



Dates for your diary

Summer 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!

WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE MHD Work Party with Wednesday Conservation Volunteers.

Wednesday 16th July MHD 10am WCV Ragwort work party

If ragwort is a problem extra work parties will be arranged and email invitations sent out. Please contact Lynn if you would like to be on that email list.

Public Walks at MHD

Meeting Place at the car park opposite the entrance to Magdalen Hill Cemetery, Alresford Road, Winchester SU 512 295. Walk usually about two hours.

SUNDAY 1 JUNE MAGDALEN HILL DOWN. MONTHLY MEANDER. **Leader:** Lynn Fomison. (01962 772251) **Meet:** 10.30am Approx 2 hours.

SUNDAY JULY 6 MAGDALEN HILL DOWN. MONTHLY MEANDER.
As 1st June

SUNDAY 27TH JULY MAGDALEN HILL DOWN MEET THE BUTTERFLIES

Leader: Lynn Fomison. **Meet:** at 10.30am A walk at one of the best times of year to see Chalkhill Blue butterflies. This event marks the end of National Save our Butterflies Week & the start of 4 weeks of special walks each Wednesday & Sunday to complement the Butterfly Summer Art Exhibition at Winchester Discovery Centre.

WEDNESDAY 30TH JULY. MAGDALEN HILL DOWN. MEET THE BUTTERFLIES
As 27th July

SUNDAY 3RD AUGUST MAGDALEN HILL DOWN MONTHLY MEANDER.
As 1st June

Friends of Magdalen Hill Down Butterfly Reserve **Newsletter No 28** **Spring 2008**

WEDNESDAY 6TH AUGUST MAGDALEN HILL DOWN. Meet the butterflies.
As 27th July

SUNDAY 10TH AUGUST MAGDALEN HILL DOWN. MEET THE BUTTERFLIES.
As 27th July

WEDNESDAY 13TH AUGUST MAGDALEN HILL DOWN. MEET THE BUTTERFLIES.
As 27th July

SUNDAY 17TH AUGUST MAGDALEN HILL DOWN. MEET THE BUTTERFLIES.
As 27 July

WEDNESDAY 20TH AUGUST MAGDALEN HILL DOWN MEET THE BUTTERFLIES.
As 27 July

SUNDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER MAGDALEN HILL DOWN MONTHLY MEANDER.
As 1st June

SUNDAY 5TH OCTOBER MAGDALEN HILL DOWN MONTHLY MEANDER.
As 1st June

As well as all the above public walks we have a number of bookings for visits by private groups which we welcome under the educational access facility in our Higher Level Stewardship agreement. If you hear of a group that would like a visit please suggest they contact Lynn

Butterfly Conservation 40th Birthday Celebrations

Our special work party day went really well with 42 people attending – many old friends but pleasingly some new faces too and a number of staff both from BC national office at Lulworth & from our region.

It yielded lots of good publicity.

There was a good article in the Sunday Telegraph 9th March on the decline of Butterflies in Britain quoting David Attenborough. The piece goes onto mention the decline in Chalkhill Blues but that conservation efforts at MHD have boosted numbers by 700 per cent in recent years.

Lynn adds that The Daily Echo also did a really good spread on the event.
There are photos and a report on our web site.

Cowslip Walk 18th April

Despite grey skies and drizzle we had an interesting walk on that Friday. The cowslips outside the stock fence on the extension were looking really at their peak but the ones in the main grazed field of the extension not yet reaching their peak.

No butterflies were seen but Patrick Fleet provided a few live life stages of moths for us to see. Eggs and tiny caterpillars of Green Brindled Crescent – these had been overwintered by Pat from a female found at MHD last autumn who had laid eggs in the moth pot, larger caterpillars of Common Marbled Carpet, a pupa – possibly of Angle Shades and an adult moth from Pats garden - Shoulder Stripe.

On the hill - What to look out for

Please let Lynn have your observations through the summer for the Autumn newsletter. We rarely have news of sightings of orchids from people but would welcome these, particularly as we have started finding new orchids on the sown areas of the extension. We are also very interested to hear of sightings of Small Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Dinky Skipper and any other less commonly seen species. We hope that Adonis Blue & Silver-spotted Skipper may also move in. It is also good to get records of sightings of hares & other mammals, reptiles etc.

