

# Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch



Newsletter 95



Butterfly  
Conservation

September 2013



# Events

[www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk)

## **Friday 4 October (the Allotments) Work Party MHD**

**Meet:** 10am – 4pm in the entrance opposite St Swithun's School on B3404.

**Magdalen Hill Down Work Parties:** we will be carrying out our usual scrub-block coppicing programme (lots of bonfires) and extra work to reduce the scrub encroachment on the Original Reserve.

**Meet:** 10am - 4pm at the top of the track between the Stonemasons and Morn Hill Cemetery at 10am. SU 512 295.

Help is always very much appreciated. If you cannot get to the meeting point at 10am, please come and find us on the Reserve.

**Friday 18 October**

**Friday 29 November**

**Friday 13 December**

**Friday 14 February**

**Friday 1 November**

**Friday 6 December**

**Friday 10 January**

**Friday 28 February**

**Yew Hill Work Parties:** we intend to cut the reservoir front in September and use any green hay to strew across Hill Top. There will be plenty of raking to do.

**Meet:** 10am - 4pm. Please come and find us on the Reserve.

**Friday 11 October**

**Friday 8 November**

**Friday 31 January**

**Bentley Station Meadow:** the Meadow has recently been granted a new 10-year Farm Stewardship Agreement, which includes lots of planned works to reclaim the Meadow from tree and scrub invasion. Get your boots on and bring a friend.

Please email Jayne if you would like to be added to the BSM volunteer list. Dates for work parties at BSM will be arranged via email to the volunteer group. We are there from 10am to 3pm. Park in the pay and display station car park, and walk across the track to the Meadow. SU 792 432.

## **New to Conservation work?**

In addition to the dates listed above, I also send out an email for extra work parties when we have one-off jobs to tackle or if we have had to cancel any of the planned dates. If you would like to be added to this list, please email your contact details to:

[jchapman@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:jchapman@butterfly-conservation.org)

**Cover photograph: Clouded Yellow by Robin Turner**

## How you can get involved

The work we do is fun and varied and benefits butterflies, moths, birds and other wildlife. All you need is enthusiasm, stout footwear, gloves and a packed lunch. We provide all the necessary tools and training and teach you a little bit about habitat management along the way. Volunteers are the only way we can keep on top of all the management work that is required over the winter months to keep the Reserves in tip-top condition. It is a great reason to get outside and get fit.

Please call me for a chat if you would like to know more. Jayne Chapman: 01962 808400 or 07909 968657

**PLEASE CALL ME IF THE WEATHER IS BAD TO CHECK THAT THE WORK PARTY WILL GO AHEAD.**

*Jayne Chapman, Reserves Officer. 07909 968657*

## Other Events:

**Saturday 12 October: AES Exhibition**, 11.00 till 16.30 at Kempton Park Racecourse. The Exhibition and Trade Fair hosts a mixture of society stands and traders selling entomological equipment such as moth traps, livestock, books and cabinets. The Exhibition is the place to buy entomological ephemera, meet fellow enthusiasts and have a great day out. [www.amentsoc.org/events/exhibitions](http://www.amentsoc.org/events/exhibitions)

**Saturday 26 October: Members Day.** See p.9 for details.

**Saturday 16 November: BENHS Exhibition** at Kempton Park Racecourse. *Note the change of venue.* Details of the Exhibition will be available soon on the BENHS website. [www.benhs.org](http://www.benhs.org)

**Saturday 16 November: National AGM**, Swindon. Details on website.

**Wednesday 4 December: Main Committee.**

**Saturday 15 February 2014: Hampshire Moth Conference.** 12.30 till 18.00. Refreshments will be provided and there will be plenty of opportunity to meet and chat with old and new friends. There will be a range of speakers; programme details will be posted later on the Hantsmoths and Branch websites and on the Hantsmoths email discussion group and on Facebook.

Whether expert or beginner you will be made very welcome.

**Fri-Sun 4-6 April 2014: Seventh International Symposium** at Southampton University. The latest techniques on the reversal of butterfly and moth declines and on the science of conserving their habitats will be discussed. Guest speakers include Dr Bob Pyle, who is internationally renowned for his work on Monarchs. Book by 31 December 2013 and save 15%.

[www.butterfly-conservation.org/4218/symposium-2014](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/4218/symposium-2014)



# Chairman's Report

Spring and summer definitely arrived and with a bang! This year will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the best ever for butterflies and moths. As Matthew Oates often says: "Never underestimate a butterfly." And how right he was, given their ability to bounce back from the appalling weather that dominated the 2012 butterfly and moth year. It really has been a spectacular turnaround of fortunes.

On the butterfly front, not only have we seen good numbers of our resident species but we also seem to be in the throes of an invasion of rare migrants, if sightings of Clouded Yellow, Long-tailed Blue, continental Swallowtail and Queen of Spain Fritillary in the southern counties are anything to go by. The news for 2013 is therefore largely positive, I'm pleased to say, and it has trickled over into the media, where butterflies and moths are getting the coverage they truly deserve. We even had a Springwatch Special dedicated to Lepidoptera. Even being somewhat subjective, I think it's also fair to say that interest in butterflies and moths is at an all-time high, as evidenced by the best ever response to the Big Butterfly Count: more records have been sent in by the general public than in any previous year.

This year's New Members Day in June was well attended despite the variable weather. This is an annual event at which we invite new members to spend a day being introduced to the work of the Branch and of Butterfly Conservation as a whole and to see the Branch's flagship reserve at Magdalen Hill Down in the afternoon. The level of enthusiasm shown by everyone was once again very high, and I received positive feedback from several participants. My thanks to everyone who helped make the event a success once again.

The AGM and Members Day will be held on Saturday 26 October and has excellent speakers lined up. I do urge you to attend, for this is the main Branch event of the year and offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with other members. This will be my last AGM as Chairman since the Branch has a very healthy policy of rotating the chairmanship every three years. I intend to stay on the Main Committee. I would like to thank everyone who has supported me during my tenure, with particular thanks to the other members of the Main Committee, who ensure the smooth running of the Branch. It really is quite humbling to be part of such a great team.

Three members are standing down from the Main Committee: Roger Buchanan, Dave Green and Brian Fletcher. I'd like to acknowledge their considerable contribution to the Branch over the years; I hope to thank them in person at the AGM.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM and Members Day on 26 October. Until then, do enjoy what's left of the season.

*Peter Eeles, Chairman*



# Reserves News

## Grazing our Hampshire Reserves

We are often asked why we graze our reserves, which livestock we choose, and why. Livestock play an important role in conservation, and our three reserves, Magdalen Hill Down, Yew Hill and Bentley Station Meadow all rely on cattle and sheep to take off the summer growth between late summer and the spring of the following year.

