

# Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch



Newsletter 117  
October 2024



Butterfly  
Conservation

Annual Butterfly  
Report 2023

## Branch Reserves Winter Work Parties 2024/2025

All work parties begin at 10am and finish at 3pm.

Bring a packed lunch and a drink, and suitable clothes for the weather.

### Magdalen Hill Down

Drive up the track past the stone masons Blackwell & Moody next to the cemetery entrance off Alresford Road, SO21 1HE. Park at the top of the track.

All dates are Mondays

October	7	14	21	28	January	6	13	20	27
November	4	11	18	25	February	3	10	17	24
December	2	9	16						

### Yew Hill

Meet at the bottom of Old Kennels Lane, Oliver's Battery, SO22 4JT.

All dates are fortnightly from the second Thursday of each month  
(except Christmas/New Year holiday)

October	10	24	January	16	30
November	14	28	February	13	27
December	12				

### Bentley Station Meadow

Meet at Gravel Hill Road car park, GU10 4LG

All dates are the first Wednesday of the month

October	2	January	8
November	6	February	5
December	4	March	5

Additionally, I'm putting a special call out for a **joint volunteer day with the HCC Countryside Volunteers and SDNP Volunteers at Butser Hill National Nature Reserve**. Fuel expenses are provided and there's extra biscuits and cake! Meet more like-minded people as we join forces to help target scrub clearance to benefit the Duke of Burgundy butterfly. Date TBC, probably a Thursday in November or December.

For queries or further information about the reserve work parties contact **Fiona Scully**: email [fscully@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:fscully@butterfly-conservation.org)

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Clouded Yellow. Rosemary Powell



## Chair's Message

As someone who remembers the Lepidoptera-filled, long and hot summer of 1976, I have to say that 2024 will also be remembered, but for all the wrong reasons. The paucity of insect life this spring and early summer has been visible to everyone, with many members of the public commenting on the lack of visitors to their garden flowers. It would also seem that this has had a knock-on effect on various food chains, with reports of bats (that feed on moths) being underweight and birds (whose young feed on invertebrates, especially caterpillars) failing to successfully raise their young.

While we await records that will allow us to quantify any declines, as well wait to see what 2025 holds in store, I'm reminded that we should always focus on things that we can change, and not get bogged down in things we cannot.

This did get me thinking about the root causes of Lepidoptera decline, and I thought it would be worth sharing my summary since many of us are able to make a positive difference in some cases, but certainly not all. I also keep this list as an 'Aide-mémoire', when I'm asked why butterflies and moths are in decline.

### Habitat Change

Habitat change encompasses several elements that often have a negative impact on our Lepidoptera. The most obvious impact is outright habitat loss due to development or agriculture, where suitable sites are simply destroyed. Reduced habitat quality is also a factor, through changing practices (such as the cessation of coppicing in woodland), scrub invasion, afforestation, and overgrazing that leads to the loss of larval foodplants and nectar sources. Habitats may also become fragmented where the loss of connectivity impedes gene flow and may hamper recolonisation following a local extinction of a given species.

### Chemical Pollution

Chemical pollution can also have a significant impact. The application of insecticides is the most direct with, for example, larvae killed through

the ingestion of the lethal compounds found on or within their foodplants. Emissions and runoff from agriculture (such as fertilisers and herbicides), industry and urban areas can also have negative consequences on the quality of foodplants, with a knock-on effect on growth and reproductive fitness, such as the number of eggs laid. There may also be an increase in plant growth due to nitrogen deposition, which results in larval foodplants and nectar sources being swamped by surrounding vegetation.

### Climate Change

The most impactful and widespread factor is undoubtedly climate change.

Global warming has certainly benefited some species, which have managed to expand their range accordingly. This includes the Brown Argus, Comma and Essex Skipper, which have all extended their range northward to a greater or lesser degree. Some species are even increasingly using secondary foodplants as their range shifts. The Brown Argus, for example, is more frequently using members of the Crane's-bill family in addition to Common Rock-rose.

One downside of climate change is that many species are simply unable to adjust. A case in point is montane species, such as the Mountain Ringlet, that may move to higher ground to find cooler temperatures, only to find that their foodplant is absent, or that there is more exposure to weather extremes. Climate also impacts the quality of foodplants, and there is one theory that the demise of the Small Tortoiseshell is partly due to the desiccation of nettles later in the year, that are essential for the development of second brood larvae.

A more direct consequence of climate change is the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including the impact of drought and fires, as well as long periods of wet and unsettled weather as we have seen this year.

### Concluding Remarks

With all these factors in play, it is more important than ever to ensure that we not only make a positive impact on these where we can, but to also create our own refuges for Lepidoptera. As well as supporting habitat management at our reserves and beyond, it is just as important



to create Wild Spaces if you are able – see <https://wild-spaces.co.uk> for more information on this Butterfly Conservation initiative.

I'm pleased to say that there has been a significant improvement in the numbers of Lepidoptera recorded in the second half of summer, although most Lepidoptera species are well down on their usual abundance. I hope that, this time next year, I'm able to share a more positive message. I think it is important to remember that our Lepidoptera have experienced very poor springs and summers before, but have always bounced back, so long as they are given a chance.

### Branch Vacancies

There is still one branch vacancy we are keen to fill. If you are at all interested in helping the branch continue to go from strength to strength, then we would be delighted to hear from you! Please contact me in the first instance at [pete@eeles.net](mailto:pete@eeles.net) or by calling **07796 331061**.

The **Events Coordinator** plans the branch's annual programme of events and ensures that all events are resourced with a leader, volunteers and equipment. We are invited to attend various events each year, and we also set up our own events, such as a New Members' Day. This is a Main Committee appointment.

*Peter Eeles, Branch Chair*



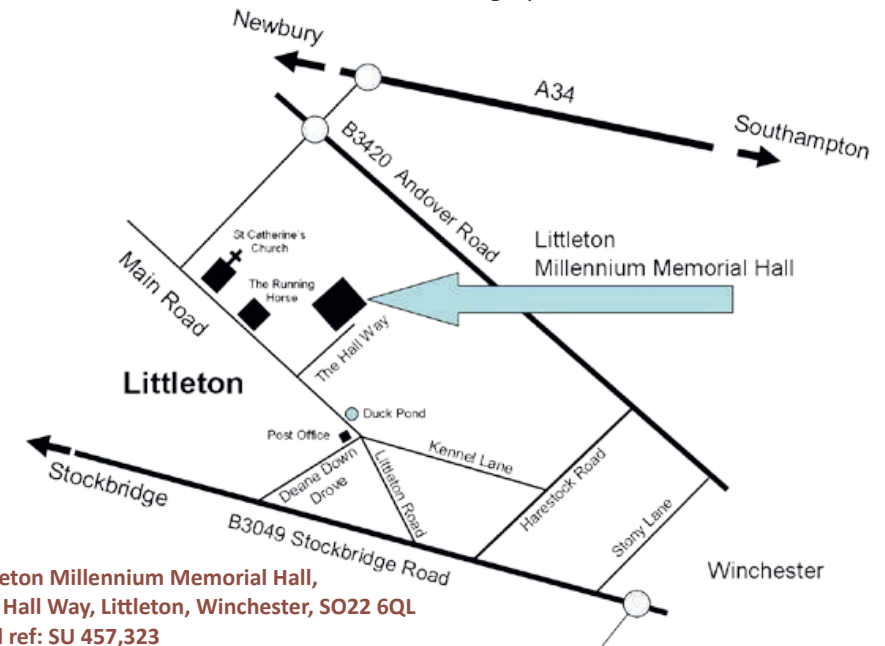
*Small Heath.  
Rosemary Powell*



## Branch Members' Day 2024

Branch members are warmly invited to attend our Members' Day, at the Littleton Millennium Hall, Littleton, near Winchester, on **Sunday 3 November 2024**.

Members are asked to bring a packed lunch.



**Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall,  
The Hall Way, Littleton, Winchester, SO22 6QL  
Grid ref: SU 457,323**

### Timetable for the day

#### 11:30 Doors open

12:00-12:30 Chair's welcome and branch updates

12:30-13:00 Steven Lofting: Introduction from our BC Conservation Manager (South East England)

#### 13:00-13:45 Lunch Break

13:45-14:15 Andy Barker: The Forest Ringlet (*Dodonidia helmsii*) - an elusive and endangered New Zealand endemic butterfly

14:15-15:00 Peter Marren: The Weird and Wonderful Names of Butterflies and Moths

#### 15:00-15:30 Refreshments and photographic competition

15:30-16:15 Martin Warren: Sex, life and death in the world of butterflies

16:15-16:25 Results of photographic competition

16:25-16:30 Raffle draw

16:30-16:40 Q&A and Chair's closing remarks

*Pete Eeles, Branch Chair*



# Photographic Competition 2024

Prints will be displayed and judged in the following categories:

- UK Butterflies
- UK Moths
- Immature stages
- Overseas butterflies and moths
- First time entrants on any of the above subjects

The event is only open to Branch members, and all members entering images into the photographic competition do so on the following terms and conditions:

1. Image(s) must have been taken by themselves in the 18 months preceding entry into the competition.
2. Entrants agree that their images may be used for non-commercial purposes by the Branch. This includes publishing images on the Branch website, social media channels and in the Branch Newsletter and Annual Butterfly and Moth reports. Copyright will remain with the member at all times and will be acknowledged when images are used by the Branch.
3. All images must be prints not exceeding A4 size (297x210mm) in either landscape or portrait format and may be mounted or unmounted.
4. Entries are limited to three per entrant.

