Antennae

Newsletter of the Gloucestershire Branch of Butterfly Conservation

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Photo Front Cover: Mullein Moth Caterpillar - Peter Rodgers Back cover: White-letter Hairstreak - Andrew Brown Unless otherwise stated all photos by the Author or from Butterfly Conservation web-site

The opinions expressed in the articles of this newsletter are not necessarily those of Gloucestershire Branch of Butterfly Conservation or Butterfly Conservation

From the Chair

Tricia Atkinson



Welcome to this Spring edition of Antennae. In the Autumn edition we were reporting on how butterflies, moths and other insects had fared in the summer. Numbers of all insects seemed to fall which of course has a knock-on effect on the number of birds and the whole food chain. We just hope that the populations of all insects will recover this year. With fewer butterflies around to lay eggs last summer, we could conclude that there will be fewer this year. However butterflies sometimes lay huge numbers of eggs, so if conditions are favourable, numbers could bounce back or at least show some signs of recovery.

There is always a fluctuation in numbers from year to year but there is no denying of a long-term decline in most species. There are some interesting recollections of butterflies in the 1970s on page 21 which just shows how things have changed in the last 50 years. In order to monitor what is happening in the butterfly and moth world, we need records. Vic Polley, the assistant county butterfly recorder, has written an informative article giving guidance on how to record butterflies. Also if you would like to explore the countryside to look for butterflies in places where we have no butterfly records, you can access a Google map showing the km squares with no records, more details on page 12.

We also need to engage the general public, particularly children, with butterflies and moths. If people can appreciate their wonderful diversity and beauty, they are more likely to care about them. Our events team has arranged a programme of events throughout the summer and need volunteers to help at these events. So if you like meeting people and would enjoy talking about butterflies or moths and helping children with simple craft or other activities then please contact Christine or Rosie at events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk. We also like to take some moths to events as they are always a big hit, so if you could supply some interesting moths that would be much appreciated.

The Marsh Fritillary at Strawberry Banks

Matthew Oates

For the last thirty-two years I have studied the Marsh Fritillary colony at Strawberry Banks, below Oakridge. For most of that time this was the only known colony in Gloucestershire. On occasions it has boomed, notably in 2010, '11 and '16. Twice we nearly lost the population, I think primarily because of the impact of poor May and June weather coupled with grazing difficulties ('under-grazing' is a major problem for this butterfly on limestone grassland).

The first Marsh Fritillaries normally appear here in mid-May, but in 2007 and 2011 they started in late April, whilst in 2013 none were seen before 1st June. Since 1994, I have counted adult numbers during their peak season period along a set route. I aim to do three or four counts during this period, then pick the highest count. I can't do more as the mid May early June period is a particularly busy time of year for me, when I also work Duke of Burgundies and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. In recent years, these counts have augmented a proper butterfly transect on the Banks, and the good news is that both data sets tell the same story.

I have also studied the gregarious larvae, at first during the late summer period but for the last twenty years during the late winter and early spring. The reasons for this switch are twofold, firstly I'm busy during August and September, working with Purple Emperor larvae. Secondly and more importantly we all need projects to help us through the winter, and Marsh Fritillary larvae become nicely active during the late winter period – they take the Feb out of February. The earliest I have seen larvae out of hibernation on the Banks is 5th Jan 2016 (which seems to be a UK record). More normally, the first webs appear during the last days of January (as this year), but in hard winters (remember them?) none appeared before late February – the latest appearance date is 27th Feb 1996. They emerge when the ground dries out and for a while, these early-emerging larval groups bask in the warmth of weak winter sunshine. They have never been recorded feeding before the first week of February.

In the early 90's, Martin Warren encouraged me to study the 'parasite load', to test the much-vaunted theory that Marsh Fritillary populations are

driven by fluctuations in numbers of one or two species of tiny Cotesia parasitic wasp, one of which is specific to Marsh Fritillary, the other of which is regarded as a generalist (I've only found the latter on Strawberry Banks). This work is tricky since I didn't want to interfere with the larvae or with the colony's natural population dynamics. Also, the parasites are at least double-brooded, producing grubs which quickly form distinctive white-silk cocoons when the host larvae change skins in early September and again in mid-March. These cocoons are similar to those we see on parasitised Large White larvae.

After a trial period, I fell back to determining the percentage of parasitised



Marsh Fritillary larvae change skins communally in mid-March, basking together for days on end whilst changing. Webs are easy to find at this stage, though in the Cotswolds most only hold 20-50

larvae in a selection of skin-changing groups during the mid-March skin change. The science here is of course not concise, but my efforts give a rough and ready figure. One problem is that an extra brood of parasites may emerge from final-instar host larvae, but to ascertain that would necessitate collecting larvae, rearing them through, and then releasing healthy bred adults – which would interfere with natural population dynamics (it would also require a license from Natural England). My

tentative conclusion is that the Marsh Fritillary parasite load at Strawberry Banks, as studied, appears to be insignificant. The highest March parasite load I've recorded is ~19% in 2001, 2003 and 2017, followed by 15% in 2022 although most years, it is less than 4%. I keep threatening to give this work up, and will if some bright young thing student proves my methodology to be nonsense. Meanwhile, I've had a fantastic time, as caterpillars are even more fascinating than the butterflies they aspire to be.