Our aim is to create a varied range of turf heights to suit the myriad permutations that *Lepidoptera* require throughout the complex stages of their life cycles. Many of the caterpillar food plants require open ground in which to establish, and cattle, apart from taking off the outcompeting coarser grasses, will also poach the ground with their hooves, leaving bare ground that will readily be colonised by low-growing herbs such as common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, which are important for the larvae of the Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* and the Chalkhill Blue *Lysandra coridon* respectively.



The type of animal we choose largely depends on what is available, but 'getting the right teeth' for the job is an important determinant of the end result. Not all livestock will readily eat the stuff we want to control, such as nettles, thistles, hogweed and scrub, but certain breeds are particularly suited to rough grassland; these tend to be our more hardy native breeds. If you visit Magdalen Hill Down this autumn/winter you will come across a herd of British Whites grazing the Reserve (with the odd Sussex mingling amongst them). Their ancestry can be traced back to the ancient breed of Park Cattle, which gave rise to the White Park (horned) and the British White, which are naturally polled (hornless). The breed is widely used in conservation grazing, owing to their ability to thrive on rough grazing, where they readily eat thistles, nettles and invasive scrub species such as bramble and birch. Such grazing helps to maintain the floristically rich chalk downland habitat that we aim to preserve.

If you venture on to the steep slopes of Magdalen Hill Down you will meet the Dexter cattle. This breed is a little feisty at times, and although it is one of the smaller British breeds it has a big attitude. It was introduced to England in 1882 from south-west Ireland where it originated. This particular herd has recently been used successfully to graze nearby Longwood Warren, a privately owned strip of remnant chalk grassland that had been heavily invaded by scrub.

Once the summer growth of tall vegetation has been taken off, the sheep arrive. Either to follow on from the cattle or, later in the spring, to take off the first flush of grass growth to allow the chalk-grassland plants establish.

Chalk downlands are typically calcareous grasslands developed over limestone on thin unimproved soils. This habitat was formed by centuries of sheep-grazing and wild-animal interaction. As rabbit numbers have declined in recent years because of disease, the sheep play an ever more vital role in maintaining the close-cropped turf crucial for rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, an evergreen shrub which is the food plant of several species of butterfly, such as the Brown Argus *Aricia agestis* and the Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, both of which can be found on our Hampshire reserves.

Shetland sheep, another rare breed, are favoured for their hardiness and their ability to eat a wide range of problem species. We have had a small flock of wethers permanently grazing Magdalen for two years now, affectionately known as ‘Gerry and the Pacemakers’; Gerry is the leader, and with an average age of nine years they are certainly getting on a bit, but they do a fantastic job controlling two of our most problematic species – hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and wild clematis *Clematis vitalba*.

A further three British Whites will spend the winter at Yew Hill, while at Bentley Station Meadow two very charismatic Highland cattle – Black Beauty and Scarlett – will attempt to sort out this year’s extraordinary grass growth.

I hope this article goes at least some way to explaining why and how we graze our reserves. And who knows, maybe be the dog-walker at Magdalen who commented

“You are deliberately putting cattle here to annoy the dog-walkers” might also find the article insightful?

As always, without volunteers none of this would be possible. All the livestock have to be checked daily (very time-consuming), and the logistics of catching, loading and moving cattle and sheep are mind-boggling. Thank you, you know who you are.

Do take a look at the Rare Breeds Survival Trust’s website for more information on our native breeds [www.rbst.org.uk](http://www.rbst.org.uk)

*Jayne Chapman, Reserves Officer*

## **Butterfly Transect Training at Magdalen Hill Down**

**W**eekly butterfly transect recording has been a mainstay of butterfly monitoring on the Hampshire Branch reserves since 1990. In recent years several new transects have been set up to accommodate the additions to our existing reserves. Currently, one transect is run at Bentley Station Meadow; there are two at Yew Hill; and now four at Magdalen Hill Down. Transect recording on the reserves takes up six months of the year (April to September) and is done entirely by volunteers; it requires something like 200 volunteer man hours per year. The butterfly transect method is widely accepted as the most efficient means of monitoring butterflies and has provided a huge volume of data essential to the successful management of the reserves.

Recently, several new volunteers have been taken on to assist with transects on the reserves, and two issues have become apparent. Firstly, it is clear that butterfly identification skills vary considerably from person to person. Secondly, although the transect field method is relatively straightforward, it is important that all volunteers (new and experienced) understand it. For reasons of scientific consistency it is essential that a standard method is followed closely. For these reasons I was asked to run two three-hour transect training sessions. These sessions were held at Magdalen Hill Down on the mornings of 27 July and 2 August. The first was attended by five volunteers and the second by thirteen, some of them involved in reserves elsewhere.

### **Topics included:**

**Knowing your site:** foodplants; which species you can expect to see; habitat and phenology; day-flying moths; where to look for caterpillars.

**Recording:** methodology refresh; identification hints and tips; what to do if identification is not certain; other records/sightings, i.e. plants, mammals, birds.

The sessions were blessed with dry weather, but the skies were overcast at the beginning of the second. A buddleia bush at the car park provided an initial taster of the variety of species on the Reserve. Some time was spent at the start of each session to explain the basic transect method and the potential pitfalls and also to answer questions.

Fortunately, 2013 has been an excellent summer for butterflies and most of the expected species were seen. The groups were able to compare the trickier whites, browns and skippers. Small Blues showed well in the chalk pit on Magdalen North Down, especially for the second session, and the Chalkhill Blues were numerous on Magdalen Hill Original. The only slight drawback was that Brown Argus and Common Blue weren't out in any significant numbers as yet.

*Phil Budd, Transect Recorder at MHD since 1993*



## Work Experience with Butterfly Conservation

I graduated recently with a BSc (Hons) in Conservation and Wildlife, studied at Sparsholt College. In my last year I had to complete a four-week placement with an organisation of my choice within the sector. I chose Butterfly Conservation. Having completed several other similar placements I thought I already knew the drill: you get given a small selection of tasks but don't get the full picture of what people do in the organisation. For this placement I was very wrong. It was unlike any other that I had done. From day one I was treated as one of the team and not as the "work experience student".

I spent the four weeks shadowing Jayne Chapman, the Reserves Officer, who was an absolute star. She got me doing things I had never been allowed to do or had the opportunity to do before, such as voicing parts of the public walks. I was involved in varied tasks, from assembly of stock fencing to administration, which allowed me to determine what kind of work I might possibly do in future employment. My favourite task was helping out on public walks and talks because it's such a nice feeling to be enthusing people in such an important subject. The public walks also allowed me to get even more familiar with the reserves and increase my butterfly and botanical identification skills. This type of work felt the most natural to me: perhaps my future vocation, which up until now I didn't know I might have. The placement also taught me that working in the conservation sector is graft with long hours; it is a labour of love. Jayne is proof of this: most weeks she exceeds her contracted hours to keep the reserves and the Branch moving forward.

This placement was by far my best ever. I would recommend anyone interested in the sector or looking to work in it to volunteer for the Branch to get the valuable experience I got. I was made to feel so welcome by everyone, from the other volunteers to the Committee members, and of course by Jayne. Now that I have finished my degree I intend to continue volunteering for the Branch.