All members attending the meeting will be invited to complete a voting slip to identify their favourite image in each category and to choose their overall winning entry. The results will be collated and the winner announced at the end of the meeting.

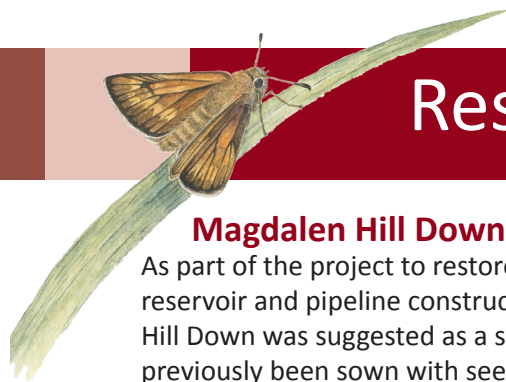
## First-time entrants

Following the success of this element of the competition in previous years and to encourage new member entries, we will be continuing with the category for images submitted by first-time entrants but otherwise on the same conditions as above.

Members unable to attend the day but who wish to submit prints may do so by posting them to **Lee Hurrell, Basingstoke College of Technology, Worting Road, Basingstoke, RG21 8TN** to arrive by **Saturday 2 November**.

Please ensure that you enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you wish your prints to be returned.

# Reserves News



## Magdalen Hill Down

As part of the project to restore chalk grassland at Yew Hill following the reservoir and pipeline construction works, the Extension field at Magdalen Hill Down was suggested as a suitable donor site. This former arable field had previously been sown with seed gifted from the donor sites of St Catherine's Hill and Martin Down. It shows how successful the reversion process has been for it now to be of suitable standard to become a donor site for helping to restore other species-rich grasslands. It's not grazed over summer and not too steep to collect seed with a brush harvester, making it more suitable than many other sites.

Emorsgate seed provided the brush harvester and came to collect the seed. A trailer load of seed was collected from an area of 2.5ha and will be stored with Emorsgate seed until it's needed. It is intended for a second seed harvest to be done later in the season next year.



*All images: Fiona Scully.  
Brush harvesting*

Magdalen Hill Down is a SINC or Site of Interest for Nature Conservation, also known as Local Wildlife Sites. Although not a SSSI or Site of Special Scientific Interest, SINC's are recognised for their local ecological importance. A botanical survey is carried out every 10 years and this year it was surveyed again by HBIC (Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre) joined by the SDNP Ranger team looking at habitat condition assessment. The chalk grass species are indicators of the quality of the habitat. The Roadside and Pathfield areas of the reserve, which are more nutrient rich, have taller more dominant grasses such as Yorkshire fog and False Oat grass. These areas need more grazing and hay cutting.





*Alton Natural History Society field trip*

Our friends from Alton Natural History Society came on a field trip. Although butterfly numbers weren't that high, we did see the first Chalk Hill Blue (13 July) and a fascinating range of spiders, grasshoppers and crickets, including Roesels bush cricket and a Long-winged Conehead nymph, and shiny Scabious Longhorn moths.

The Tadley U3A group also found interesting invertebrates including Noble Wasp-sawfly, Yellow-sided Clover-sawfly and Six-spot Burnet moth caterpillars. The National Trust South Downs Countryside Team came and visited for the day to look at the arable reversion fields and chalk scrapes.



*Pond summer.  
SINC survey*



The small pond has quietly transformed itself. It has been fascinating to watch, from worrying initially that it was too small, to seeing the wildlife appear and the plants grow. At first, there was alarm caused by an outbreak of bright green algae, but then extraordinary orange water flea creatures descended in their millions and devoured the algae, and the water cleared. The very gentle sloping sides, variable depth and deeper centre attract various invertebrates. Several species of dragonfly have colonised and birds are always around for a drink. The pond is not yet a year old so we are enjoying seeing it during its early life.

Although butterfly and moth numbers have overall been low this year, the Striped Lychnis moth seems to have done well, with many people finding good numbers in their gardens munching on Dark Mullein.

*Yew Hill in bloom.  
Walk on Yew Hill walk looking  
for White-letter Hairstreak*



## Yew Hill

The series of reserve walks reached a high point at Yew Hill in June. Rupert Broadway carefully timed the walk this year to coincide with the White-letter Hairstreak. In previous years the walk was held during the peak Fragrant Orchid display and just missed the hairstreaks. But success this year as we watched three White-letter hairstreaks flying among the elms.

Yellow Rattle and the thin soil have kept the grass shorter on the banks and ditches, but the high rainfall and no summer grazing has resulted in a lot of Hoary Ragwort and Wild Parsnip. So a large part of this little reserve is looking rather overgrown, but still attracting butterflies.





## Bentley Station Meadow

Bentley Station Meadow continues to be a work in progress, with a volunteer day cutting and clearing the bramble in the main meadow and another volunteer day clearing bramble re-growth in August. It will take a few years to get on top of the bramble, but compared to this time last year the bramble is much reduced in height and area. The cows were on during June to graze the grass down which has allowed more wildflowers to come through. A tree survey paid homage to some of the notable trees on site, in particular a veteran crab apple and an oak with an enormous trunk which Neil kindly measured.

**Fiona Scully,**  
South Downs Landscape Officer



*Bentley Station Meadow.  
Meadow 2  
Meadow 3*



*Chilcomb scrape. Striped Lychnis larvae  
Yew Hill. Fragrant orchids*



*Chilcomb sports ground scrape.  
Interpretation board*







## New Members' Day 2024

For the third consecutive year, the branch held a New Members' Day at St Swithun's School, Winchester, on Saturday 3 August. It was well attended once again, with members who had joined the branch in the previous two years.

The day followed the successful format of the previous two years, starting with refreshments followed by a series of short presentations: some focusing on branch activities and opportunities, and others on more general butterfly- and moth-related topics. Peter Eeles, Branch Chair, welcomed participants and later presented a session on butterfly photography. Vice Chair Rupert Broadway gave a talk on butterfly gardening, following which WCBS co-ordinator Chris Piper informed attendees of the various methods of butterfly and moth recording. South Downs Landscape Coordinator Fiona Scully talked about the Hampshire reserves, and Branch Treasurer Neil Goodall shared his personal experiences of volunteering, both on practical conservation tasks and committee roles, outlining the associated benefits to the branch and to the individual. The morning presentations finished with Ashley Whitlock talking about the annual programme of butterfly walks.

We then decamped the short distance to Magdalen Hill Down for a picnic lunch and afterwards split into four groups, each with an experienced leader, for a walk around the reserve. The cloudy weather made for some excellent photographic opportunities as many of the butterflies were basking with wings open to gain sufficient heat for them to be active. Although numbers were down in what has generally been a disappointing summer, over a dozen species were sighted, (see page 15 for Ashley's highlights).

Once again, the day was deemed to be a great success, with one participant in particular commenting that they wished that other organisations would hold similar events. One of the main aims of the New Members' Day is to make members feel engaged with the branch and to open their eyes to the opportunities that are available – we are always on the lookout for volunteers and we hope that at least some of the participants will want to get more involved with branch activities as a result.

**Rupert Broadway, Vice Chair**

*Touring Magdalen Hill Down. Ashley Whitlock*

## New Forest Butterfly Transect Group

### Visit to Kevin Ross's nature reserve in North Baddesley

On what felt like the first hot day of the summer, Trevor Bumfrey arranged a visit to a private nature reserve near North Baddesley. In the end, there were only three of us, led by Kevin Ross, who owns the land, and is a passionate advocate for butterflies, so has maintained a wonderful area of rough, damp grassland.

We started by the buddleias in Kevin's back garden, where we saw Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and a Hummingbird Hawk-moth. Out in the grassy meadow, there were skippers in abundance. Unlike the New Forest heathland, Large Skippers were very much in the minority, with both Small and Essex Skippers popping up on stems near enough to our path to get photos for positive identification. One or two Marbled Whites were still around, at the end of their season, alongside abundant Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown. We ventured into the neighbouring woodland, where Kevin had seen a Purple Emperor last week, and found both Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral, but His Imperial Majesty failed to put in an appearance. In all, we listed 16 species in just over an hour.