Two parasitised larvae, from which yellow Cotesia grubs have emerged. The grubs quickly spin white silk cocoons. Note the Marsh Fritillary silken skin-changing pad.

Prinknash Garden being sold

Tricia Atkinson

The branch planted up part of the monastery garden at Prinknash Abbey in 2009. We planted good garden plants for nectaring butterflies and moths and also some caterpillar foodplants such as Buckthorn, Honeysuckle, Fuchsia and Honesty. We also planted wildflowers on a sunny bank within the garden. We erected an information board depicting all the butterflies likely to be seen there.

Since then we have maintained our part of the garden and had work parties there every 3 or 4 weeks throughout the growing season. We have been very pleased with the garden and have received lots of compliments from visitors. We also have held events there to engage with the public.



However, we have heard that the trustees at Prinknash Abbey have put up for sale certain parts of the Prinknash Estate including the monastery garden. Apparently the garden has now been sold subject to contract. The new owner has asked for our contact details but at the time of writing hasn't contacted us yet.

As a result we don't yet know whether we will be able to continue maintaining our part of the garden. Due to the uncertainty, we are not planning on holding any events there this summer.

Day Flying Moths

Steve French

When I was asked to write an article on Day Flying moths for Antennae, I foolishly agreed to do so without considering the enormity of the task at hand!

There are, of course, many more day flying moths in the UK than there are total butterfly species. But how many exactly? Well, that depends on which book you read or what website that you consult. The consensus is that there are around 130 macro moth species, but nobody seems brave enough to put a number on the micros. In my own experience, micro moths are quite regularly encountered during the day (albeit they are far harder to spot). So, I would think the number exceeds that of macros. That gets us up to somewhere near 300 before we even consider the "easily disturbed by day" category.

So where does one start? I think that listing the species would make rather a dull article so thought it might be useful if I were to detail a handful of day flyers in a series that can run over as many issues of Antennae as it may take. I'm going to start with five striking and easily identified species that will be on the wing in spring and early summer. Let's see how many of these you can spot this year.

The Emperor moth (male) (Saturnia pavonia)



The name says it all. Arguably our most handsome native species. Only the male of the species flies by day (the female occasionally comes to light) and can be seen from late March through to May. He flies low, searching for females and can easily be mistaken for a butterfly. The male has large, feathered antennae and can detect a female's pheromones from several miles away (possibly up to five, but I haven't tested the theory). Whilst the adult moths have no mouth parts and do not feed, the caterpillar's foodplants consist of brambles, heathers and blackthorn. Keep an eye out for these on your spring walks. That Peacock butterfly that just fluttered by, may not have been a Peacock at all.

Speckled Yellow (Pseudopanthera macularia)



When someone tells you that moths are boring, but butterflies are pretty and colourful, show them a photograph of the Speckled Yellow. Or better still, point one out when you're out for a walk. A lot of people are surprised that this is not a butterfly! It's a reasonably common species and you can find it in open woodland and scrub from late April until early June. The larvae feed on Wood sage, White dead-nettle, Woundwort and Yellow archangel. My favourite place to spot these on a spring walk is Chase End Hill on the Bromesberrow estate in the north of the county, but they are just as easily found throughout the Forest of Dean and across the Cotswolds.

Mother Shipton (Callistege mi) Photo by Ged Cassell



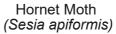
This moth is named after Old Mother Shipton, a 16th century Yorkshire witch. The pale markings on the forewings are said to show the outline of the witch's face. Not a scarce species, it can be found in meadows, grassy verges and heathland and is on the wing from May to July. The caterpillars feed on clovers and other legumes.

The Cinnabar (Tyria jacobaeae)



An easily recognisable species, named after the colour of the hindwings and the unmistakable markings on the forewing. Flies by day but also at night (not much time for sleep then) and can be found in open grassy habitats, including waste ground, gardens and woodland rides. On the

wing between May and July. The larvae feed on ragwort and you may be just as familiar with the yellow and black hooped caterpillars as you are with the moth. Very rarely you may encounter one of the scarcer variants, such as yellow, rather than red marked individuals.





The Hornet Moth (along with the Lunar Hornet Moth) is the largest of our Clearwing Moths. A stunning example of mimicry, it has even evolved beyond its appearance and vibrates its wings to buzz like a true hornet with its legs dangling in flight. The larvae burrow into the wood of black poplar (Populus nigra), and other species of poplar. The larval stage can last two years or longer. The adults normally emerge in June and they are best seen in the early morning when they rest on the trunk of the tree, inflating their wings. They are not spotted very often but come quite readily to synthetic pheromone lures. A proper "bucket list" moth – you really need to see it to appreciate the full beauty. If anyone is interested in seeing a hornet moth at close quarters, I hope to be able to show one off at some of our summer moth trapping events.