**Abby Sullivan**

Essex Skippers  
Paul Brock



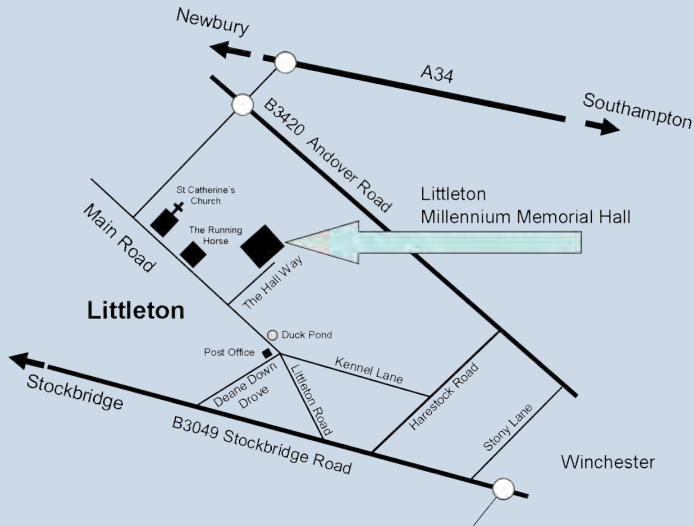




# Members Day

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch  
Saturday 26 October 2013

Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall, The Hall Way,  
Littleton, Winchester, SO22 6QL (SU455324)



## Programme

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1:30        | Doors open  |
| 2.00 - 3.00 | Annual General Meeting  |
| 3.00 - 3.45 | Philip E Howse: Art, Illusion and Wing Patterns in Butterflies and Moths. |
| 4.00 - 4.45 | Refreshments, "mingling" and photographic competition                     |
| 4.45 - 5.30 | Martin Warren: Butterfly Breakthroughs                                    |
| 5:30 - 5:50 | Results of photographic competition                                       |
| 5:50 - 6:00 | Final comments and close of meeting.                                      |

# Members Day

## Annual General Meeting 2013

### Agenda

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting.
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Presentation of accounts.
5. Reports of Conservation, Information, Records and Reserves Subcommittees.
6. Chairman's report.
7. Election of Committee members.

The following members are standing down from the Committee:

**Roger Buchanan**

**Brian Fletcher**

**Dave Green**

In keeping with the requirements that a third of Branch Committee members should stand down at each AGM the following members (based on seniority rotation) are standing down but seeking re-election:

**Andy Barker**

**Juliet Bloss**

**Tim Norriss**

8. Health and safety matters.

Any other business: items should be notified to the Chairman by 21 October.

# Members Day

## Photographic Competition

**A**ll images must be prints not exceeding an image size equivalent to A4 (210x297mm) in landscape or portrait format. Prints may be mounted.

### **ENTRIES ARE LIMITED TO A TOTAL OF THREE PRINTS**

Prints will be displayed and judged in the following categories:

- UK Butterflies
- UK Moths
- Behaviour
- Immature Stages
- Overseas Butterflies and Moths

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 winners announced at the end of the meeting.

As last year there will be no opportunity to show slides or digital images at this meeting.

**Members unable to attend but who wish to submit prints may do so by post to: Peter Eeles, 6 Cholsey Road, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG19 4GH. Those attending should bring their prints with them.**

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



# News, Reports & Events

## Butterfly Records 2013

The deadline for sending in records is Monday 4 November; see [www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/recording](http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/recording) Please send your records as soon as possible, if you have not already done so. It is pleasing to receive an ever increasing amount of electronic data via the Branch website and MapMate.

Your data is a valuable contribution: it is used in the annual *Butterfly and Moth Report* and, as part of our database, it increases our understanding of the numbers and distribution of butterflies in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and consequently helps their conservation. Thank you. We look forward to receiving your data in what has been yet another difficult year for both butterflies and recorders, with a mixture of indifferent weather, although perfect at times!

**Paul Brock, Branch Butterfly Recorder** [pauldbrock@btinternet.com](mailto:pauldbrock@btinternet.com)

## New moth-ers needed

What will it take to tempt you into the enchanting world of moths?

It is easy to find reasons to shy away from this huge group of insects. Only the most ignorant will avoid moths on the basis they are small, brown and ugly and eat clothes and carpets. Out of the 2,500+ species fewer than ten are “clothes moths”. And yes, there are lots of small, brown and not particularly memorable moths, but there are so many more which are wonderful. Many have cryptic marking; others come in virtually every colour of the rainbow: Ruby Tiger, Orange Swift, Yellow Shell, Green Silver Lines, Blue-bordered Carpet, Purple Thorn. Aren't moths' names wonderful?

It's autumn. Day by day, week by week our butterflies are disappearing, so what better time could there be to start looking at moths? They can be seen right through the winter.

A good starting point is the website [www.hantsmoths.org](http://www.hantsmoths.org). “Flying tonight” is accessible from the opening page. It will show a list of moths, with thumbnail pictures, recorded in the current week. The most likely to be seen, according to the records in our database, will appear at the top. In mid/late September some easily identifiable macro moths are around, including Angle Shades, Burnished Brass, Brimstone Moth

and Setaceous Hebrew Character, as well as the micro moth *Pyrausta aurata* – the mint moth.

You do not need a moth trap to start seeing and recording moths. Try leaving an outside light on and see what is settling on the wall or coming to a lit window. Many moths will visit the same flowers as butterflies; in autumn it is particularly rewarding to look at ivy flowers by torchlight. Although day-flying moths are not as numerous or as obvious as in summer, a walk through vegetation will normally disturb a few resting nocturnal moths, which may then settle to be identified. Or try our friend Dave's technique of tapping vegetation with a thin stick. Another keen moth-er looks at what has settled on a fence at a filling station near his home, where a light is left on overnight. Another finds moths in pedestrian underpasses around Andover.

On p.82 of the 2012 *Annual Report* there is a map showing moth-record coverage in the two counties. You can see that many 2k squares have no records. Please help fill them by looking for moths in any way you can.

We would like to hear how you get on if you are lured into the exciting world of moths.

*Lynn Fomison, Lfomison@madasafish.com*  
*Tim Norriss, Moth Officer & Report Editor*

## Are you all a-flutter?

**B**utterfly Conservations' summer issue of *Butterfly* included an invitation to readers to sign up to the e-newsletter *all aflutter*. This interesting publication brings you the latest news, fascinating features, tips and advice from Butterfly Conservation every month, straight to your inbox. [www.butterfly-conservation.org/member-email](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/member-email)



Peacock - Rosie Powell

## Plant Heritage Walk



Jayne Chapman, Jenny Mallett and Juliet Bloss, seen here with Doug Smith, Chairman of Plant Heritage, hosted two very successful late afternoon walks on Magdalen Hill Down on 26 April for the Plant Heritage Society that was holding its national AGM at the Day's Inn hotel on the end of the Down. It was cold and windy and only one butterfly was seen (a Small Tortoiseshell) but the cowslips were carpeting the Reserve and the visitors were delighted with the view.