We also looked under a number of reptile sheets, which revealed a lovely brown female adder, a grass snake, and lots of slow worms. There were dragonflies and soldier beetles in the air, Cinnabar moth caterpillars on the ragwort, and grasshoppers underfoot. On a day like this, Kevin's reserve is an amazing place to visit.

**Nigel Owen**

*All images: Brian Cartwright.  
Small Tortoiseshell  
Meadow Brown  
Comma*







## 2024 Field Trip Highlights – Hampshire



The field trip programme in 2024 was severely interrupted by the weather, with several cancellations and the re-scheduling of some site visits.

In the spring, the Duke of Burgundy was seen at West Wood and a female was observed laying eggs, while at Butser Hill the species was evident but in very low numbers. Once again, one of the highlights of the season was the New Forest trip to see the Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Standing Hat, before venturing on to Pig Bush to track down the Emperor Moth. On Martin Down, sunshine was scarce, but when it did shine through there were good numbers of butterflies, including our target species the Marsh Fritillary, and with the added bonus of Emperor Moths.

Into the summer, the weather again played a big part; several target species were well down in numbers or not seen at all. On Broxhead Common, there was a good count of Silver-studded Blue, while the highlight of the field trip was seeing a lovely Emperor Moth caterpillar feeding on heather. During short bursts of sunshine, the Purple Emperor was seen in good numbers at Alice Holt Forest and singletons were observed at West Walk and Micheldever Wood.

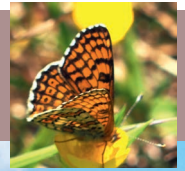
The New Members' Day at Magdalen Hill Down was a success despite the weather being grey and drizzly at times. We saw several Adonis Blues, many Chalk Hill Blues, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper, Six-spot Burnet, Silver Y and an Oak Eggar moth. It was a very enjoyable day, and we hope to see some of the new members on future field trips.

Shipton Bellinger was a treat with Brown Hairstreak, Wall Brown and Magpie Moth.

It was lovely to welcome new field trippers this year and I'd like to thank all who came on the walks in this year's programme. Hopefully, the weather will improve for 2025! Look forward to seeing you again next year.

**Ashley Whitlock**, Field Meetings Organiser, Hampshire

## and Isle of Wight



Once again, we've had another year where the weather let us down, with walks cancelled because of the rain.

Our first walk, in Parkhurst Forest, after a week's delay because of rain, was a great success, with lots of Brimstones and other early butterflies.

The Glanville's were late emerging again, but were plentiful later in May for the field trips in Mottistone Chalk pits and Afton Down. Not so many people came over to the Island to see the Glanville's this year, which was a shame.

The June walk at Newtown Meadows and Walter's Copse was good and the sun shone. We saw our first White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries in Walter's Copse, while in the meadows there were lots of Puss Moth caterpillars.

The July Mottistone Down walk was disappointing as we didn't see the Dark Green Fritillary. However, we were rewarded by seeing Grayling in one of the chalk pits. Kemphill Moor Copse was again cloudy which affected the number of butterflies seen. We were lucky enough to observe Purple Hairstreaks in the oaks and some came down low enough to photograph.

On the Mount Joy walk, at long last, the sun shone and we were treated to lots of beautiful summer butterflies, including Wall Brown and Brown Argus.

I would like to give special thanks to all the people who helped me in leading walks this year and to everyone that came along.

**Kay Shaw**, Field Meetings Organiser, Isle of Wight

*All images, Ashley Whitlock.*

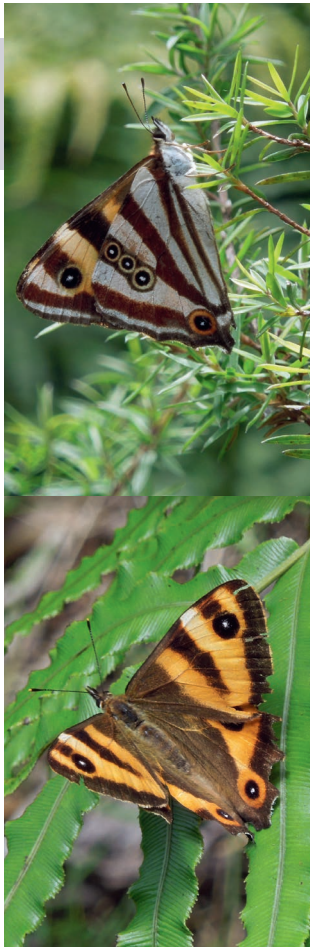
*Micheldever Wood*

*Male Purple Emperor, West Walk*

*Grizzled Skipper on Hannah's finger, Butser*

*All IOW images: Kay Shaw.  
Afton Down, near Freshwater Bay  
Mount Joy Cemetery, Newport*





## In Search of the Forest Ringlet (*Dodonidia helmsii*)

In his comprehensive book *New Zealand Butterflies*, published by George Gibbs (1980), he lists a total of just 23 butterflies from Aotearoa New Zealand, of which 11 are endemic (ie found in New Zealand and nowhere else). This rather impoverished fauna is due to New Zealand splitting from Australia about 80 million years ago, before butterfly evolution had really got going.

Considering New Zealand’s endemic species, the majority are either alpine Satyrids (browns), of which there are five, or else Lycaenids, especially ‘coppers’, of which George Gibbs recognised four. The most elusive and arguably most beautiful of all the endemics is the Forest Ringlet. It was discovered in 1881, and although widely distributed in the native forests, to altitudes of at least 1,250m, it is rarely encountered. There are fewer than 400 records, since the original discovery!

In December 2023, I visited the forests of the Coromandel Peninsula in an attempt to find the species and undertake ecological research. I’m sure you can imagine my joy when I encountered and photographed my very first Forest Ringlet, especially as

so few people have ever seen it. Indeed, I was lucky enough to observe the butterfly on a number of occasions, as well as find eggs and larvae. Although regarded as a sub-canopy species, sometimes visiting the flowers of Manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) for nectar, the females at least, have to descend to ground level to lay eggs on the *Gahnia* spp. sedges that are the larval foodplant.

If you’d like to learn more about this beautiful butterfly and the challenges it faces, please come to the Branch Members’ Day in November when I’ll be giving a presentation on the species (see page 5).

**Andy Barker**

All images: Andy Barker.  
Forest Ringlet, underside  
Forest Ringlet (female), upperside

## Hampshire and Isle of Wight Butterfly Report 2023

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White-letter Hairstreak. Lee Hurrell



## 2023 Butterfly Report: Introduction

As a complement to the online Annual Butterfly Report (ABR) for 2023, found at [hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/report.php?year=2023](https://hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/report.php?year=2023), we present here an informal summary of the 2023 butterfly year.

It should be emphasised that this summary is *not* a print version of the online summary, but an abstract of selected highlights that presents the 'headlines' of the 2023 season. We also include several anecdotes shared by our members.

2023 marks a transition in the way our Branch reports on the Hampshire and Isle of Wight butterfly year; a stepping stone in the evolution of our dual digital/print report.

Given this new way of presenting the ABR (the production of a data-intensive online summary of the previous butterfly year each spring, with a summary in a printed newsletter), we would like to encourage all members to capture their interesting sightings and anecdotes each year, with a view to including them in a printed newsletter.

### Online summary

Data is verified and collated by our H&IOW Butterfly Recorder through *iRecord*. For details of this and all the ways in which you can pass on your butterfly records, please see the Recording page on the Branch website:

[hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/webpage.php?name=recording](https://hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/webpage.php?name=recording)

#### How do I contribute?

- Enter your 2024 butterfly records in *iRecord*

#### When is the deadline?

- 1 December 2024

**Your help is vital and every record really does count!**

### Print summary

#### How do I contribute?

- Email your 2024 anecdotal highlights and lowlights, and your interesting butterfly observations, in words and photographs, to: [butterflywalks@gmail.com](mailto:butterflywalks@gmail.com)

#### When is the deadline?

- 1 December 2024

My thanks to Kevin Freeborn (Newsletter Editor), Rupert Broadway (Engagement Subcommittee Chair), Lee Hurrell (Conservation & Records Subcommittee Chair), Bob Ansell (County Butterfly Recorder) and Andy Barker for their support and, most importantly, input in helping us converge on this new approach.

**Pete Eeles**, Branch Chair



## 2023 Highlights Summary

### The year in numbers

Records	150,860
Individuals	555,895
Tetrads (populated)	1,061
Species	49
Recorders	4,531

In many ways, 2023 was a record year for butterflies and butterfly recording in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. In excess of 150,000 butterfly records were received from more than 4,500 recorders, both all-time highest figures. Well over half a million individual butterflies were observed across 49 species.

Weather wise, it was a mixed year to say the least. The early season in March and April tended to be cool and cloudy, with a series of depressions moving through – see the atmospheric pressure graphs on page 21. This tended to hold back spring emergence with, for example, Orange-tip, Small Blue and Glanville Fritillary appearing three weeks later compared to 2022.