For further reading:

Britain's Day-flying Moths: a Field Guide (2nd edition) by David Newland

Sad Goodbye to Jen Gilbert

Tricia Atkinson

Jen Gilbert was the engagement officer for the 'Limestone's Living Legacies' project for the Back from the Brink project which ran for 4 years. When the project ended, Jen took on the role of Landscape Officer for the Cotswolds. In this time she worked with landowners to improve their land for Duke of Burgundy and Marsh Fritillary along with other butterflies. In addition she managed the two reserves in the county, Prestbury Hill reserve near to Cheltenham and Rough Bank near to Bisley.

Sadly the roles for landscape officers ended, but Jen has now joined the South West Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (SWFWAG). She will still be visiting landowners in the county to advise on managing their land for wildlife including butterflies so she is continuing her good work.

We met up with her one afternoon at the café at Prinknash and gave her two framed Richard Lewington prints, one of the Duke of Burgundy and one of Marsh Fritillary, which hopefully will be a reminder of her time at Butterfly Conservation. We miss her but look forward to our paths crossing at some point in the future.

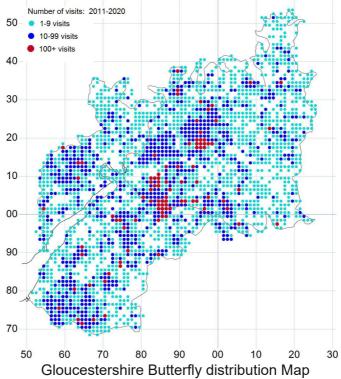


Photo of Jen by Peter Hugo

Gloucestershire Butterfly Maps - White Squares

Brian Atkinson

When we look at the map showing the positions of all butterfly records in our county we can see quite a few blank areas. The kilometre squares defining these areas are often known as "White Squares".



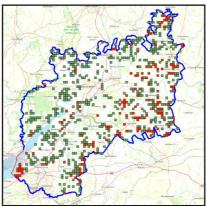
http://www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk/bflyglos/bflymap.html

Using the butterfly records from 2011 to 2023 we can, using QGIS, plot all the squares with records. We can then divide the area covered by Glos branch into kilometre squares. Of course around the perimeter there will be many partial "squares" where the boundary cuts across a square. Ignoring the smaller pieces (less than 30%) we can plot these and then, by difference, find all those with no records – the White Squares. There are approximately 3,475 squares in the area and there are no records for about 700 of them which is just over 20%.

So, why are there no records for these squares? Of course it could be

there are no butterflies in them, although that is unlikely for many of them. A more realistic reason could be that there is no access, the square encompasses private or agricultural land with no footpaths or other rights of way. However, from the map it can be seen that many are crossed by footpaths, bridleways, etc and some even contain areas of open access.

All Local Authorities publish maps of legal rights of way in their area so, by downloading these for Gloucs, South Gloucs, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, I was able to map all rights of way (footpaths, etc) in the white squares and then divide the set into those with footpaths (green) and those without (red). I have ignored roads, which may not be an ideal way to survey but at least are useful for access.



There are over 700 squares on the map and a list of these would be very unwieldy and difficult to use by "Butterfly Explorers"! I had to find a better way, so I have created a map in Google Maps and by clicking on:https://www.google.co.uk/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=10vWECxuljoN09oREvkox3jWdrMxoBIM&usp=sharing
you can examine a map of our area with "white squares" marked. (shown on page 14). If you are out and about and want to see this on your phone as you walk, open gmaps, select you (bottom of your homescreen), then maps and toggle the map on from your list.

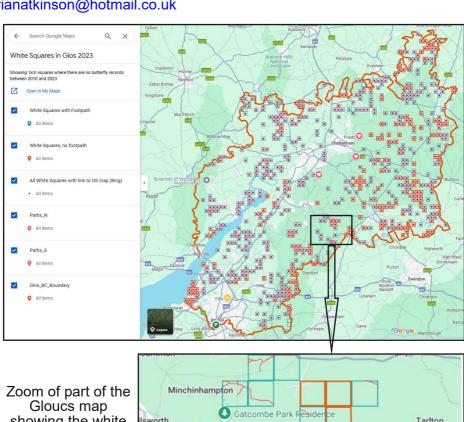
Those with red outlines have no footpaths, those in blue have footpaths marked by orange lines. Some may be very short, just clipping the corner of the square, etc.

Maps

You

By default they are shown on a standard Google map to aid navigation,

but clicking on the square at the bottom left of the screen will change to a satellite view where you can form an impression of the habitat, etc. As an extra there is a red dot in the centre of each square. Clicking on this will display the grid reference of the square, the latitude and longitude of the centre of the square and a link to another web site. Clicking on this will display an Ordnance Survey map of the area. If you see any butterflies in any white squares, please submit the records (see article on page 26 for guidance). If you have any queries please email me at brianatkinson@hotmail.co.uk



Zoom of part of the Gloucs map showing the white squares with footpaths and without footpaths

Winners of the Gloucestershire Butterfly and Moth Photographer of the Year 2024

The 2024 photographic competition entries were presented at our Annual Members' day and were judged by our guest speaker Andrew Commins from Natural England. The competition was very well supported and a big thank you to everyone who submitted an entry. If you would like to see all of the categories entries, a slideshow has been set to music and uploaded to our branch website (please follow the link below).

http://www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk/hamearis/latest-additions/ Meanwhile here are the 2024 category winners.



