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February 2026

Dear Branch Member,

Please find the latest news from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch...

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The 2025 Butterfly Transect Season

Firstly, let me thank everyone who was involved with butterfly transect walks in 2025. We now have more than 200 active transects being walked in Hampshire and Isle of Wight, which is probably the most of any Butterfly Conservation branch. The data obtained is vital for understanding local, regional and national trends, and for identifying those species in greatest need of conservation action.

2025 was undoubtedly a big improvement on 2024, with numbers for almost all species being significantly up. The combined total of butterflies recorded on all transects, was up 29%. The biggest gains were Clouded Yellow (+1082%; but started from a very low base in 2024), Large White (+310%), Small White (+283%), Green-veined White (+260%), Chalk Hill Blue (+210%), Purple Hairstreak (+186%), Dark Green Fritillary (+183%), Small Blue (+172%), Silver-washed Fritillary (+143%) and Comma (+129%). Although most species showed a positive trend in 2025, Brimstone and Orange-tip showed no change, and the only species showing a slight decrease was Meadow Brown (-18%).

If you would like to see 25-year trend graphs for all species, comparing the Hampshire & Isle of Wight trend relative to that of England, these are available to view and download from the "transect" tab on the branch website, or by clicking the following link:

https://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/webpage.php?name=transect_25year_trends

As always, I'd just like to wish you all a successful and enjoyable 2026 transect recording season; hopefully with plenty of warm sunny weather!

Andy Barker (Butterfly Transect Co-ordinator, Hampshire & Isle of Wight)

Email: andy.barker@butterfly-conservation.goassemble.com

Butterfly Transect Co-ordinator (Hampshire & Isle of Wight)

As announced in the previous Branch e-News, I will be stepping down as Butterfly Transect Co-ordinator for Hampshire & Isle of Wight at the end of February 2026. I've been in the role for 36 years, and greatly enjoyed it, but all things eventually come to an end, and I feel that now is the time for me to step down. Don't worry, I won't be giving up entirely but will continue as the Local Authority area Transect Co-ordinator for Winchester District, Eastleigh Borough and Southampton Unitary.

We have Local Authority Co-ordinators in place for most areas now but are still looking for people to take on the role for Isle of Wight, and North Hampshire (see previous e-News). If you feel this is something that you'd like to do, I'd still be interested to hear from you. (After 28 February, it would be best for you to contact Jo Milborrow [transect@butterfly-conservation.org] at Butterfly Conservation.)

Andy Barker (Butterfly Transect Co-ordinator, Hampshire & Isle of Wight)

Email: andy.barker@butterfly-conservation.goassemble.com

Reserves report

Magdalen Hill Down

With cold, wet days and colour drained away, this is the hardest time of year for a lot of us. The volunteer days help get through winter as you certainly warm up being so active. Sadly, we've had to cancel a few due to heavy rain. The cows and sheep have also got through the grazing a lot quicker this winter so will be taken off much sooner. Last year the cows were taken off the first week of April, whilst this year it will be around mid Feb. This reflects the difference in grass growth each year, with a big contrast between 2024 and 2025.

The volunteers have been accompanied by Stonechats keeping warm on the south-facing hillside, along with Kestrels hovering overhead. Skylarks have also been resident all winter.

Each week the volunteer team do a vital job cutting or pulling-up young Hawthorn regrowth in the grassland, plus cutting back Bramble and Clematis, and keeping footpaths open. Over time the young Hawthorn, Bramble, Clematis and Privet growth would cover and shade out the wildflowers, as happened in the 1980's until rescued by the Hampshire Branch.

We leave established scrub for shelter, invertebrates and birds. There is a lot of young Hawthorn spreading everywhere on Magdalen, so even as we clear different patches on rotation, there's always a good amount left - plenty for the Bullfinches and Stonechats to enjoy. Maintaining species-rich grassland like Magdalen, just like hay meadows, takes a lot of management through grazing and cutting. It's a low-nutrient system for chalk-loving wildflowers, where the summer's growth is removed either by grazing, or cutting and baling, or raking-up and removing all the cut material – which is where the volunteers come in!

The volunteers do great work looking after this important and beautiful chalk grassland site.

Thanks also to the Winchester College Students who have been continuing their hedge-laying skills along the old hedgerow.