The Met Office named 11 storms in 2023, from Otto and Noa in February and April, through Babet in October, which more or less put the tin lid on it for the 2023 butterfly season, and ending with Gerrit in the last days of December. Some species, like the Purple Emperor, were literally blown away in the mid-July gales.

Species that did have a good year included Holly Blue and Small Copper, rising to ninth and twelfth respectively in the commoner species rankings – see page 22. Of the scarcer species – see page 23 – the Duke of Burgundy climbed four places. For the second year running, there was no record of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary; and, sadly, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary remains in peril, although it was recorded in one more tetrad than in 2022.

In terms of species on the rise in 2023, Large Tortoiseshell had records from across the Isle of Wight, while on the south-east coast of Hampshire numbers of Long-tailed Blue in September and October were their highest on record.

It was the Red Admiral though that had a coruscatingly good year. The squadrons of a dozen or more seen by your report editor in ceaseless combat over the sunlit grasslands of Fleming Park, Eastleigh, during the 'Indian Summer' evenings of September 2023 were truly remarkable and memorable.

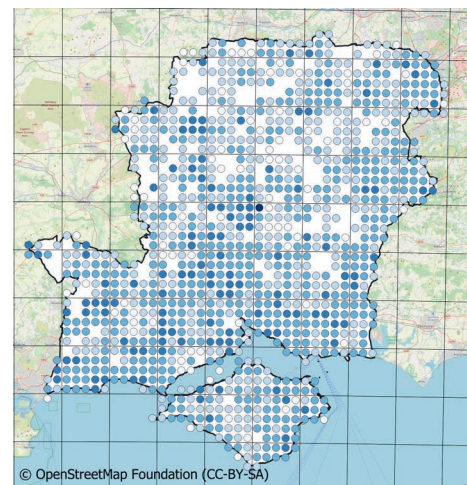
**Kevin Freeborn**, Editor

## Scene Setters

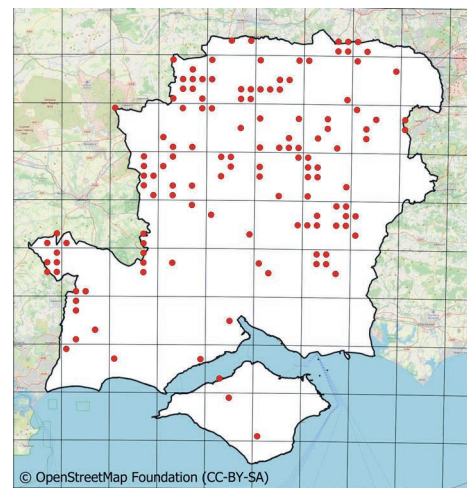
### Glossary of terms

**Tetrad** A 2km by 2km square division of the OS National Grid (the circles in the maps below). Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have 1,246 tetrads. The larger squares on the maps below are 10km by 10km.

2023 Tetrad Coverage



Tetrads in which butterflies have been recorded



Unrecorded tetrads

please contact the County Butterfly Recorder:  
[butterflyrecorder@hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:butterflyrecorder@hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk)

**Butterfly transect** A method of monitoring butterflies, involving walking a fixed route at a given site, once a week from the first week of April to the last week of September, counting the number of each species seen. For the purpose of comparison between other butterfly transects both locally and nationally, there are a fixed set of guidelines. These primarily relate to the time of day when and the weather conditions under which the transect is walked. For further details of transect methodology, see: [ukbms.org](http://ukbms.org)

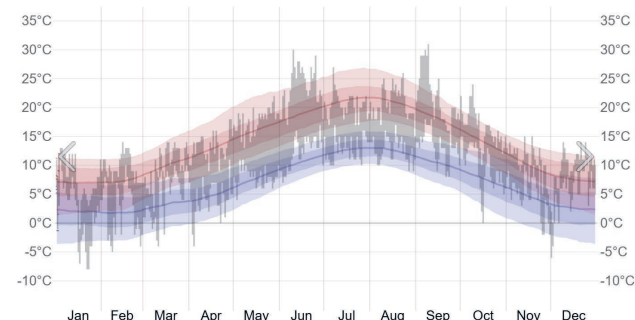
**Flight period** This is the period when the adult butterfly (imago) is on the wing.

**Butterfly counts** Butterfly transects do not monitor population size, but because of a consistent methodology, they allow us to monitor change from one year to the next. Other counts sent in by recorders will be a function of the area of a site covered and the amount of time spent. In a quantitative way they give an idea of important sites, but would only give an indication of population size.

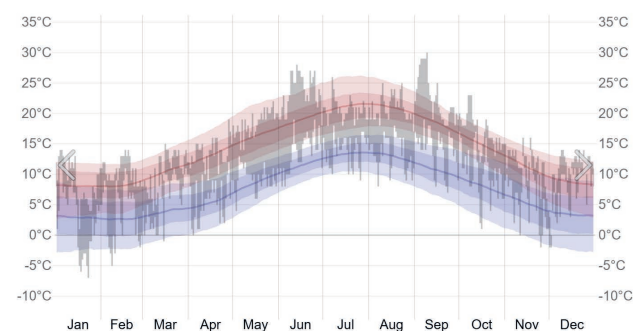
**BC Priority Status** Regional priority is shown as listed in the Butterfly Conservation South East England Regional Conservation Strategy 2015-2025, as adopted for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Six butterfly species have been identified as 'Top Priority'.

In the tetrad coverage chart, the darker the circle, the greater the recording effort, based on a logarithmic scale. This methodology illustrates the 'cold spots' that require more targeted effort in coming field seasons. If you would like more information regarding unrecorded tetrads then

## 2023 Weather Report



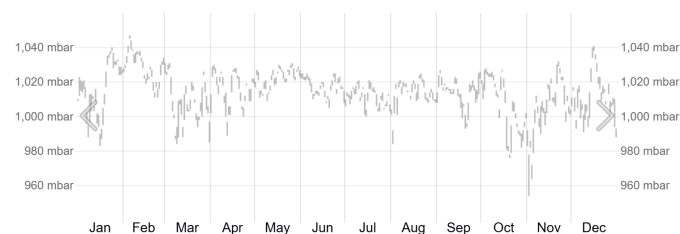
Temperatures at  
RAF Odiham



Temperatures at  
Southampton



Atmospheric  
pressure at RAF  
Odiham



Atmospheric  
pressure at  
Southampton

Source: [weatherspark.com](http://weatherspark.com)

## Commoner Species Summary

The year's twenty-five most common species are shown below according to their tetrad coverage within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, which embraces a total of 1,246 tetrads (a tetrad is a 2km square, a division of the OS GB National Grid).

The Red Admiral was the most widely recorded species, counted in more than three-quarters of H&IOW tetrads. Its rise of five places over its 2022 ranking is in contrast to Small Tortoiseshell that fell five places. Holly Blue had a good year, achieving its most widely recorded position over the past five years.

Species	Tetrads	Records	Positions (by Tetrad)				
			2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Red Admiral	953	14,786	1	6	4	5	3
Small White	890	13,317	2	3	1	1	2
Meadow Brown	884	16,963	3	1	2	3	4
Gatekeeper	881	13,112	4	4	5	4	1
Large White	881	11,700	5	2	3	2	5
Peacock	870	9,127	6	7	6	6	7
Brimstone	814	11,323	7	5	7	7	6
Comma	777	4,875	8	8	8	8	11
Holly Blue	723	7,168	9	12	17	10	11
Common Blue	696	5,189	10	11	16	9	10
Speckled Wood	668	9,296	11	9	11	11	9
Small Copper	586	2,807	12	17	13	15	18
Green-veined White	527	2,520	13	13	14	13	15
Marbled White	510	3,497	14	16	10	16	12
Small Tortoiseshell	506	1,545	15	10	12	12	17
Ringlet	496	3,199	16	14	9	14	14
Painted Lady	482	1,343	17	15	15	20	8
Orange-tip	367	1,554	18	18	18	17	16
Small Skipper	342	1,715	19	19	19	21	19
Large Skipper	314	2,076	20	20	21	18	20
Small Heath	301	3,231	21	21	20	19	21
Brown Argus	237	1,927	22	24	23	23	23
Silver-washed Fritillary	227	1,716	23	22	22	22	22
Essex Skipper	135	378	24	25	25	27	27
White Admiral	116	531	25	27	26	28	25

## Scarcer Species Summary

The year's twenty-two least common species are shown below. Three species jumped up the rankings year on year: Small Blue up five places; Duke of Burgundy up four; and Silver-studded Blue up three. Conversely, Clouded Yellow dropped five places; Chalk Hill Blue and Purple Emperor dropped four positions; and Dark Green Fritillary was down three.