Magdalen is a good place to see migrant butterflies and moths too. Last year a Clouded Yellow was seen on 18th April. This year Patrick saw a Painted Lady on 7th May. See below for exciting project on migrants!

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

Lynn received this form head Office in March. Sounds good! Lets 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 BC 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.

Moths

Patrick has had a couple of evenings with moth lamps at Magdalen already this year. If you are interested in helping to record moths at MHD please contact Lynn or Patrick.

Thank you

Most of our visitors are very considerate & helpful.

A few are not. No motorbikes or people carrying guns have permission to be on the reserve. Hang gliding, metal detecting and flying of kites are all activities that are not allowed, along with ball games, camping barbeques and fires. It could be a long list!! Basically Magdalen Hill Down is a nature Reserve for the quiet enjoyment of wildlife. And anything that conflicts with this is not acceptable. In the eventuality of not being able to contact Lynn please ring 101 for the Police if you find motorbikes on the reserve or any other activities inappropriate to a nature reserve.

Grazing

The original reserve and extension was well grazed by Sarah's cattle through the winter & all went well.

200 sheep arrived on 18th April onto MHD North by road. They moved onto top field and left us in early May.

Winter Conservation Work

We are very pleased with all the work we achieved this winter. Our contractor Chris Jackson constructed a cattle coral on the extension & provided an easy link to MHD North to facilitate the movement of stock. At other work parties unwanted scrub was cleared and one Sunday Hampshire Conservation Volunteers did major work on hedgerow maintenance.

Patrick Fleet continues with the important task of working from one end of the original reserve to the other cutting off all scrub regrowth. It is this regular work together with the grazing – cattle & rabbits that keeps the original downland looking so good and providing such excellent butterfly habitat. This work will continue through the summer.

How the butterflies fared in 2007

Members will have been able to read this report of how Magdalen's butterflies fared in the 2007 Annual Report a 160 page book just provided free to members to give full details of last year. But it is repeated here for the benefit of non members.

Those of us closely connected with the reserve look forward to each years transect results especially as for many species there has been spectacular increase in numbers. For example on the original reserve our management was successful in increasing the number of **Chalkhill Blues** on transect from 437 in 1990 to 3236 in 2006. Similarly on the extension **Common Blues** rose from 50 in 1996 to 802 in 2006. On Magdalen Hill Down North in just three years **Marbled Whites** increased from 0 in 2004 to 61 in 2007.

Although the numbers of some species have experienced dire plunges in 2007 nevertheless the transect figures from the three parts of the reserve are fascinating because there is some variety in the fortunes of the same species in different parts of the reserve.

Andy Barker is transect co-ordinator & comments " It was one of the worst years on record, with overall butterfly numbers 30-40% down at many sites in Hampshire (including MHD), and some species such as **Chalkhill Blue** and **Common Blue** showing massive declines both at MHD and elsewhere in the county. MHD (north) only showed a slight decline in total butterflies, and had it been a better year it would definitely have shown a big increase reflecting the positive condition of the grasslands as a result of the ongoing habitat creation. **Meadow Brown** did exceptionally well, even with the poor weather! " And Jenny Mallett's observation indicates just how bad the weather was " Things looked promising in April with early species flourishing, but miserable May/June/July weather produced more than twice the average rainfall"

Original reserve 3951 butterflies of 28 species were recorded on transect in 2007. The total numbers suffered a reduction of just over 40% & number of species were down by 3. The missing species were **Dingy Skipper**, **Dark Green Fritillary** and **Marsh Fritillary**. But as these are not regarded as species breeding on the reserve & only seen in ones and twos the non-recording of them is not significant. What is significant is the massive reduction in overall numbers. The significance of the decrease is heightened because it is just a few of the species that are breeding colonies that suffered more than a 20% decrease in numbers. **Green-veined White** (50% down), **Small Copper** (76%), **Common Blue** (40%), **Chalkhill Blue** (67%), and **Gatekeeper** (49%). On these species alone the reduction in

the total number seen was 2507. No wonder the total was 2719 down overall

Not surprisingly our migrants were well down too **Clouded Yellow** (47%) and **Painted Lady** (96%). It's amazing we saw any at all! (The **Painted Ladies** were both seen in August and the **Clouded Yellows** in August & September.) Of course we all experienced the disappointment and frustration of the poor summer weather and we know that such conditions are unfavourable for butterflies and moths. And it gives us the interest & knowledge of seeing how species recover when we get the results of transects in 2008. Regarding the **Chalkhill Blues** the last time there was a lower figure than 1066 was back in 1995 as numbers were starting to build up. When we looked at the hillside in July the low numbers were obvious. In 2006 the peak count was 581 in week 17, the same week in 2007 gave 120! The comparisons in week 22 were 222 and 25. Enough said!