*Juliet Bloss, Editor*

## New Forest Show 2013

The Branch made a return to the New Forest Show in 2013 after a couple of years' absence. Visitors showed an enormous amount of interest in butterflies and moths. The recent BBC Springwatch butterfly programme had certainly caught the imagination of many people, and we were very pleased to sign up a few new members.

The new Branch display material definitely gives a more professional feel to our stand. On the first two days we had a selection of moths (caught the previous night) on view. Many people were surprised and fascinated by the variety and colour of the specimens.

Sales of the new Hampshire and Isle of Wight butterfly posters and the Field Studies Council guide sheet to British Butterflies went well. Income from sales at this and other events is an important source of Branch revenue. We need to consider other methods of fundraising at future events.

On the Wednesday (31 July) the sunny and warm weather brought in a large crowd. Sophie, Countess of Wessex, visited the New Forest Corner, where our stand was situated. She came close but, sadly, was not drawn to learn more about butterflies.

However, I did have the opportunity to talk at length to the MP for New Forest East about the importance of butterflies and moths and the need to retain the correct habitats for their survival.



Many thanks must go to all the volunteers who turned out to help. This is a really big event where we can talk to many people about butterflies and moths. We must certainly return again next year.

*Arthur Greenwood, Financial Advisor*

## **A Transect-Walker's Ramblings**

**Y**es, I confess I am a butterfly transect walker. It's the sort of admission that makes people in a convivial group at parties suddenly realise they really should phone home now to check that the babysitter is coping (strange for 75-year-olds) or remember that they promised to help the hostess make the gravy (not normal at a barbeque). And you find yourself left with the one person who either wasn't quick enough off the mark or wants to share their equally weird hobby with you (perhaps collecting old Brylcreem jars or being something of an expert on different treatments for athlete's foot).

Anyway, I digress. In a nutshell transect-walking involves going for a walk (the same walk each time) in the sunshine and counting the number of butterflies of different species. And when I say walk I don't mean one of those brisk, elbows back and forth look-how-fit-I'm-getting walks, done only by smug people without an ounce of excess fat about their person. No, I'm talking about a leisurely amble, usually taking about 45-60 minutes. There are, inevitably, a few rules about how to do such things but they are hardly burdensome, and I'm not about to start batting on about them here. When you've finished the walk you submit your counts to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. They chuck all the data together and produce really useful reports on butterfly trends across the UK or by site. They've been doing this since 1976, so

there's loads of data to help us see what's happening to our butterflies over time. On 27 July I booked myself on a transect-walker refresher/training session organised by Jayne Chapman, our Branch Reserves Officer. She'd coaxed Phil Budd to come along and impart some of his expert knowledge. Phil is a bit of a whiz at entomology in general and *lepidoptera* in particular. He has also walked transects since before he was born. We had a very enjoyable couple of hours pootling around in the sunshine at Magdalen Hill Down, and came away with lots of helpful hints and tips on how to identify butterflies on the wing (female Common Blue or Brown Argus? Small White or Large White? Ringlet or Meadow Brown?). And we all thought we were perfectly normal, well-balanced human beings.

For further information on transect-walking and the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme go to **[www.ukbms.org](http://www.ukbms.org)**

And for more details on Brylcreem collecting and athlete's foot treatment go to **[www.getalife.co.uk](http://www.getalife.co.uk)**

***Penny Jeffreys, Minutes Secretary***

## **IOW Group News**

**T**his year we have been working with several Isle of Wight-based companies and organisations interested in helping butterflies and moths on their land. Indeed, more and more people are asking us how they can improve their land or garden for butterflies and moths. It is really great that more people want to help.

We are still working with the Forestry Commission on plans for improving Parkhurst Forest for butterflies and moths and will be organising a few practical conservation work parties over the winter. We would be very grateful to anyone who can help at any of them. No previous experience is necessary as the work will be done using hand tools. Besides being beneficial to wildlife, conservation work offers great exercise and is fun: you can do as much as you feel able. Please contact Stuart Read on 07877 333734 or at **[s.jread@btinternet.com](mailto:s.jread@btinternet.com)** for more information; details will also appear on the Branch website.

We have been doing some moth surveying at the request of the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) on their reserve at Briddlesford Woods, in the north-east of the Island. Briddlesford Woods is the largest remaining block of ancient semi-natural woodland on the IOW. Most of the reserve is private, so to be able to trap here is very exciting. The last mothing session here was in 1994! We have caught a good range of species to date, including some nationally important ones. The star so far has been a fresh Dark Crimson Underwing. Another of these stunning moths was seen in a nearby wood a couple of weeks later. These records suggest that there is an established colony here away from the New Forest.



The National Trust Optics & Wildlife event at Newtown NNR was enjoyed by all who went along on 6 July. Many thanks to Tim Norriss, Lynn Fomison and Dave Cooke for bringing over the display from Hampshire, for setting up moth traps the night before so that there were moths to show visitors, and for manning the stand and leading a butterfly walk. Thanks also to the National Trust for assistance with moth trapping and setting up and to IOW Group helpers.

An actinic moth trap belonging to the IOW Group can be borrowed. Please contact John Rowell on 01983 281342 for further information.

An IOW Group meeting will be held in October or November to discuss future plans. Details will be put on the Branch website, and I shall also email out details to everyone for whom I have an email address. Alternatively, please contact me on 01983 754935 or at [caroline\\_dudley@btopenworld.com](mailto:caroline_dudley@btopenworld.com) in early October for more information.

**Caroline Dudley, IOW Events Organiser**

## JAYNE CHAPMAN DESIGN

Art...naturally



Jayne Chapman Design was founded in 2013 to create an original and distinctive range of natural history-themed ceramic ware, working with both contemporary artists and classic illustrations to produce attractive designs that will both grace any home and be collectable in their own right.

We currently have four butterfly and moth-influenced designs, and for every sale placed with us that mentions this advert we will donate £1 to the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch of Butterfly Conservation – just email [contact@jaynechapmandesign.co.uk](mailto:contact@jaynechapmandesign.co.uk), tell us what design you would like and we'll get back to you!