While records of Large Tortoiseshell and Long-tailed Blue have been entered here on the list for the first time, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary was not recorded again in 2023. Both Marsh Fritillary and Pearl-bordered Fritillary were recorded in less than one per-cent of Hampshire and Isle of Wight tetrads.

Species	Tetrads	Records	Positions (by Tetrad)				
			2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Silver-studded Blue	100	861	26	29	28	26	28
Green Hairstreak	88	233	27	28	27	29	24
Clouded Yellow	85	158	28	23	31	24	34
Dark Green Fritillary	82	531	29	26	24	25	26
Purple Hairstreak	77	183	30	32	30	30	33
Small Blue	67	465	31	36	35	36	36
Dingy Skipper	66	364	32	31	29	32	30
Grayling	62	483	33	33	33	31	32
Chalk Hill Blue	61	1,019	34	30	34	33	29
Grizzled Skipper	58	309	35	35	32	34	31
Wall	57	197	36	34	36	35	37
Brown Hairstreak	42	149	37	39	38	41	39
Duke of Burgundy	29	122	38	42	42	42	41
White-letter Hairstreak	29	69	39	41	37	37	35
Adonis Blue	28	284	40	38	39	38	40
Purple Emperor	27	59	41	37	41	39	38
Glanville Fritillary	18	126	42	40	40	40	42
Silver-spotted Skipper	15	69	43	43	45	44	45
Marsh Fritillary	12	53	44	44	44	43	44
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	10	212	45	45	43	45	43
Large Tortoiseshell	10	11	46				
Long-tailed Blue	5	13	47				



## Earliest and Latest Sightings

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Earliest	Latest	Span (days)
Red Admiral													02-Jan	30-Dec	363
Peacock													06-Jan	31-Dec	360
Brimstone													02-Jan	28-Nov	331
Small Tortoiseshell													06-Feb	07-Nov	275
Comma													15-Feb	11-Nov	270
Small White													15-Feb	07-Nov	266
Holly Blue													27-Mar	15-Nov	234
Speckled Wood													02-Apr	15-Nov	228
Large White													02-Apr	07-Nov	220
Clouded Yellow													23-Mar	24-Oct	216
Small Copper													07-Apr	07-Nov	215
Painted Lady													09-Apr	07-Nov	213
Green-veined White													06-Apr	17-Oct	195
Common Blue													25-Apr	18-Oct	177
Wall													20-Apr	07-Oct	171
Meadow Brown													21-May	24-Oct	157
Brown Argus													07-May	09-Oct	156
Small Heath													07-May	03-Oct	150
Dingy Skipper													20-Apr	02-Sep	136
Adonis Blue													17-May	29-Sep	136
Small Blue													16-May	15-Sep	123
Gatekeeper													10-Jun	25-Sep	108
Large Tortoiseshell													03-Apr	17-Jul	106
Small Skipper													04-Jun	10-Sep	99
Grayling													22-Jun	25-Sep	96
Large Skipper													22-May	22-Aug	93
Chalk Hill Blue													29-Jun	29-Sep	93
Ringlet													04-Jun	03-Sep	92
Marbled White													30-May	21-Aug	84
Silver-studded Blue													06-Jun	28-Aug	84
Silver-washed Fritillary													15-Jun	05-Sep	83
Dark Green Fritillary													14-Jun	04-Sep	83
Orange-tip													03-Apr	22-Jun	81
Purple Hairstreak													14-Jun	02-Sep	81
White Admiral													13-Jun	20-Aug	69
Green Hairstreak													20-Apr	27-Jun	69
Brown Hairstreak													19-Jul	25-Sep	69
Essex Skipper													11-Jun	16-Aug	67
Grizzled Skipper													20-Apr	22-Jun	64
Duke of Burgundy													07-Apr	09-Jun	64
White-letter Hairstreak													10-Jun	06-Aug	58
Silver-spotted Skipper													25-Jul	14-Sep	52
Glanville Fritillary													16-May	29-Jun	45
Marsh Fritillary													13-May	26-Jun	45
Long-tailed Blue													12-Sep	24-Oct	43
Pearl-bordered Fritillary													10-May	14-Jun	36
Purple Emperor													22-Jun	23-Jul	32

## Compared to 10 Years Ago Earliest and latest sightings 2023 v 2013

	2023			2013			Difference in span (days)
	Earliest	Latest	Span (days)	Earliest	Latest	Span (days)	
Red Admiral	02-Jan	30-Dec	363	01-Jan	26-Dec	360	3
Peacock	06-Jan	31-Dec	360	01-Jan	29-Dec	363	-3
Brimstone	02-Jan	28-Nov	331	27-Jan	28-Dec	336	-5
Small Tortoiseshell	06-Feb	07-Nov	275	16-Feb	25-Dec	313	-38
Comma	15-Feb	11-Nov	270	27-Jan	22-Dec	330	-60
Small White	15-Feb	07-Nov	266	09-Jan	24-Oct	289	-23
Holly Blue	27-Mar	15-Nov	234	14-Jan	07-Oct	267	-33
Speckled Wood	02-Apr	15-Nov	228	11-Jan	04-Nov	298	-70
Large White	02-Apr	07-Nov	220	13-Apr	25-Oct	196	24
Clouded Yellow	23-Mar	24-Oct	216	18-Jun	09-Dec	175	41
Small Copper	07-Apr	07-Nov	215	23-Apr	04-Nov	196	19
Painted Lady	09-Apr	07-Nov	213	01-Jan	25-Nov	329	-116
Green-veined White	06-Apr	17-Oct	195	16-Apr	28-Sep	166	29
Common Blue	25-Apr	18-Oct	177	06-May	29-Oct	177	0
Wall	20-Apr	07-Oct	171	09-May	18-Sep	133	38
Meadow Brown	21-May	24-Oct	157	01-Jun	15-Oct	137	20
Brown Argus	07-May	09-Oct	156	14-May	05-Oct	145	11
Small Heath	07-May	03-Oct	150	10-May	24-Oct	168	-18
Dingy Skipper	20-Apr	02-Sep	136	06-May	31-Aug	118	18
Adonis Blue	17-May	29-Sep	136	27-May	29-Sep	126	10
Small Blue	16-May	15-Sep	123	14-May	04-Sep	114	9
Gatekeeper	10-Jun	25-Sep	108	17-Jun	22-Sep	98	10
Small Skipper	04-Jun	10-Sep	99	06-Jun	04-Sep	91	8
Grayling	22-Jun	25-Sep	96	08-Jul	20-Sep	75	21
Large Skipper	22-May	22-Aug	93	05-Jun	22-Sep	110	-17
Chalk Hill Blue	29-Jun	29-Sep	93	04-Jul	12-Oct	101	-8
Ringlet	04-Jun	03-Sep	92	02-Jun	31-Aug	91	1
Marbled White	30-May	21-Aug	84	04-Jun	03-Sep	92	-8
Silver-studded Blue	06-Jun	28-Aug	84	20-Jun	26-Aug	68	16
Silver-washed Frit.	15-Jun	05-Sep	83	10-Jun	21-Sep	104	-21
Dark Green Fritillary	14-Jun	04-Sep	83	06-Jun	04-Sep	91	-8
Orange-tip	03-Apr	22-Jun	81	14-Apr	14-Aug	123	-42
Purple Hairstreak	14-Jun	02-Sep	81	26-Jun	04-Sep	71	10
White Admiral	13-Jun	20-Aug	69	17-Jun	05-Sep	81	-12
Green Hairstreak	20-Apr	27-Jun	69	11-Apr	11-Jun	62	7
Brown Hairstreak	19-Jul	25-Sep	69	06-Aug	26-Sep	52	17
Essex Skipper	11-Jun	16-Aug	67	05-Jul	27-Aug	54	13
Grizzled Skipper	20-Apr	22-Jun	64	28-Apr	17-Jul	81	-17
Duke of Burgundy	07-Apr	09-Jun	64	30-Apr	24-Jun	56	8
White-letter Hairst'k	10-Jun	06-Aug	58	29-Jun	09-Aug	42	16
Silver-spotted Skip.	25-Jul	14-Sep	52	24-Jul	10-Sep	49	3
Glanville Fritillary	16-May	29-Jun	45	25-May	11-Jul	48	-3
Marsh Fritillary	13-May	26-Jun	45	25-May	19-Jun	26	19
Pearl-bordered Frit.	10-May	14-Jun	36	13-May	19-Jun	38	-2
Purple Emperor	22-Jun	23-Jul	32	11-Jul	23-Aug	44	-12

**Example:** Purple Emperor was recorded 19 days earlier in 2023 v 2013 but their season lasted one month longer in 2013.