Additional scrub clearance was done by contractors, kindly funded by SDNP, to coppice and clear scrub regrowth at the bottom of the hillside, in order to benefit Adonis Blue, Chalkhill Blue, and Grizzled Skipper.

Yew Hill

I'm delighted to say that there have been no incidents with the sheep this winter (last winter we had one seriously injured by a dog and then one went missing - not good), but they have been safe and content at Yew Hill this winter and have become very friendly. They've also had a good appetite and got through the grazing so are due to be moved off (once there's a day that's not so busy with Southern Water trucks). Thank you to all the Livestock Lookers who have kept an eye on the sheep and made sure they were safe. And thank you to the Oliver's Battery dog-walking community for using alternative routes when the sheep are there and keeping dogs out of the reserve - it's hugely appreciated.

Due to the construction traffic and not having access, it's clear that we are not going to be able to cut and rake the SW meadow this year. But in the long run, this might prove beneficial in arranging a long-term management agreement for this little meadow, along with Hill Top. It's not been forgotten - it's just not practical at the moment to manage it. But the intention is to get it back into shape when SW have finished operations.

Bentley Station Meadow

We've been low on volunteers at BSM this winter, what with illness and injuries, and the brushcutter machines both stopped working. Despite great work by our scythers, we resorted to getting-in Ellie, our contractor, to do the brushcutting. The next volunteer days will be clearing Bramble from the main meadow. There were only three of us plus Ellie last time, but we had a very satisfying bonfire and got lots cleared! After seeing all the Wild Primrose and Violets appear last spring, I'm sure it's all worthwhile.

Volunteer work days schedule

The volunteer work party dates are on the [Hampshire Branch website](#) (summarised in the Newsletter [here](#)). In essence: **Mondays at Magdalen Hill, first Wednesday of each month at BSM and fortnightly Thursdays at Yew Hill.**

Butterfly Walks on the Reserves

We've now got some Walks in the diary. Please keep checking for updates on [the branch website](#).

Friday, 12th June, 11:00 - 13:00 at Magdalen Hill Down - we'll be looking for our meadow butterflies - Marbled White, Green Hairstreak, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper, and Burnet moth. Meet at the top of the track past the stonemasons (Blackwell & Moody), off Alresford Road, SO21 1HE

Thursday, 16th July, 10:30 - 13:00 at Bentley Station Meadow (Booking Essential, so that we can plan for parking. Thanks.) Looking at the flowers and butterflies, particularly Purple Hairstreak, and Silver-washed Fritillary. Please note the walk will be a circular route approx. 2 miles from the car park. Meet at Gravel Hill Road car park, GU10 4LQ

Wednesday, 12th August, 11:00 - 13:00 at Magdalen Hill Down - this should be peak time for Chalkhill, and Adonis Blues. Let's hope the Chalkhill Blues have a better year. Meet at the top of the track past the stonemasons (Blackwell & Moody), off Alresford Road, SO21 1HE

Sadly, **no walk at Yew Hill this year**, due to Southern Water operations.

Some photos from the reserves (all photos © Fiona Scully)...



Volunteers pose at BSM (top)
Then get down to work... (bottom)



MHD - volunteers getting a mid-winter suntan



MHD (L to R): Volunteers tree-popping / Bovine volunteers / comprehensive scrub clearance by the SDNP team

I look forward to seeing you on our Reserves soon,

Fiona

[Fiona Scully \(BC Reserves Officer, South East England\)](#)

Email: fscully@butterfly-conservation.org

Snippets

- A sad story of habitat destruction at Haslar Sea Wall - see the [23 Jan 2026 News item](#), submitted by a branch member.
- If you have any comments or suggestions for your regular e-Newsletter, please email me, the editor (enewsletter@hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk).
- The branch Annual Butterfly Report didn't quite make it in time for this issue - hopefully in the April edition!

Dates

An electronic calendar (.ics), covering all Field Trips & Reserves Walks, is available from [the Butterfly Walks webpage](#), or just copy/paste this link into your Calendar application, to **subscribe** (don't 'download' - you won't get automatic updates, if events change): https://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/BC_Hants_walks.ics

[Reserves Volunteering \(check website for updates\)](#)

Please check the website for updates.