*Visit us online at [www.jaynechapmandesign.co.uk](http://www.jaynechapmandesign.co.uk) or at our pottery in Medstead (see online for directions)*









Purple Emperor

Painted Lady

Clifden Nonpareil

Red Underwing

All £12 inc. p&p



## New Members

*Welcome to the following 81 new members who have joined since the last Newsletter.*

*Please consider volunteering to help with the running of our various events and activities.*

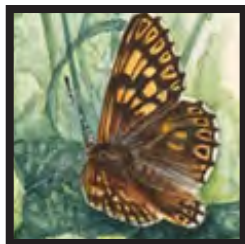
Mr J Alexander, Totton; Mrs Sally Alvis, Hordle; Dr Frank R Batchelor, Old Bedhampton; Mrs J K Benham, Four Marks; Mr M Birkinwald, London; Miss Holly K Black, Shirley; Mr T & Mrs M Blumer & Family, West Tytherley; Mr Chris Brooks, Basingstoke; Mrs Rosalind Butcher, Ludgershall; Mr G & Mrs S Caws, Cowes, Isle of Wight; Mrs Wendy Chalk, Chandler's Ford; Mr David Chapman, Aldershot; Mr A & Mrs R Cheyne, Lymington; Mr Michael Coates, Alton; Mr Mark Coles, Holbury; Mr G & Mrs SJ Coster, Eastleigh; Mr O & Mrs A Cox & Family, Alresford; Mrs Helen Dakin, Spring Woods; Miss Anna-Marie Davies, Winchester; Ms Peta Davies, Winchester; Miss A Deane & Miss H Rose, Fareham; Mr & Mrs M Dunning, The Warren, Holbury; Mrs Karen Egerton-Read, Newport, Isle of Wight; Mr Darren Fry, Portsmouth; Mr John D Glasgow, Winchester; Ms Jill Goddard, Marchwood; Mr JS & Mrs ND Goddard, Milford On Sea; Dr Kathryn Graham, Farnborough; Mr Malcolm E Green, Cowes, Isle of Wight; Mrs Sandra Gregory, Regents Park; Mr Michael Gregory, Lee-on-the-Solent;

Ms Susan Harrison, Ashley Heath; Mr M I Harrison-Jones, Fareham; Mrs Debbie Hickson, Chandler's Ford; Mrs Elizabeth Hiscock, Bishops Waltham; Ms Ruth Holland, Fareham; Dr Mark JG Holmes, South Acre, Norfolk; Mr Raymond Howell, Hangersley; Mrs V Hudson & Mr E Boothby, Freshwater, Isle of Wight; Mr Lee Hulin, Basingstoke; Mr Neil A Hulme, Worthing, West Sussex; Mrs Barbara J Hunt, Lymington; Mrs Marilyn Hunt, Porthsmouth; Mr Michael P Le Masurier, Barnham, West Sussex;

Mr Martyn Lewis, Sway; Mrs Elizabeth MacKeown, Petersfield; Mr Roger Mansfield, Fordingbridge; Mr David Martin, Somerley; Mr Nick G May, Eastleigh; Mr Mark McKeown, Farnborough; Mr R & Mrs G McMillan & Family, Hook; Mr J R Millo, Ashley Heath; Mr D & Mrs H Mills, Portsmouth; Miss Alison Mosson, Cliddesden; Mr M & Mrs E Mottram & Family, Farnborough; Dr Murdoch, Winchester; Mrs Sue P Myers, Seaford, East Sussex;

Ms E Oram & Mr R Shackleton, Waterlooville; Mr Rupert Pitt, Winchester; Ms Debbie Pledge, Newport, Isle of Wight; Mrs H Poland, Ramsdean; Mr Geoff Read, Kings Worthy; Mr S & Mrs SM Richards, Fareham; Mr S & Mrs J Ridler & Family, Andover; Mr Simon B Saville, London; Mr Gavin J Seager, Southsea; Mr M & Mrs J Sivell & Family, Cowes, Isle of Wight; Mr P & Mrs E Sowerby, North Baddesley; Mrs J Symes & Mr P Rood, Hamble; Mrs E R C Symonds, Upper Woodcott; Mr D & Mrs J Thomas, Ashurst; Miss Wagstaff & Miss Hale, West End; Mr M & Mrs L Walker & Family, Fort George, Guernsey; Mrs Helen Watson, Cowes, Isle of Wight; Mr R & Mrs S West, Stockbridge; Mr Kevin White, Ryde, Isle of Wight; Dr Richard White, Fordingbridge; Mr Tony & Mrs N Williams, Seaview, Isle of Wight; Mrs Vidya Wolton, East Cowes, Isle of Wight; Mrs Stephanie Wright, Farnborough; Mr Andy Wyers, St Catherines Down, Isle of Wight; Mr Kevin White, Ryde, Isle of Wight; Dr Richard White, Fordingbridge; Mr Tony & Mrs N Williams, Seaview, Isle of Wight; Mrs Vidya Wolton, East Cowes, Isle of Wight; Mrs Stephanie Wright, Farnborough; Mr Andy Wyers, St Catherines Down, Isle of Wight.

*Pat Turner, Membership Secretary*



## Potpourri

### The White-letter Hairstreak: where and how to see it



**E**lusive at the best of times, the White-letter Hairstreak (WLH) has become increasingly rare, and is now designated 'Endangered' by DEFRA. A monophagous species, entirely dependent on elm, its numbers have plummeted as a consequence of Dutch elm disease (DED). Sexually mature elm is the insect's sole host plant. The larvae hatch in mid-March; the elm flowers and then seeds by default are their essential foodstuff until the leaves flush in April. For all that, the butterfly remains unique amongst England's rarities in that it is a habitat-generalist, equally at home on elms behind a Gosport petrol station as in the hedgerows of the wider countryside.

Recognized sites in the two counties are few and far between, fewer still with public access. The largest known colony is within the Defence Munitions complex at Gosport, out of bounds for obvious reasons. However, almost any clump of elm in that borough offers the chance to see a specimen. The elms there are mostly 'Dutch elm', a name loosely applied to all natural hybrids of wych and field elm. Dutch elm not only suckers profusely (unlike wych), but also produces copious flowers and seeds (unlike English Elm), ideal for the butterfly. Inevitably DED takes its toll but, such is its capacity for regeneration from roots, the plant is never exterminated.

The inability to reproduce vegetatively is the Achilles heel of the wych elm, the WLH's preferred species. Once diseased, it is usually gone for good, any seedlings quickly demolished by deer, and thus several colonies of the butterfly known before 2000 have been lost, notably at Botley Wood.

Further west, good numbers can sometimes be seen on the elms in Peartree Gardens near Woolston, Southampton (SU439118, nearest postcode SO19 7RH), while at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens near Romsey, the collection of Asiatic elms with a resistance to DED supports a colony. The two Japanese elms (*Ulmus japonica*) along the track separating the Braishfield Plantation from the Populetum in the north-west corner appear the favourites; cultivars of the same species planted near the Jermyn's Road boundary are too shaded for the butterfly.

Very much a sun-worshipper, the WLH is content to spend much of its brief life basking atop the canopies, only occasionally stirring to feed on the honeydew secretions on the leaves, or indulge in courtship. Ergo: binoculars are essential. Visits to flowers are rare, and usually only after rain has washed away the honeydew, when thistle, bramble and ragwort suddenly become attractive.