## Transect Trends 2023 v 2022

Species	2023 count	2022 count	2023 combined transect trend
Red Admiral	10,079	1,417	611%
Holly Blue	4,617	1,339	244%
Brown Argus	4,104	1,205	240%
Small Copper	1,667	489	240%
Peacock	7,850	3,081	154%
Brimstone	15,869	7,762	104%
Essex Skipper	651	351	85%
Gatekeeper	42,371	23,351	81%
Large Skipper	5,521	3,068	79%
Meadow Brown	87,130	51,749	68%
Small White	14,319	8,832	62%
Small Heath	7,032	4,723	48%
Large White	7,548	5,135	46%
Small Skipper	3,678	2,587	42%
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	480	350	37%
Small/Essex Skipper	7,605	5,560	36%
Marbled White	13,965	10,369	34%
Small Blue	1,178	908	29%
Grizzled Skipper	295	253	16%
Comma	2,148	1,863	15%
White Admiral	653	570	14%
Common Blue	6,885	6,062	13%
Adonis Blue	514	457	12%
Speckled Wood	10,194	9,530	6%
Silver-studded Blue	5,706	5,540	2%
Silver-washed Fritillary	3,450	3,502	-1%
Grayling	886	918	-3%
Dark Green Fritillary	1,380	1,521	-9%
Painted Lady	391	437	-10%
Orange-tip	1,376	1,555	-11%
Green-veined White	2,140	2,636	-18%
Green Hairstreak	172	213	-19%
Dinky Skipper	409	633	-35%
Ringlet	9,727	15,264	-36%
Wall Brown	134	214	-37%
Duke of Burgundy	56	93	-39%
Chalk Hill Blue	7,496	12,979	-42%
Small Tortoiseshell	501	905	-44%
Silver-spotted Skipper	46	109	-57%
Clouded Yellow	34	223	-84%

The data in this table is based on **164 transects\* across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.** (\* see definition on page 20)

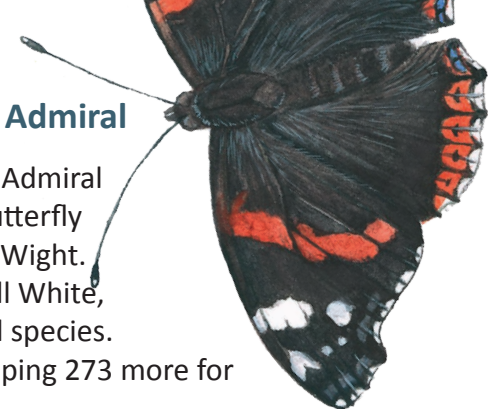
**Please note:** The aggregated data represents individual butterflies recorded on transect, and because of the consistent methodology, gives the most accurate measure of population change from one year to the next for common species. As the figures are based on actual butterflies recorded, and do not include estimates for missed weeks, the percentage change for those species that are rare or with short flight periods, may be significantly affected by missed weeks due to bad weather.

The percentage change values are not included for species poorly represented on transect, as there is too little data to generate meaningful figures. For these species, a better measure of performance is the total number of records and individuals received from all sources. It must be recognised, however, that such data are not collected in a consistent way, so will be greatly affected by the weather and recorder effort.

Although transect data offers the most consistent approach to monitoring change in butterfly numbers, total records received from all sources benefits from the greater volume of data. To assess overall change for a given species from one year to the next it is therefore recommended that the figures from both the transect data and total records are considered.

## 2023 Butterfly of the Year: Red Admiral

- Recorded in 953 tetrads, the Red Admiral was our most widely recorded butterfly across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This is 63 more tetrads than Small White, the second most widely recorded species.
- In terms of tetrads, that's a whopping 273 more for Red Admiral than in 2022.
- An amazing 41,633 individual adults were recorded, making Red Admiral the third most abundant butterfly in the region after Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper.
- There were 14,786 records of Red Admiral, with only Meadow Brown having more in 2023.
- The first sighting was recorded on 2 January and the last on 30 December, making it the joint earliest (with Brimstone) and second latest (after Peacock) recorded species, but with the greatest span (at 363) of days between first and last sightings.



Chris Rose

Red Admirals were everywhere in 2023! At the peak of the season, counts of 30 on one buddleia bush were not unusual. *Lee Hurrell*

On 9 October, I watched a regular movement of Red Admirals at rooftop height flying north to south from my garden in Itchen Abbas, estimated at 30 or so in a one- to two-hour period. This appeared to be a reverse migration. *Rupert Broadway*

This was the best year I have ever seen in Pamber Forest for Red Admiral. 2007 was the previous best with 75 recorded on transect; this year I recorded 185, with a massive peak of 61 was reached on 10 July. *Graham Dennis*



## New Forest Butterfly Transect Group 2023 Season Highlights

2023 was a record year in terms of overall numbers recorded: 68,948 exceeded the 67,567 recorded in 2019, although the density was higher in 2019 as less transects were walked. This represents a 40% increase over 2022. Much of the increase is down to a very warm, dry June which resulted in large numbers of summer browns. It also meant that less common summer species such as White Admiral had a spectacular year. We also recorded our first Purple Emperors since 2002. Record numbers of Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper made up nearly 50% of the total, and both Small/Essex and Large Skippers had record years. Brimstone and Peacock did well in spite of a cool spring, while Brown Argus and Small Copper also thrived after a poor 2022. Red Admiral was the most common butterfly from September onwards. On the down side, Small Tortoiseshell, Common Blue and Grayling had poor years, partly due to a cool, wet late-summer. Most surprising was that Ringlet was 36% down on the long-term average, and we barely recorded 50% of the 2022 total.

### Bob Taylor

*Small Copper. Brian Cartwright*

*Small Skipper. Chris Rose*

*Holly Blue. Francis Plowman*

*Duke of Burgundy. Chris Rose*



## 2023 Highlights January to April

**Brimstone, Magdalen Hill Down** *Branch website post, Rupert and Sharron Broadway*

**26 January** The volunteers at today's work party at Magdalen Hill Down were rewarded by the sight of a male Brimstone flying around in the early afternoon sunshine, although the temperature couldn't have been much more than 5 degrees. He was either showing his appreciation of their efforts, or perhaps registering his disapproval at the disturbance!

**Searching for Brown Hairstreak eggs** *Branch website post, Mark Tutton*

**9 January** I took advantage of a rain free day to have a look for more Brown Hairstreak eggs on Portsdown. In a 90-minute search of south-facing Blackthorn with plenty of suckers, I managed to find three new eggs in an area where adults were pretty scarce.

**Searching for White-letter Hairstreak eggs** *Branch website post, Andy Barker*

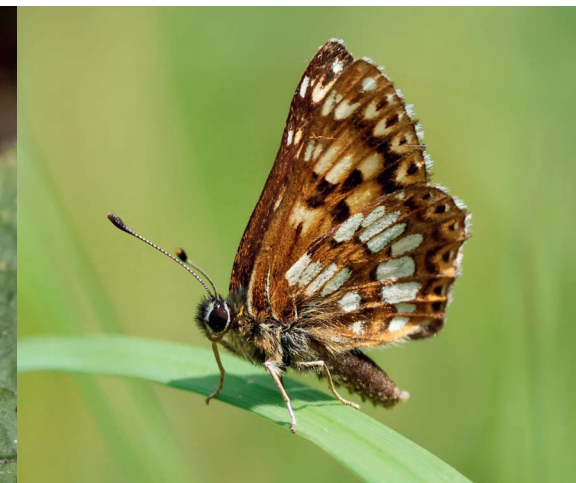
**19 January** I made a brief (20-minute) search for White-letter Hairstreak eggs on a roadside elm near Hursley. This is a site where I have seen the butterfly regularly over many years, so it's usually possible to find one or two eggs in the winter months. Unfortunately all the lower branches had been cut back, so I only found one egg today.

**Holly Blue Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis**

In what turned out to be the second best year on transect for the Holly Blue in Pamber Forest, with a total count of 101, behind only the 111 in 1990, the first individual was seen on 8 April.

**Duke of Burgundy Species champion, Ashley Whitlock**

Emerging at Noar Hill on the 18 April after a cool, wet period through March and April, the Duke of Burgundy was reluctant to emerge in numbers until well into May.





## 2023 Highlights May

**Butser Hill** *Branch website post, Mark Tutton*

**2 May** [The slow start to the season is exemplified in Mark's post] Although at first the cloud cover was nearly 100%, I sat on the south-facing slope and bided my time. Around lunchtime, weak sunshine finally broke through and it warmed up enough for a few Grizzled Skippers and a solitary Duke of Burgundy and Dingy Skipper.