UK Butterflies and Overall Winner: Paul Sadley "Brimstone Flight"



My Garden Butterflies: Peter Rodgers "Small Tortoiseshell" and also the winner of UK Moths: "Mullein Moth Caterpillar" see front cover



Winner of Overseas Butterflies: Chris Tracey "Fiery Copper Courtship"



Winner of UK Butterflies or Moths Junior Category: Cara Ennis "Vapourer Moth Caterpillar"

Branch Photographic competition 2025

We will be holding the annual branch photographic competition as usual but with a change to the categories. Instead of 'My Garden Butterflies and Moths' there will be a new category 'Immature Stages', for photos of butterfly or moth eggs, larvae and pupae. The other three categories are UK Butterflies, UK Moths and Overseas Butterflies and Moths.

Getting photos of eggs and pupae is more challenging but the good thing about larvae is that they stay reasonably still and don't fly away just when you are about to take the photo.

Please send up to three in each category as JPEG attachments to emails to reach Simon Fenner at simonf@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk by 13th October.

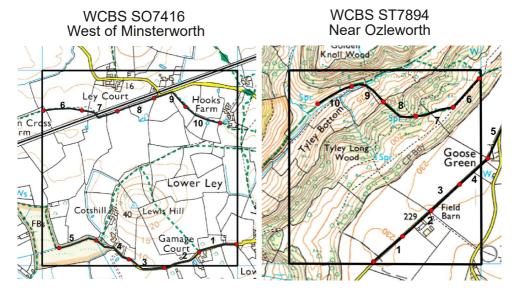
As usual we would like children to participate so please encourage your children or grandchildren to enter. There will be a separate prize for the winner of the under 16s.

All entrants must be a member of Gloucestershire Branch of Butterfly Conservation or child or grandchild of a member.

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey

Tricia Atkinson

The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) is an important national survey organised by BC Head Office where 1km squares are chosen at random. The recorder walks along a set route 1km through the square in one direction and then 1km to return, recording butterflies along the route. This is carried out just twice during the summer during July and August, although optional extra visits may also be carried out. The recording follows the same methodology as for standard transects eg counting the butterflies within a 5m 'box'. We are looking for recorders to record on squares SO7416, West of Minsterworth and ST7894, Nr Ozleworth. For both squares, the set routes are all along public footpaths in interesting countryside.



Recorders obviously need to be able to correctly identify widespread species, although, sometimes a rare species is seen. Please email me at chair@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk if you are interested. and I can then send you more details of the route for you to consider.

During July and August a few WCBS recorders sometimes contact me to say that for various reasons they aren't able to do the recording in their allocated square this year. I then need to try to find someone to fill in, so am often looking for extra recorders to cover. Please let me know if you would be happy to be a 'reserve' WCBS recorder.

If you are interested in finding out how to record in a WCBS square or on a standard transect, we are organising a walk around Bill Smyllie on Sunday 8th June, 2pm - 4.30pm. We will walk the transect and demonstrate what is involved in recording butterflies on transects, see Prestbury Hill event on page 34 for details .

If you would like to record but not too sure about your butterfly identification skills, you would be welcome to attend a butterfly ID day on Sunday July 20th at Prinknash and Painswick Beacon, more details on page 35.

A Night in the Garden

Rosie Woolley

You would think not much happens on a summer night in a suburban garden in Gloucester, but as I found out there is a hive of activity. I am talking moths, which as many of you will know, there is a huge variety of species and significant numbers. I was lucky enough to borrow a moth trap from Steve French. I wanted some live specimens to show at events

last summer.



Having previously used the pool of local moth experts, I was forced to give it a go myself and was pleasantly surprised. Steve gives excellent instructions and all the required equipment; it was quite an easy set up on the lawn plugging the trap into an extension from our garden shed.



In the morning, I enthusiastically rushed out and saw that there were some very big moths on the outside of the trap. I managed to capture these and found a large number of smaller moths inside the eggboxes.

It was very exciting especially the large moths, which were Poplar Hawk moths. They proved a big hit at the Hillfest event I took them to. Thank you to Richard for identifying the other moths I took and for answering all the technical questions that

I was unable to. To be able to allow children to hold these creatures and learn about them in real life is a joy and cannot be replaced with books or screens.

I can't say I will become a regular moth recorder but it is good to know that my garden is a haven for wildlife and hopefully the changes we have made such as letting the grass grow all summer have increased the biodiversity, I shall certainly give it another go this summer.