But it was far from being all bad news. Anyone reading sightings on the branch web site would have seen how much visited MHD was in April. Visitors were regularly seeing a dozen **Grizzled Skippers** or a dozen **Green Hairstreaks**. Dan Hoare managed a massive count of 18 on the 15th April. On 16th April Mark Swann counted 29 **Green Hairstreaks** mainly at the top of the hill, battling of positions on hawthorn bushes. It is therefore surprising that the transect figures did not record more than the 32 and 29 respectively. But these were totals that were good to see because in May the weather deteriorated quickly & undoubtedly shorted the flight season. In 2006 Green Hairstreaks were seen every week in May but only one was recorded in 2007. **Small Skippers**, **Large Skippers**, **Brimstones**, **Small Whites**, **Orange Tips**, **Holly Blues**, **Red Admirals**, **Small Tortoiseshells**, **Speckled Woods** and **Ringlets** all had increased numbers. Pleasingly Small Heaths only showed a slight reduction. And it is important to say that the lower numbers recorded were not just a result of less butterflies around but a reflection of the difficulty in walking a transect when the weather is very unsettled.

The Extension 2414 butterflies of 28 species were recorded in comparison to 3161 (a reduction of almost 26%) and 29 in 2006. **Dingy Skipper** was not recorded on transect in 2007 but one was seen. The butterflies showing the most significant reductions were **Common Blue** (down 71%) and **Chalkhill Blue** (down 85%). **Small Coppers** were down from 65 to 36. The courting pair glimpsed on 24th April obviously failed to produce many offsprings! **Painted Ladies** were down from 128 to 6 but as a compensation another Nymphalid fared well with **Peacocks** up from 58 to 270. (Patrick Fleet records finding 7 batches of caterpillars on 4th June on MHD) **Marbled Whites** were 50% down. Patrick & I saw a **Clouded Yellow** on 18th

April and it was exciting to speculate this might actually have bred on site as opposed to being a migrant that had flown in. But this species did not maintain its early promise and a total of just 4 were recorded. However two did make a good showing at the first of our new monthly Sunday walks on 2nd September to the delight of 22 visitors. Species that recorded a small but welcome increase were **Large Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Holly Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Small Heath and Ringlet. Meadow Browns** were up by over 150 with a total of 1077.

(26th May – a pouring wet day in a month of mixed weather) things have not been too good for Spring butterflies so far. Most species we expect to see have been seen but not in high numbers.

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
Lynn Fomison

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 August 2008. Let her know if you would like it by email to save us the cost of postage. Alternatively it can be accessed on our web site

Butterfly Summer

Those of us closely connected with butterflies like to think they are unique in the way that they epitomise the spirit of summer. With their intricately marked and coloured wings and joyful flight for many people summer just would not be Summer without them flying around.

It is fitting therefore in Butterfly Conservation's 40th Anniversary year Winchester City Council are mounting a special exhibition entitled 'Butterfly Summer'. It will include paintings photographs, handicrafts etc and activities for children. Butterfly Conservation have been allocated space for displays and talks. This is taking place at City Space, The Discovery Centre, Jewry Street, Winchester. (The Discovery Centre is a development by Hampshire County Council and the City. It is centred around the much-revised and updated County Library.) It is on from 26th July until 24th August We are hoping that this will be an inspirational and very special event in BC's 40th year. Admission is free so we hope lots of you will make a visit. We will have volunteers there on some of the days to chat to visitors about our love of butterflies so if you would like to help by being one of those volunteers please contact Roger Buchanan 02380 252963. Extra walk sat MHD are planned in conjunction with this event and these are listed on the calendar of events.

Magdalen Hill Down Who's Who

Who's Who....

Friends Coordinator: Sylvia Whalley, 77 Alresford Road Winchester. SO23 0LA Tel: 01962 890848

Warden: Patrick Fleet, Ivy Cottage, Dummer. Basingstoke. RG25 2AG Tel: (01256 398471)

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National web site www.butterfly-conservation.org