**Duke of Burgundy** *Noar Hill Branch website post, Francis Plowman*

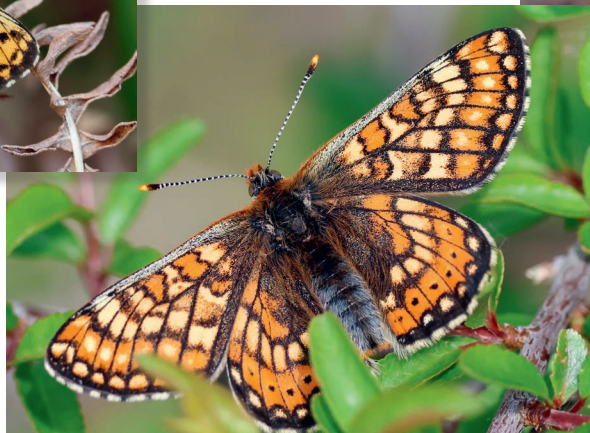
**3 May** On the Cowslip-bedecked slopes and dells of Noar Hill today, where the Duke of Burgundy was our quarry, we were delighted to record 12 very fresh specimens.

**Butser Hill** (Branch field trip) *Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

**8 May** We walked round the rim of Butser Hill admiring the countless Cowslip plants, along with many Early Purple Orchids, and finding many caterpillars of the Six-spot Burnet moth crawling in the lush green chalk downland.



*Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
& Marsh Fritillary. Chris Rose*



**Marsh Fritillary, Magdalen Hill Down** *Helen Pinchin*

**13 May** What a wonderful surprise this afternoon! We saw our first Marsh Fritillary of the season, and our first ever at Magdalen Hill Down. In fact, we think we saw two, unless the first flew down and resettled near us.

**Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Bentley Wood** *Helen Pinchin*

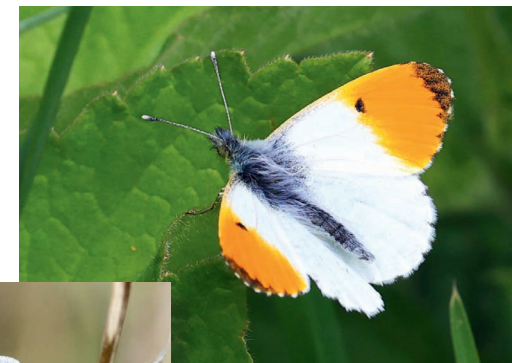
**14 May** We went along to Bentley Wood hoping to see Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, which I'm pleased to say we did, though they were hard to photograph as they rarely settled long enough. A surprise though was to see three Marsh Fritillaries close together; maybe they followed us from Magdalen Hill Down!

**New Copse/Pig Bush** (Branch field trip) *Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

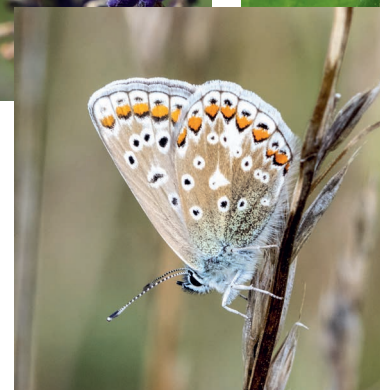
**18 May** The Pearl-bordered Fritillary was out in good numbers; there were several females seen egg-laying in the scrubby leaf litter, and the slopes of the rides were covered in Common Dog-violet.

**Wheeler's Bay** (Reserve Volunteers' Grand Day Out) *Branch website post, Rupert Broadway*

**24 May** We were welcomed at Wheeler's Bay by a contingent of Isle of Wight members led by Jim Baldwin who was to be our guide for the day. After making sure we had seen our first Glanville Fritillary on the undercliff, Andy Butler, Glanville species champion, gave us a short talk on his and other branch members' contributions to creation of the excellent habitat at the site, where we also saw Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Small White, Large White, Small Blue, Peacock and many Common Blue.



*Small White. Francis Powman.  
Common Blue & Orange-tip.  
Brian Cartwright*



**Stockbridge Down** (Branch field trip) *Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

**24 May** Like most sites this year, the Holly Blue seemed to be quite common, as was the Green Hairstreak, along with Grizzled Skipper. Other species of note were Brown Argus, Common Blue – certainly living up to their name, and Orange-tip.

**Martin Down** (Branch field trip) *Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

**28 May** A tally of 17 butterfly species was seen, mostly along Bockerley Ditch. Every Hawthorn bush seemed to have a Green Hairstreak or two; pristine Adonis Blues were taking to the wing and Small Blues were everywhere.



## 2023 Highlights June

### **Silver-studded Blue** *Nigel Owen*

Although the Silver-studded Blue is notorious for not flying far from where it emerges, the first ones I see each year tend to be furthest from the heart of the colony. It is as if they send out scouts first, who travel further than the rest of the colony.

### **Silver-studded Blue** *Sheila Anne Williams*

I was really surprised to spot this stunning little blue butterfly on the chalk downlands surrounding Winchester. Not just in one place, but in three: Yew Hill, Pitt Down and Magdalen Hill Down. Although they are more often associated with heathland, it was a delight to see them on downland. Surprisingly, one was even sighted in a fourth area at Wildern Local Nature Reserve, near Hedge End. This was the very first time that it had been seen there, becoming the 30th butterfly species on this small but interesting reserve.

### **White Admiral** *Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis*

It was a very good year for White Admiral, with 92 on transect. The first was on 15 June with a very good peak of 33 on 25 June and the last was on 25 July. With these numbers, and the early season, I was half expecting to see a second brood but the rather wet late-summer probably put paid to this.

### **Purple Emperor** *Species champion, Ashley Whitlock*

The 2023 season arrived earlier than anyone anticipated and, by the time many observers realised, the butterfly was well out. In Hampshire it arrived on the 21 June at Longstock and was also seen in Straits Inclosure and Havant Thicket, on the same day.

### **Purple Emperor** *Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis*

It was a bumper year for the Purple Emperor in Pamber Forest. On 25 June, five were seen on transect – a remarkable day, as generally we do not see them at all on transect. Several others were seen in the following two weeks, all of them males visiting the ride surface, one settling on a sweaty sock!

### **Purple Emperor, Pitt Down/West Wood** *Helen Pinchin*

**25 June** We had another Purple Emperor highlight at Pitt Down/West Wood where we saw two this time. The first was on the ground at the bottom of the open grass area at Pitt Down; it was so close I nearly stepped on it as I wasn't really looking for them in that area. The second was on the same poo we saw one on two days previously ... thought we ought to check it out just in case, and glad we did!

### **Silver-studded Blue, Yew Hill** *Rupert Broadway*

**27 June** I recorded a single male Silver-studded Blue at the BC reserve at Yew Hill. This wasn't the first record for the site, but is very unusual (I believe there were several other records in the Winchester area around the same time). Assuming this was a wanderer from one of the New Forest colonies, breeding on a chalk downland site is highly unlikely as the sub-species found in Hampshire has evolved to live on acid heath (although colonies on limestone do exist elsewhere).



*Purple Emperor. Chris Rose*

*Silver-studded Blue. Sheila Anne Williams*





## 2023 Highlights July

### **Purple Emperor** *Species champion, Ashley Whitlock*

In Alice Holt Forest, a male Purple Emperor was observed being attacked by a Hobby, and an unfortunate male Emperor was seen being beheaded by a dragonfly. During the St Swithun's Day gale, many males succumbed to the high winds, and the season petered out into the third week of July; it turned out to be one of the wettest July's on record.



*Purple Hairstreak.  
Francis Plowman  
Albino Gatekeeper.  
Marion Nesbit*

### **Purple Hairstreak** *Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis*

Generally speaking, this species is poorly represented in the transect data as it is a canopy dweller. I tried to complete the new fixed point monitoring for this species, but during the flight period the weather was very wet and windy and so, having missed the first half, I gave up! On the normal transect I recorded 26, with a peak count of 10 on 7 July.

### **Silver-washed Fritillary** *Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis*

This species is showing signs of an improvement in Pamber Forest. The peak count on transect was of 60, coming on 7 July; but they continued on the wing into early September. There was one reported sighting of a *valezina* form, the first for a few years now.

### **Silver-washed Fritillary, Abbots Wood Inclosure** *Helen Pinchin*

**2 July** On a Branch field trip to Abbots Wood Inclosure, we were fascinated to have a really good sighting of a Silver-washed Fritillary aberration (someone thought it might be *ab. ocellata*), the first time we've seen anything like it.

### **Gatekeeper** *Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis*

This was the best year for Gatekeeper since 1996 on the Pamber Forest transect. It was, once again, the most numerous species, with 1,626 individuals recorded. The peak count of 432 was on 25 July. Triple-figure counts were recorded for five consecutive weeks.

### **Gatekeeper** *Lee Hurrell*

Gatekeepers were so ubiquitous at one farm survey I carried out, I was counting in 50s.

### **Ringlet** *Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis*

The drought of 2022 really had an impact on this species, which is notoriously drought intolerant. The Pamber Forest transect recorded 557 overall, 70% down on the long-term average of 800. The peak count of 183 was reached on 10 July.