If you would like to try your hand at moth trapping this year, why not borrow a trap from our free loans scheme. Contact Steve French either through our Facebook page (see below) or by email moth-officer@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Light Trapping for Moths

Guy Meredith

Did you imagine this was a recent innovation? If so, think again. When looking into this recently, I found that this has been done for millennia. As far back as AD 60-65, the use of a bronze vessel of the shape of a milestone and lowering a light to the bottom of it was advised so the moths fly in and are scorched. This was used to attract and kill pest species – wax moths - that were devastating bee-hives. But the oldest known light trap to catch (as opposed to just attracting) moths without killing them in order to look at them, seems to have started in the mid 1800s. "Live" trapping has continued ever since with increasing

A full version of this article including many links to historical and scientific documents was first published by Guy on our Gloucestershire Moths Facebook group on 6th Jan this year. Why not take a look and if you're not already a member of

sophistication to the present day.

Alternatively, for an electronic copy of the whole article please contact serena.meredith@butterfly-conservation.goassemble.com

the Facebook group, you know what to do!



Butterfly Recollections from the 1970s

Jack Harrison

From 1974 to 1981 I lived in Winchcombe. For a good part of the time, my 'headquarters' was Woodpeckers Cottage in the woods to the south west of Winchcombe. That was in the midst of some wonderful butterfly country but I often explored further afield. The garden at Woodpeckers was surrounded by trees but the open spaces had buddleia. The top finds on the buddleia were regular Silver-washed Fritillaries with one valesina variant in 1978. Dark-green Fritillaries were found on most open downland and were regular visitors to Woodpeckers.

KEY

TH - Taylors Hill SP003157

GW - Guiting Wood SP070262

TOD - Toddington SP050325

WP - Woodpeckers Cottage SP007261

CG - Caudle Green SO946102

BC - Bull's Cross SO878088

SH - Swifts Hill SO876067

LCH - Cleeve Hill SP005255

PUB - Woolpack Inn SO871073

RC - Rodborough Common SO846031



In some open areas of the woods around Woodpeckers, Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were occasionally to be found, a particularly good spot being in the wayleave under the pylons SP011260. Graylings would sometimes drift down from Cleeve Hill. The woods had elms and White-letter Hairstreaks could be found on the buddleia. Surprisingly despite numerous searches, I never came across Duke of Burgundy in those woods although Guiting Wood, not far away, had a colony. The best spot for the Duke was the cutting of the [then] disused railway line to the east of Toddington. Some species were remarkably elusive: for example Grizzled and Dingy Skippers were encountered only a few times, Dingies being on the eastern slope of Cleeve Hill. Large and Small Skippers were common although I never knowingly found an Essex.

In those days I didn't really think of Pearl-bordered as rare. Many woods had them, eg Guiting and Mercombe Wood / Lyde Bank SO997152 to the

south of Hilcot. Small Pearl-bordered was found just once on the steep hillside near Nympsfield SO798018. Marsh Fritillaries were a little more widespread with meetings on Taylor's Hill near Hilcot and Bull's Cross. Sadly, I never did find High Brown although a 'thrill' once in Guiting turned out to be Dark Green. Hailes Wood to the northeast of Winchcombe was rumoured to have High Browns, but no luck. Silver-washed, apart from the Woodpeckers sightings, were once found on a buddleia behind the Woolpack Inn near Slad. Also memorable in the pub visit was VERY LOUD live music by Jet Harris (formerly of the Shadows). I believe he lived in the area and was indeed a butterfly enthusiast, although I never met him in the field. A real 'hotspot' for Dark Greens was nearby Swifts Hill.

Surprisingly, I never came across White Admiral except in the far west of Gloucs. Many of the 'browns' were common, even a few Walls, with Marbled Whites being found everywhere. Graylings were on most suitable hills.

Common Blues were never 'common', nor were Brown Argus. Small Blues occurred in discrete colonies, a strong one being at the bottom of Taylor's Hill. The best place for Holly Blues was the small parks and public gardens in Cheltenham. Chalkhill Blue was on Rodborough Common. Adonis Blue, apparently occurred in the southwest of Gloucs but I never found it. Sadly, despite numerous searches, I never came across Large Blue. Every May, Green Hairstreaks made a memorable sight at the lower eastern slopes of Cleeve Hill with fresh Hawthorn leaves providing excellent camouflage. I didn't see Purple Hairstreaks but in those days hadn't realised that they are 'evening flyers' over the tops of Oak and Ash.

I must mention one incident which with hindsight, seems utterly irresponsible: Glanville Fritillary. I had collected some 50 caterpillars from 50 different nests on the south coast of the Isle of Wight. They were very easy to rear (using roadside plantain) and the resulting adults fluttering in net cages paired and I had far too many caterpillars the following year. So having already selected a suitable spot, I released hundreds. The adults flew that year and a few the following year, then they died out. When someone excitedly found Glanvilles at my site, Caudle Green, I was forced to confess!

I haven't been back to the Cotswolds for more than 40 years, and no doubt a lot has changed. I find it difficult to believe that PB Frits are now confined to the Bathurst Estate.

(Jack now lives in the north of Scotland to the east of Inverness.)