Moving north, the Crabtree Plantation, just east of Basingstoke, sandwiched between the A30 and M3 (SU658517, nearest postcode RG24 7AS) holds the butterfly, although numbers are invariably low. Likewise across the Solent there are a few sightings each year, but as yet no hotspots have been identified. The more sunlit wych elms on the Niton undercliff are worth trying, as are any of the numerous elm hedgerows around Newtown.

As noted earlier, the butterfly is a habitat-generalist, and any clump of elm that has flowered in spring will offer the chance of a sighting. It is also very indolent, so to enhance the chances of success, WLH-spotting should ideally be done in twos or more, with one person delegated to shake the trunks or branches to put the butterfly up.

The WLH is traditionally on the wing from mid-June to early August, although winters such as the last will inevitably delay emergence.

*Andrew Brookes, Species Champion for the WLH*

## **Chalk-grassland-habitat creation at Sparsholt College (pt.2)**

In September 2012 I wrote about a tiny population of the Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*) found at Sparsholt College amongst flower-rich grassland in an area known as the Shelter Belt. I emphasised the vulnerability of this isolated population and the steps being taken to create additional habitat in a 150m by 8m wide margin of an adjacent field. (See pp.18/19 of Newsletter 93, available on the Branch website.)

Kidney vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) is the sole larval foodplant for the Small Blue, and it thrives in sunny situations on low-nutrient chalky soils. Following soil-stripping in March 2012 to expose the chalkier subsoil, a local-provenance chalk-grassland seed mix (purchased by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch) was sown by College students in April 2012. The seed mix comprised 80% fine-leaved grasses (mostly fescues) and 20% flowers, which specifically included kidney vetch for the Small Blue and bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) for the Common Blue.

Given the wet summer of 2012, the seed germinated well and a good coverage of ground flora was established. Botanical surveys undertaken in August 2012 showed that kidney vetch had germinated especially well, giving around 0.5 plants per square metre (c. 600 plants in total). Follow-up work to remove unwanted ruderal species (e.g. thistles) has been undertaken by staff and students, but there have been no real problems to date.



Despite a wet autumn and prolonged cold winter and spring, the flowery grassland that appeared on the reseeded strip in early summer 2013 was magnificent. It was lovely to see so much flowering bird's-foot trefoil and kidney vetch in late May and early June, and despite the slow start to the season I was hopeful that the Small Blues would appear. On my regular transect walk on 5 June I saw a Green Hairstreak, Common Blue and Small Heath, which was fantastic, but no sign of Small Blue, either here or in the original area. I started to wonder whether the reseeded grassland had come a season too late. Surely the colony could not fail just as this excellent habitat was created.

After an anxious wait, on 19 June I finally saw two Small Blues on the original site; then on 27 June a Small Blue was seen on the reseeded area, and better still it was an egg-laying female. On 1 July a further three Small Blues were seen, then four on 10 July and three on 15 July. Half of those seen were on the reseeded area, so despite the incredible lateness of the season the area was a great success. It shows what habitat creation can do for one of our rarest butterflies, and we hope it will help to reverse some of the declines seen over recent decades.

Compared with the wet July of 2012 I'm sure we all appreciated the warm sunshine of this summer. Some of the Branch Committee enjoyed lovely weather for an early evening visit to the site on 5 July, when the flowers were at their best (see photo). It seems that the Small Blue also thrived in these conditions, and even with the lateness of the first brood there was time enough for the life cycle to be completed and for a small second-brood emergence. The first of these butterflies appeared on transect on 12 August and a second on 19 August, with several others off-transect, all on the reseeded area. That's not to mention the 10 Common Blues, three Brown Argus and two Small Coppers.

Only time will tell how successful the project has been in the long term, but for me the joy of walking through a beautiful flowery grassland alive with butterflies and the buzz of bumblebees in early July a little more than a year after seeding was reward enough. Let's hope for even better things in 2014.

**Andy Barker, Chairman, Branch Conservation Committee**

## **Moths in the news**

It must be said that moths don't often make it into the news. And when they do it is usually (to most people's way of thinking) bad news. To moth-ers it can be fascinating though.

The reports in the news on 13 June this year certainly were in that category. Bird Cherry Ermine caterpillars (*Yponomeuta evonymella*) had totally denuded trees at a Southend cemetery and veiled them in sheets of silk, giving the whole place the look of a spooky movie.



Below is a close-up view of the thick, robust web which helps to protect the caterpillars from predators and the weather when they are at their most vulnerable during metamorphosis.



At the time of writing ( 30 July) Tim Norriss is getting reports of high numbers of these moths recorded within the Branch, so it was obviously a good year. Please let me or Tim know if you come across any newsworthy stories featuring moths or their caterpillars.

Lynn Fomison, [Lfomison@madasafish.com](mailto:Lfomison@madasafish.com)

## The Big Butterfly Race: Friday 19 July 2013

The Big Butterfly Race was a publicity event at the start of Big Butterfly Count. The BBC gave it good coverage: several pieces on BBC Radio Sussex and a piece on South Today. Alexis Green, the weather presenter, chased butterflies with us until 12 noon.

So what was it all about? Last year butterfly enthusiasts in East and West Sussex had a competition to see who could find the most species. Dr Dan Danahar and Branch Chairman Peter Eeles then fixed up a similar competition between Hampshire and Sussex.

There were 10 of us in each team. Sussex's team, the "Wood Whites", included heavies like Captain Nick Baker, Martin Warren and Neil Hulme, ably supported by Dr Dan Danahar and other Branch members, including Patrick Barkham of *Butterfly Isles* fame.

Hampshire, the "Glanville Fritillaries", was captained by Matthew Oates, co-founder of our Branch. We also had Ken Wilmott, who shares Matthew's 50 years of looking at butterflies. We had a Dr Dan too – Regional Officer Dan Hoare. Branch members Chairman Peter Eeles, Tim Bernard, Andy Bolton, Paul Brock, Lynn Fomison, Arthur Greenwood and Tim Norriss.



Sussex Wildlife Trust CEO Tony Whitbread and his counterpart Debbie Tan from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust adjudicated the results. The adjudicators had to see every butterfly and were hard but fair.

We met early in a car park in Bosham, and Matthew gave us the team talk.

**Our purposes were:** Duty. Honour. And most important of all to avenge the death of Sweet Fanny Adams, who had reputedly been murdered by a Sussex sailor.

Sadly, we failed. We managed the first two. We searched dutifully for species and on seven occasions were successful in finding larva or eggs, which scored double the points of an adult butterfly. And of course we conducted ourselves with honour, having resisted the temptation to take along a few Large White larvae. (We almost slipped up on honour when Matthew was banned from appearing on South Today holding a pint before the watershed.)

Each team scored 34 points: 1 for an adult and 2 for an egg, larva or pupa. However Sussex saw two more species and so were awarded the crown by the Chair of the South Downs National Park Margaret Paren. Anyway, it just showed that Hampshire is the best county for butterflies, as we could not even find a Peacock in Sussex, and Hampshire's Graylings were early.