### **White-letter Hairstreak, Stockbridge Down** *Helen Pinchin*

**7 July** We enjoyed watching our first Chalk Hill Blues of the season at Stockbridge Down ... and then we saw our first ever White-letter Hairstreak in Hampshire, thanks to a couple of fellow spotters who pointed it out to us!

### **West Harting Down** *(Branch field trip) Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

**18 July** On to the summit, the 'butterfly of the year' has to be the Red Admiral as they were absolutely everywhere. As we ate our lunch, I went for a wander and there were 7 or 8 feasting on something not very nice, and the buddleias were festooned with all the Vanessaids, and Hummingbird Hawk-moths put in an appearance as well.

### **Vanessid census at Longstock Park**

**23 July** Red Admiral was the runaway winner at the Longstock Park buddleia collection, with numbers easily exceeding 100. Peacock came a respectable second at 34. Wooden spoons went to the Small Tortoiseshell (1) and Comma (1), the latter, along with the bees, preferring the more complex nectar of the golden yellow Buddleja weyeriana 'Sungold'. Half a dozen Large Whites, one Meadow Brown, and a Hummingbird hawk-moth were also seen. The Longstock 'Flutterby News' poster announced the recent sighting of a male Purple Emperor 'feasting on duck poo' in the Water Gardens, a 'first' for the site.



*Peacock. Brian Cartwright  
White-letter Hairstreak. Lee Hurrell  
Silver-washed Fritillary. Brian Cartwright*





## 2023 Highlights August

### **Speckled Wood** *Reserves Officer (Pamber), H&IOWWT, Graham Dennis*

It was a very strange year for this species at Pamber Forest, with an awfully poor spring generation, a better second generation and a spectacularly good third generation. The second and third generations ran together, starting in mid-July with an impressive peak of 80 on 30 August.



### **Adonis Blue** *South Downs Landscape Officer, Fiona Scully*

Good numbers of Adonis Blue at Magdalen Hill down in August; and a good year for wasp spiders too.

### **Possible Short-tailed Blue**, *Shanklin Branch website post, David Tiffin*

**1 August** I came across a small blue butterfly at the bottom of the cliff along the promenade between Shanklin and Sandown, not far from the steps that lead up to the Blueberry Café. In flight, from the size and grey/blue colouring, I thought it could be either a Small Blue or Brown Argus. When the butterfly actually settled the markings were similar to a Small Blue except on the rear hind wing it had two orange spots/markings similar to a purple hairstreak. Later, trying to identify it, I believe this was probably a Short-tailed Blue.

### **Yew Hill Reserve Walk** *Branch website post, Rupert Broadway*

**4 August** Despite the heavy cloud and cool temperature there was a good turnout for the branch's second Yew Hill reserve walk of the season and the Chalk Hill Blues, the main target species, did not disappoint, flying up in good numbers and posing for the photographers.



*Speckled Wood. Brian Cartwright*  
*Silver-spotted Skipper. Francis Plowman*

### **Unusual garden butterfly in Hiltingbury** *Branch website post, Andy Barker*

**7 August** This afternoon, I was lucky enough to spot a Silver-washed Fritillary in our garden. This was the 23rd species for our garden this year, but more than this, it was the beautiful Valezina form of the female. Most years we have one or two Silver-washed Fritillaries visit our garden, but this is the first time we've had a Valezina. She gave us excellent views whilst nectaring on Marjoram.

### **Shipton Bellinger** *(Branch field trip) Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

**13 August** Even with the threat of rain, the sun did break through on several occasions, which gave us glimpses of battling male Brown Hairstreaks in the main ride; these could be observed at close quarters, and I could see they were looking quite battle scarred! Several worn and fresh looking Walls were also observed in the morning's walk, along with Brown Argus, Common Blue, and with Holly Blues skipping through the large areas of ivy.

### **Adonis Blue, Portsdown** *Branch website post, Mark Tutton*

**16 August** I was looking to see how the Chalk Hill Blues were doing, and so imagine my surprise when I spotted a pristine male Adonis Blue – a first for me on Portsdown Hill. Hopefully they might establish themselves and take advantage of the good habitat management.

### **Long-tailed Blue, Havant** *Branch website post, Alan Wingrove*

**30 August** My second Long-tailed Blue of the year in my medium sized garden in Havant. This time, a faded female, laying eggs on the buds of my sweet peas. She stayed for about 30 minutes, laying many eggs. If I can have two separate individuals in my garden in a three week period there must surely be many around.



*Brown Hairstreak. Chris Rose*

## 2023 Highlights September to December

**Grayling, Browndown (North), Gosport** *Branch website post, Francis Plowman*

**2 September** Clearly Grayling have survived much better in the more weather-protected habitat of Browndown (North), where at least ten were recorded this afternoon.

**Old Winchester Hill (Branch field trip)** *Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

**3 September** There were some good butterfly numbers today. The top prize, I think, went to the Small Heath; they were everywhere. A close second was the Meadow Brown. Also, there were good numbers of Adonis Blue, mainly males, and most of these were in good condition. Silver-spotted Skippers were buzzing around, mainly females, and several were seen laying eggs, along with a couple of female Adonis Blues, on the short turf on the far southern slope. Several Painted Lady were also spotted.

**Painted Lady, Lee-on-the-Solent** *Branch website post, Mark Wagstaff*

**23 September** It's Lee Festival this weekend and as I dashed out into the garden to photograph a Spitfire passing over my house (two actually, in formation) something very orange passed me. A pristine Painted Lady settled and took a great liking to what's left of our verbena after last week's storms. I couldn't resist some photos and needless to say, completely missed the Spitfires!

**Long-tailed Blue, Portsdown** *Claire Hartt-Palmer*

**24 September** Watched Long-tailed Blues mating on Portsdown.



**Long-tailed Blue, Portsdown** *Branch website post, Ashley Whitlock*

**9 October** We saw at least seven or eight individuals. Several were in very good condition, which suggests these have just recently emerged. They were claiming territories, in a very similar fashion to the Duke of Burgundy, rising high up into the

sky and intertwining on the way up, and then splitting and coming back down onto their perches. Several were quite worn, with very little of their tails to be seen.



**Long-tailed Blue, Portsdown** *Branch website post, Mark Tutton*

**9 October** Seven or eight were frequently spotted in two small, fairly sheltered areas of south-facing slope that they were using as their lek. Three males and a female were extremely fresh, and it ultimately resulted in a pairing – perhaps the first observed in Hampshire?

**Clouded Yellow, Magdalen Hill Down**

*Lee Hurrell*

I didn't see a Clouded Yellow all year, until October, when I found six at Magdalen Hill Down. This was the same day I saw around 50 Red Admiral gliding down the hillside, heading south, so presumably a migration day.

**Peacock** *Lee Hurrell*

Several October sightings – I wonder if this species is beginning to have a second brood, as it does in Europe.

**Holly Blue, Woolston** *Branch website post, Nic Burns*

**15 November** The big surprise was spotting a couple of Holly Blues on Woodley Road, Woolston. One was definitely female, the other, I think, was male, but I only saw it briefly in flight.



*Grayling. Chris Rose  
Small Heath. Francis Plowman  
Long-tailed Blue. Chris Rose*

**Purple Emperor larvae, West Wood** *Branch website post, Mark Tutton*

**6 December** I have been looking for Purple Emperor larvae in woods where I have seen adults. Today, I thought I would try West Wood near Winchester. I concentrated my search on a couple of sheltered north-facing paths where I had previously seen females inspecting the willows. Very quickly, I spotted two dangly leaves that were firmly attached to their twig with silk, and though very dead, both appeared to have had the distinctive feeding pattern of Emperor larvae. Carefully, I pulled the branch down and diligently searched the whole spray, checking the buds, forks, growth scars and remaining leaves. After going boss-eyed for about ten minutes, I finally tracked the caterpillar to a nice fork about a metre away, where it had settled to spend the winter. During the course of four hours or so, I managed to track down two more, both by searching for 'dangle leaves' – another one in a fork and the other aligned alongside a bud, both fantastically camouflaged.





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## Newsletter Deadline

Please send your Lepidoptera-related newsworthy pieces and features to  
Kevin Freeborn... and you don't have to wait until February!

**The deadline for the spring Newsletter, edition no. 118, is 15 February 2025**

### Lepidoptera Tale Piece... your story behind the picture

One of the pleasures of compiling this first edition of our combined Newsletter/ABR publication has been to receive and look through all the many excellent butterfly and moth photographs taken by our branch members. **The Hummingbird Hawk-moth** by **Brian Cartwright** is, I'm sure you'll all agree, a stunning picture, and crops beautifully to grace the back cover.

To contribute words and images to the 2024 Annual Butterfly Report, please see the details given on page 18.

*Kevin Freeborn,  
Newsletter Editor*



The opinions expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of Hampshire and IoW Branch. Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268). Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP. Vat. No. 565 9070 16.



Lepidoptera  
Tale piece ...