Developing a Wild Space at Warden Hill Primary School in Cheltenham

Tricia Atkinson

Following on from last year's family day at Crickley hill, we were invited to Warden Hill Primary School to help their Eco-club build a Wildspace. Ken Newcombe, the branch education coordinator, and I visited the school to discuss how we could engage the children with butterflies and moths. The teacher showed us an area in the school grounds which had become wild with lots of tough weeds. She wanted to make it a more attractive area for the children but also to encourage more butterflies and other pollinators.



Trica and Ken with the Warden Hill Eco-club and their teacher Sarah

First of all she arranged to get the area cut and cleared, then we went into the school with Yellow Rattle seed, which we divided into 18 small pots. The children from the Eco-club scratched up some turf to reveal bare soil on which they sprinkled the seed. The Yellow Rattle should help reduce the vigour of the grasses and tougher plants which will help the other wildflowers to compete. The Yellow Rattle flowers are also very good for pollinators such as bees.

We are planning to visit again sometime before Easter and take wildflower plants such as Ox-eye Daisy, Marjoram, Red Campion and Knapweed for the children to plant out.

The Importance of Work Party Volunteers

Ken Newcombe

During the late Autumn and Winter months, when butterflies and moths are scarce, the Gloucestershire Branch undertakes conservation work. Every year work parties help to maintain and improve habitats to help butterflies and moths. These take place at several places including the two Reserves at Prestbury Hill and Rough Bank as well as sites such as Strawberry Banks, Ravensgate Common and Oakley Wood.

Conservation is one of the most important aspects of the work of BC. Recording provides invaluable data on the health of the populations of butterflies and moths, but, without conservation, the worrying decline seen since the 1970s may continue unchecked or even accelerate.

Work parties fulfil several functions, including improving habitats of species under threat and ensuring that invasive scrub and bramble does not overrun and destroy existing habitats. Scrub is a very important component of many sites as it gives shelter and perching points and is a foodplant for several invertebrate larvae as well as being used by birds. However, it must be controlled so that it doesn't take over and reduce the valuable unimproved grassland. Work at the Prestbury Hill Reserve exemplifies how we deal with this.

This Bill Smyllie part of the Reserve has several species which appear high on the Red List. The Wall is an occasional visitor, albeit only two





Before (left) and After(right) showing scrub reduction at Prestbury Hill. Work done in Feb 2025 Bill Smyllie Reserve

were recorded in 2024, and is one of the two Red List Endangered species in Gloucestershire (the other being the Wood White which thrives in the Forest of Dean). Vulnerable species on the Reserve are the Small Heath, the Marsh Fritillary (which only arrived in 2020), the Duke of Burgundy, the Adonis Blue and the Chalk Hill Blue. Near Threatened species found here are the Dark Green Fritillary and the Small Blue. It is addressing the needs of these and other species, including moths, that underlies the work done, much of which is scrub clearance.

The success of the conservation work in maintaining and increasing butterfly numbers is impossible to quantify. However, as a guide, between 2017 and 2024 the numbers of Duke of Burgundy recorded on the transects increased from 6 to 23. 2024 was a bad year for butterflies, but prior to this the numbers had risen to 54 by 2022, showing a significant increase. Small Blue at the Reserve were one of the exceptions to the collapse of numbers in 2024 with 680 being recorded, more than double the number from the previous year. Two consecutive weeks recorded 241 and 286 on the transect. A further 346 were recorded on The Masts part of the Prestbury Hill Reserve.



Duke of Burgundy Hamearis lucina



Small Blue Cupido Minimus

More volunteers are always needed. Those who come can do as much, or as little, as they have time for. To quote a well-known supermarket, 'Every Little Helps'. All equipment is supplied, and a friendly welcome plus cake is guaranteed. Work party dates are published in the Autumn copy of Antennae and on the main BC website (Go to https://butterflyconservation.org/in-your-area/gloucestershire-branch and scroll down to Events). If you would like to secure the future of butterflies and moths and have a real impact on the ecology of the area, your help would be most welcome

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Guidance for New and Existing Butterfly Recorders

Vic Polley

Butterfly Conservation (BC) is charged by the government to keep them informed about the state of butterflies and moths in the UK via records which contribute to the Government's Biodiversity Indicators. Recording butterflies is the essential starting point for conserving these beautiful creatures and if there were no records, more species would be extinct! Gloucestershire is an important county for butterflies, with no less than five of the eight most threatened UK species breeding in Gloucestershire. Records are also used to define nature conservation priorities and in assessing planning applications to help avoid the destruction of land rich in wildlife. Just a word to new-comers: a number of species are very similar to other species e.g. Small and Essex skipper (Sk/ExSk), the Whites family, female Adonis and Chalkhill Blue (AdBl/ChBl), etc. Please don't put in a record unless you are certain of the butterfly's ID.