Highlights of the day were a Purple Emperor and, at the other end of the scale, a tiny Small Blue caterpillar in a kidney vetch flower.



Photos: Tim Bernard

Ken Willmott summed it up: the Glanville Fritillaries were unlucky to lose the competition by way of a species count. Matthew and I saw a Peacock fly past, with our adjudicator sadly in the distance. I also saw a Large Skipper eggclay, but I was lost in unfamiliar woods at the time. Are these excuses good enough? I think a replay is in order. Put my name down!

More at [www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports\\_bigbutterflyrace2013.php](http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports_bigbutterflyrace2013.php)

And a delightful account from Patrick Barkham at [www.theguardian.com/environment/audioslideshow/2013/jul/30/butterfly-counters-audio-slideshow](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/audioslideshow/2013/jul/30/butterfly-counters-audio-slideshow)

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## Search for the Isle of Wight Wave

Over the last decade I have been fascinated by the search for the elusive Ivory-billed woodpecker in the forests of the south-eastern United States. There have been tantalising sightings suggesting the bird may remain at large, but many people are sceptical, believing it to have become extinct.

On Saturday 6 July Ian Merrifield, Iain Outlaw, Rob Wilson, Ashley James and I went in search of a creature that is not quite so famous: the Isle of Wight Wave (*Idaea humilitata*). It used to inhabit at least one vegetation-covered ledge on the chalk cliffs below Tennyson Down before the ledge fell into the sea in 1931; the Wave wasn't seen again. Attempts to rediscover this species on the Island have always failed, but an isolated record from Hampshire (Portsmouth, 1954) gave hope that it may still lurk somewhere in the area. It's still found on the continent; this is from a German website.

It's a really small moth with that distinctive reddish streak along the leading edge of the wings. We had talked about having an evening searching for it for a few years now, but this year Rob and Ian made it happen, working closely with the National Trust and the Coastguards.

Having examined the images of Google Maps, we set ourselves up on the cliff top above two well vegetated areas. The main kit consisted of four bright LED lights suspended over the cliff face on an extendable fishing rod, with a mercury vapour bulb trap set back from the cliff. The idea was (and it was Ian's idea and set-up) that any moths on the ledges would be drawn to the light from the LEDs and then be attracted across to the main MV light where we were sitting safely well back from the cliff edge.



As the Isle of Wight Wave is noted for appearing at dusk we set up early, ringing the Coastguards to let them know when the MV light was started up. In the photo you can see the MV trap and the LED lights connected to the end of the long fishing rod. I am also looking very hopeful there, net in hand and ready to go. During the evening we encountered a number of fascinating moths, including a Cream-spot Tiger, high numbers of Small Elephant Hawkmoths, a couple of Elephant Hawkmoths and a Privet

Hawkmoth. We also attracted the scarce Dew Moth and The Shears, good numbers of which flitted around the LEDs before heading towards the MV trap, a sign that the set-up was working.

I left to cycle back home at 1.30am, having been up since just after 5am the previous morning, but Rob and Ian stayed behind for the duration. No Isle of Wight Wave, but it had been a great evening and there are already plans to continue the great 'Search for the Isle of Wight Wave' in the future.

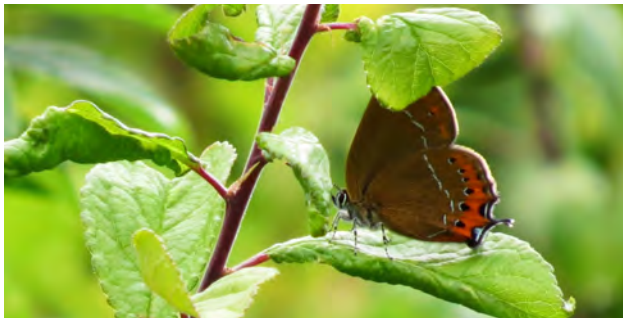
*Stephen Plummer*

## Hairstreak Hunt

**T**he secret to a successful hunt, be it hairstreaks or tigers, is good connections. You need to know who to ask, where to look, and when to go.

When Adrian Butterworth and I decided to try to see all the British Hairstreaks this season we found ourselves relying heavily on the expertise of others.

Our first goal, Green Hairstreak, is usually quite easy to find on Magdalen Hill Down. This year, because of the cold spring, they were pretty scarce, but we were helped on our initial outing by Jenny Mallett, who knows the Down well. On our first expedition on 5 May we eventually found three in a sheltered location along the bottom hedge line. One down.



The next target was Black Hairstreak, a much rarer insect, and one not found locally.

It necessitated much perusing of the Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust website, and liaising with Martin King and Kevin Kearns, who had tracked it down last year. We were all prepared with OS maps and detailed instructions from Stuart Hodges, the Black Hairstreak champion, and about to head off to last year's site, when the weather turned wet. We delayed a day, and in the meantime heard from Martin and Kevin that they had succeeded at a different site with a larger population, and had obtained good views. So we switched our destination to the M40 Compensation Area in Bernwood Forest on 29 June. It was a nerve-racking expedition. The first person we spoke to at the car park had waited three hours and seen nothing. This was not encouraging. A fairly long walk brought us to the site, where we gazed at hedges for a couple of hours and saw nothing, or nothing conclusive. Secret plans to revisit the site later in

the week were revolving in my head when we turned to leave. Near the exit to the site we noticed some trampled grass and there, suddenly, a small brown butterfly appeared on a bush and settled briefly. It moved to a tree where it perched in full view on a leaf and we all had good, albeit fairly brief, looks. In the end we reckoned we had seen five, but it was a close-run thing. Two down.

White-letter Hairstreaks were hard hit by the loss of elms to Dutch elm disease, and this once common butterfly is now much harder to locate. However, species champion Andrew Brookes knew a private site near Portsmouth where we joined him late in the afternoon of 9 July to walk along a row of young elms. The butterfly is a bit of a reluctant flyer, but a few shakes on the trees stirred it into action; we had lots of good views of about six individuals, some very low, but mainly at treetop level. This proved to be the easiest of all the hairstreaks to see. Only two to go.

Although Purple Hairstreak is probably the commonest of them all, and widespread in the New Forest, we did not have a specific site for it; so I thought it might prove to be tricky. We found it on our first try in Hawkhill Inclosure, but it was at the height of the heatwave on 17 July and the three insects would not settle. They flew frenetically around and up and down, flashing past so fast they were just a blur. But Tony Goddard, who lives near Bentley Wood, knew a reliable site for an evening visit opposite his house, in Blackmoor Copse. The pressure was off, since we had already seen them, so we were able to enjoy a wonderfully relaxed session on 23 July with the Hairstreaks perching and allowing scope views of both upper- and under- sides. What a treat.