Feb. 16th & 23rd (poss. 2nd Mar. [tbcf]). Start 10am, finish by 3pm	Magdalen Hill Down	Please contact Fiona Scully for details.
(Finished 12th Feb.)	Yew Hill	
4th March. Start 10 am, finish by 3 pm	Bentley Station Meadow	

[Branch, and branch-related Events \(check website for updates\)](#)

2026 Events to be announced.

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[Branch Field Trips 2026 \(check website for updates\)](#)

Hampshire walks and Isle of Wight walks...

When	Where	Target species
Sat 18 Apr	Parkhurst Forest	Orange-tip, Brimstone, Comma, Peacock
Wed 29 Apr	West Meon - Park Hill	Small Tortoiseshell, Holy Blue, Orange-tip
Sat 2 May	Thorness Bay fields	Orange-tip, Brimstone, Green-veined White, Skippers
Sun 3 May	Portsdown Hill	Wall
Wed 6 May	Butser Hill - Ramsdean Down	Duke of Burgundy, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Emperor Moth
Sun 10 May	Queen Elizabeth Country Park - Coulter's Dean	Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Grizzled Skipper
Wed 13 May	New Forest - Ramnor & Pig Bush Inclosures	Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Cuckoo, Raft Spider, Emperor Moth
Sat 16 May	Mottistone Chalk-pits	Glanville Fritillary, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper
Wed 20 May	Martin Down	Marsh Fritillary, Adonis Blue, Emperor Moth, Forester Moth
Sat 23 May	Compton Chine	Glanville Fritillary, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Adonis Blue
Wed 17 Jun	New Forest - Hawkhill Inclosure	Dark Green Fritillary, Silver-studded Blue, Clouded Buff Moth
Wed 24 Jun	West Wood / Pitt Down	Dark Green Fritillary, Marbled White, Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary
Sat 27 Jun	Newtown Meadows / Walter's Copse	White Admiral, Marbled White, Brown Argus, Ringlet
Sun 28 Jun	Creech Wood / Forest of Bere	Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral
Wed 1 Jul	West Walk / Forest of Bere	Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral
Sat 4 Jul	Mottistone Down	Dark Green Fritillary, Brown Argus, Chalk Hill Blue
Sun 5 Jul	Basing Wood	Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral
Wed 8 Jul	Abbotswood Inclosure	Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary
Sun 12 Jul	Micheldever Road / Abbotstone Down	Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary (ab. Valesina)
Wed 15 Jul	Queen Elizabeth Country Park / West Harting Down	Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary, Hummingbird Hawk Moth
Sat 18 Jul	Kemphill Moor Copse	White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary (inc. ab

		Valesina), Purple Hairstreak
Sat 1 Aug	Mount Joy, Carisbrooke	Chalk Hill Blue, Common Blue, Wall, Brown Argus
Wed 5 Aug	Old Winchester Hill NNR	Clouded Yellow, Silver-spotted Skipper, Adonis Blue
Wed 12 Aug	Shipton Bellinger	Brown Hairstreak, Magpie Moth, Wall Brown
Sat 15 Aug	Brading Downs	Chalk Hill Blue, Brown Argus
Wed 19 Aug	Noar Hill	Brown Hairstreak, Common Blue, Clouded Yellow
Wed 2 Sep	Beacon Hill at Exton	Clouded Yellow, Silver-spotted Skipper, Brown Argus
Sat 5 Sep	Thorness Bay fields	Clouded Yellow, Wall, Brown Argus, Small Copper

[Accompanied Reserves Walks \(check website for updates\)](#)

Email [Fiona Scully](#) to book a place on a Reserves walk.

When	Where	Target species	Information
Fri 12 Jun, 11:00-13:00	Magdalen Hill Down	Marbled White, Green Hairstreak, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper, and Burnet moth	
Thu 16 Jul, 10:30-13:00	Bentley Station Meadow	Purple Hairstreak, Silver-washed Fritillary, and summer flowers	Booking essential!
Wed 12 Aug, 11:00-13:00	Magdalen Hill Down	Chalkhill, and Adonis Blues	

[First sightings \(01/01/2026 - 06/02/2026\)](#)

Note: Data extracted from [Branch 'News' webpage](#) (so, NOT official!)

31st January	Red Admiral	Great Fontley
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Social Media links, etc.



Branch FB



Our Reserves FB



Branch X
(Twitter)



Branch Insta



Branch WWW