The Essential Parts of a Record

Recorder's Name (First name and Surname)

Site Name (nearest place on the OS map, reserve name, etc.) *

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

Grid Reference (preferably 6 figures)

Species common name

Number seen (just a number, no other characters)

* Please don't add a house number or house name to a street address, which have to be removed for data protection purposes

A Few Requests to Existing Recorders

It's great to receive all your records but you can help by not putting in records for the same species at the same place more frequently than about twice a week. Otherwise you will probably be recording the same individuals quite frequently, over-estimating the number present.

People putting in records directly into their Smartphones often appear to put in several records consecutively for just one of the same species. This

can lead to record processing problems so we would be grateful if you could accumulate several such counts before entering the record.

Please send your records to only one place (person, online system or organisation). If you send the same record to another place as well, this may lead to duplication.

How to Submit Records

Butterflies for the New Millennium website

Records can be submitted on BC's Butterflies for the New Millennium website (this title simply means casual records). Follow the link: https://www.butterflyrecording.org After registration, enter a record by clicking on the coloured box on the left (Enter Records).



Garden Butterfly Records

If you want to submit your garden records separately from your other records, follow the BC link: https://gardenbutterflysurvey.org, then complete Steps 1 and 2 for registering and submitting a record.



iRecord







iRecord is now a very popular system catering for all wildlife groups. Follow the link: https://irecord.org.uk/help/how-do-i to get started with iRecord and submit, amend or delete a record. If you want to record butterflies on your smartphone whilst in the field, download the free iRecord Butterflies app (developed for BC by the Biological Records Centre and the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology). This takes you easily through the steps for putting in a record (see steps 1-3 below). Please check that the location of your record is where you think it is. The app uses your phone's GPS to generate a OS reference but if signal is weak then your location on the satellite image can be wrong. You can correct this by manual navigation on the location screen.



1)Tap on a species or search for one, then click record



Check your location by tapping the location icon. your OS reference is on the right



 Check your location on the satellite image and use your touch screen to navigate if necessary, then pin

Please don't record butterflies on the British Trust for Ornithology's Birdtrack website because many records turn out to have only a two figure (or no figure) grid reference (e.g. ST79) with an area of 100 (or 10,000) square kilometres and have to be rejected. Likewise, please don't put in records via iNaturalist, as we tend to ignore them because they have the same problem and many people use pseudonyms instead of the recorder's name.

For those who can't (or don't want to) put records in online we would be grateful if you could submit them to the Glos Butterfly Recorder Chris Wilshire, email: butterfly-recorder@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk on a spreadsheet in line format as follows:

Recorder	Site	Date	Grid Ref	Species	Number
Tony Hancock	Railway Cuttings	10/02/2025	ST769909	Brimstone	2

Key Site Recording

Back in the early 2000s, the then County Butterfly recorder, Guy Meredith, produced a ground-breaking document listing all the known Key Butterfly sites (several hundred) in Gloucestershire and marked their boundaries on a set of 1:25,000 OS maps.



An extract from the Gloucestershire Key Butterfly Sites Map

The list of Key Species which still breed in Gloucestershire at present is: SPbF, PbF, MF, DoB, BrH, SmBI, L.BI, ChBI, AdBI, GzSk, DySk*, WdWh, W.Ad, SwF*, DGF, WLH, Wall, to which Chris Wiltshire added GrH* and BrAr* in 2014. They are all currently Red Listed species except those marked with an asterisk. In 2009, Tricia Atkinson started the Glos Key Sites Project, with several dozen experienced recorders visiting as many Key Sites as possible to see if the key species are still there, or whether the site had degenerated. The results are used to update annually the 'All Key Sites' document, an important source of information on all Gloucestershire's scarce species. Contact Brian Atkinson brianatkinson@hotmail.co.uk if you would like a copy of the latest version. Brian is also our butterfly mapping expert and can supply a map showing the site boundary of any Key Site. If you would like to discuss Key Sites recording, contact Sue Smith for the Stroud area or Vic Polley for the Wotton/Dursley area.

All the above relate to 'casual' records (i.e. with no mandatory restrictions on the weather or time of day for recording). Nationally, these records are used for distribution studies (i.e. where on a UK map the species have been recorded over the years). They are also used at the local level for population studies (the number recorded) to find out which species are declining or increasing over time.

If you would like to find out more about Butterfly Walks in Gloucestershire why not purchace a copy of our booklet, http://www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk/hamearis/walks-booklet/



Butterfly Transects, Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveys (WCBS) and Timed Counts