The final species was Brown Hairstreak. Andy and Linda Barker do a transect near Shipton Bellinger, and on 18 August I joined them on a walk around the area. Sadly, Adrian was indisposed, but having the Barkers as guides was too good an opportunity to miss. It proved to be another successful search: Andy found the first individual nectaring on creeping thistle and soon after we located two more on the ripe (black) berry clusters of Wayfaring Tree. All three were males as it was still early in their flight period; apparently the females are more often seen later. Ten days later three of us revisited the area on a warmer and very sunny day and found at least six, including both sexes. The biggest surprise of the day was a Purple Hairstreak, also feeding on a cluster of the black Wayfaring Tree berries, and not an oak anywhere in sight, turning

it into a two-hairstreak day. Mission achieved.

We are heavily indebted to all our connections and very grateful for the help they gave us. Having a target does stir you to make an effort but can be quite stressful. Fritillaries or skippers could be the next target, but can we stand the strain?

*Juliet Bloss, Editor*

**Photos:** Black Hairstreak: Martin King (copyright), Brown Hairstreak: Richard Coomber

## South-west Turkey



In early April we went on a Green Tours 12-day holiday to south-west Turkey. We flew out to Dalaman and back from Antalya and journeyed pleasantly through Turkey in between. We stayed at four different places: Dalyan, on a river and including several boat trips; Kas and Finike, both pleasant places on the coast; and finally in the mountains. Our main focus was orchids and other flowers, and we had an excellent leader in Seda Soylu, but of course we made good use of visits to beautiful places to look at butterflies, moths and other wildlife, which was very plentiful. Lizards were especially so at the various archaeological sites.

We ran a moth trap on only one night; our best moth was undoubtedly the Giant Peacock *Saturnia pyri* at Olympus Mountain Lodge. This was the last of the four places where we stayed and was beautifully situated close to both mountains and the coast. The interesting ruins at Phaselis were close by. Despite a cold night a Striped Hawkmoth was also seen there, as well as numerous other macro moths.

At Finike we found a Spurge Hawkmoth inert on the pavement one morning. A lively Hummingbird Hawkmoth larva was spotted at another archaeological site (Xanthos), where we also saw Southern Swallowtail. Another interesting caterpillar sighting was several long strings of Pine Processionary moths.

We saw a total of just 23 butterfly species as it was early in the season, but it was quite something to see all three Swallowtails, including Southern and Scarce. Most memorable was a morning in woodland with dozens of Eastern Festoons nectaring on Asphodel, with Krupers Nuthatch calling while we picnicked amongst numerous species of *Ophrys*. Turkey is a great place to visit with lots to see, and good food too.

Tim's photos are on Drop box. Send him an email if you would like to see them and he will let you have the link.

**Lynn Fomison, [Lfomison@madasafish.com](mailto:Lfomison@madasafish.com)  
Tim Norriss, Moth Officer & Report Editor**

See [www.greentours.co.uk](http://www.greentours.co.uk) for 2014 trips. Tristan Lafranchis and Richard Lewington are leaders on some of the butterfly trips.

## **The EIG in Romania 2013 - Part I**

**E**ach year, the European Interests Group (EIG), a sub-group of Butterfly Conservation, runs a trip in support of the Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust. All the profits from these trips are donated to the Trust, which offers a prime example of hands-on local conservation in the Órség area of western Hungary. The Trust promotes traditional husbandry on small parcels of land it acquires, in order to maintain environments which support colonies of all four of the Maculinea (large blue) butterfly species. Needless to say, these efforts also benefit a magical variety of other butterflies.



Pallas' Fritillary

These fund-raising trips are organised for the EIG by Mike Williams, who also shares the lead in the field with Sáfíán Szabolcs (Safi), the Trust's manager and head. We are also supported by Martin and Tomas, who do an amazing amount to help make our holidays memorable. These trips are always well supported, usually with groups 12-14 strong. One nice thing is that we meet up again with the same core of stalwarts each year. Sometimes we venture into largely unknown butterfly territory to see what we can find (as last year in Serbia) and at other times we go to known sites or to areas where there is a high probability of seeing something rare. This year we went to Romania, from 22 to 30 July. The initial announcement of the trip highlighted a visit to a Violet Copper site, but by the time the detailed itinerary was available a whole array of possible goodies was being dangled before us. Some of the sites were well known, but others less so. We were lucky to have had pre-survey work done by Lajos Nemeth-Bóka, the Director of Greeneye Ecotours, who knows the country well and made all the hotel reservations on our behalf. The area covered during the week was entirely within Transylvania; and more precisely to the east and south of Cluj-Napoca.

On day 1, after the flight to Cluj, it was nice to get aboard our two minibuses and head off towards the hotel, a fair distance away in Odorheiu. To our surprise, the buses shot off the main road and up an unpaved track for two or three miles through hilly, forested terrain, until we ground to a halt and Safi announced 'something special' on the side of the track. There, still nectaring in low sunlight and amenable to having pictures taken were several Pallas' Fritillaries. I knew from my previous attempts that this is a difficult butterfly to find: what a way to start our holiday!

Next day, we had a very tight itinerary, beginning with a mountain road up to a ski station (we are now in the Eastern Carpathians). The weather soon clamped down, leaving us with sightings of singles of Niobe Fritillary, Large and Blind Ringlets and Purple-edged Copper. Cutting our losses, we descended to sunnier conditions in Racu Valley, where highlights included Cardinals on thistles, Eastern Bath White, Hungarian Glider and a passing Lesser Purple Emperor. It was obvious by now that Lajos's itinerary needed 16-hour days and a total disregard for the mediocre condition of local roads.



Meleager's Blue  
& Brown Argus

So to Plan B, which missed out the Violet Copper site and took us to a steep, high, grassy hill near Badeni, the top of which was inhabited by Hermit butterflies. Before the climb, we recorded Meleager's, Chapman's, Mazarine, Turquoise, Osiris, Long-tailed and Eastern Baton Blues. We found the Hermit on top of the hill, together with a nice display of Swallowtails, hill-topping in a brisk breeze.

On day 3 we headed south for a couple of hours to the Violet Copper site near Fagaras. We were late in the second brood of this butterfly, so were grateful to discover that some females were left. By following the trail of bistort plants we found that the butterfly's range here was a bit more extensive than expected: it was not only in the dried-out bog area but also in the adjacent, lightly wooded areas. This day we also changed our base to the small town of Gheorgheni, so another longish drive followed to our new hotel.

**To be continued.**

**Ken Bailey**



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## Newsletter Deadline

**M**any thanks to all contributors. The deadline for the spring Newsletter is 14 March 2014.

We now use Arial 10pt for text, 12pt for headings; paper size A5; bold for emphasis (not underlining). It is helpful (but not essential) for contributors to format their offerings in this way.

**Newsletter Design** - Dan Powell [email: dan.powell@care4free.net](mailto:dan.powell@care4free.net)

**Artwork** - Rosemary Powell [www.powellwildlifeart.com](http://www.powellwildlifeart.com)

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Hampshire and IoW Branch.





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