the launch of BC 's South East Woodlands project coppice workers years ago called Pearl-bordered Fritillary "The Woodcutters Friend"

Butterfly Conservation needs more members!

As the ONLY national charity devoted to butterflies and moths Butterfly Conservation is working hard to halt the decline in moths and butterflies. We KNOW we can make a difference. But what would help us tremendously is MORE members. Membership costs only a little more than 50p a week and can be paid monthly. So if you are not a member please think about joining, and if you are a member can you persuade a friend to join or give a gift membership?

I always say to people that I do not want to be writing in twenty years time saying, "Back in 2008 we knew butterflies were declining badly but not enough people listened and helped, and now it is too late".

I am optimistic that people will recognise the magic of butterflies, not want to lose them from their lives and want to keep them for future generations and respond positively to this request. Membership of BC is a way of being part of something good to help butterflies and moths.

This year BC celebrates it's 40th Anniversary so there is no better time to join. The actual "birthday" was 7th March and we had a very successful celebratory work party at Magdalen Hill Down with over 40 people attending. Martin Warren, BC's Chief Executive, came along with other BC staff and journalist Rosie Boycott. We got good publicity in local papers and a few mentions in the national press too.

Lynn Fomison



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 Autumn 2008 Newsletter to Lynn by the 30th August 2008. Contact details in 'Bentley Station Meadow Who's Who'.

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

Transect Co-ordinator

Thelma Smalley – Tel: 01962 734328

Newsletter Editor

Janet Jones – Tel: 01252 842174

Branch Website

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

National Website

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