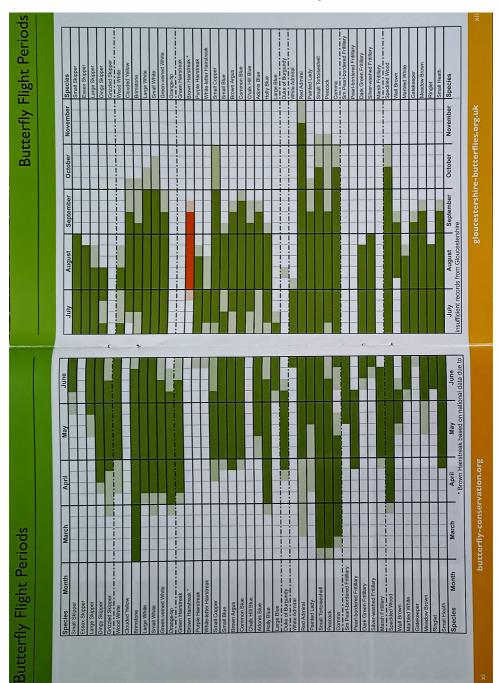
These three more complex methods are used for population studies at the national level. The results are utilised by BC, academics, environmental institutions, etc. to give rigorous data on which species are decreasing or increasing, to inform conservation. BC's website for recording these schemes is the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) https://ukbms.org/user/login. The Butterfly Transect is one of the longest-running insect monitoring schemes in the world and provides the highest quality data from experienced surveyors. Surveys are carried out along a fixed route once a week for 26 consecutive weeks. This scheme isn't suitable for people who work full time, owing to the mandatory restrictions on the time of day and on our notoriously unreliable weather. Sites usually (but not always) contain scarce species. At present, owing to illness, we are looking for a volunteer to share the Strawberry Banks transect during 2025, (see figure below - Marsh Fritillary site).





If you would be interested in this, please contact Vic Polley. If you wish to start a new transect, please contact Chris Wiltshire (Glos County Transect Co-ordinator). If you require help in entering your transect records on the UKBMS website, contact Vic Polley (Online Transect Coordinator). For WCBS Surveys, two visits are carried out between July and August. They take place along a fixed route within a one kilometre square, following the same methodology as for transects. If you wish to be allocated a WCBS square, contact Tricia Atkinson. Timed Counts are used much less frequently than the other two schemes, principally to survey rare species. Factsheets on how to carry out these three schemes can be downloaded from the UKBMS website.

Butterfly Flight Times Extract from Gloucestershire Butterfly Walks Booklet



Dates for Your Diary 2025

Below are the events and field trips planned for this spring and summer. The field trips are guided walks looking at butterflies and any day-flying moths. The contact details for the leader are given if you have any queries, e.g. to check what the terrain is like. There is no need to book unless stated otherwise.

The events are aimed at the general public and all members are welcome. If bad weather is forecast you might like to check if the event or walk is cancelled. All events are free unless stated otherwise.

Some of the walks are on rough ground so please wear suitable footwear and come prepared for the weather.

Saturday 17th May. 10am - 3pm Minchinhampton Marking Day. The Old Lodge Minchinhampton Common. Traditionally May is when the cows are brought from the overwintering fields and sheds and released back onto the commons. Livestock owners gather with their animals beside The Old Lodge on Minchinhampton Common where each cow is tagged or marked for identification before being released. National Trust staff and other local organisations will be on hand to answer questions about the age-old tradition and the way in which the Commons are managed. There will be guided walks and fun activities for children. Parking on the Common near the Old Lodge. SO852008, GL6 9AQ, What3Words: leafing.nowadays.geek.Contact events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Saturday 24th May. 2pm – 4.30pm Prestbury Hill Reserve. Walk to seek out Duke of Burgundy, Marsh Fritillary, Small and Adonis Blues, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak. The site is steep and surface uneven so sturdy footwear advisable. Meet at entrance to main Bill Smyllie section SO993244 What3words: hometown.blissful.scrub Postcode not given as satnavs can direct you to the wrong place. Parking available on the side or the road and inside the gate. Contact Tricia Atkinson 01242 512584 chair@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk or Ken Newcombe 07752 035388

Sunday 1st June. 2pm - 4.30pm Cinderford Linear Park. A walk along mainly level woodland tracks (just one quite long uphill section) to see Wood White and Grizzled Skipper. You are advised to wear long trousers

and sleeves, socks and shoes due to the quantity of ticks present in the woodland. Meet in the parking area at SO649127, nearest postcode GL14 3EZ, What3words: unpacked.castle.teaching. Contact Ken Newcombe 07752 035388 education@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Sunday 8th June. 2pm – 4.30pm Prestbury hill Reserve. Celebration of 50 years of transect recording. Join Tricia Atkinson and other transect walkers to walk the Bill Smyllie transect and see what is involved in butterfly recording for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey and standard transects. Meet at entrance to main Bill Smyllie section SO993244 What3words: hometown.blissful.scrub Postcode not given as satnavs can direct you to the wrong place. Contact Tricia Atkinson 01242 512584 chair@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk or Ken Newcombe 07752 035388

Sunday 22nd June. 8am Hartpury Orchard Centre. A gathering at the centre to examine and discuss findings from moth traps. Arrive from 8am. Toast and Coffee served afterwards. GL19 3DB. What3words: promotion.emulating.thigh. Plenty of free parking. Contact Steve French 07531 316893 moth-officer@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Saturday 28th June. 10.30am - 1pm Rodborough Common. Leisurely

walk around Rodborough Common to see the variety of blue butterflies flying at this time of year, including (if we're very lucky!) the recently reintroduced Large Blue. As well as looking for the blue butterflies we'll also have a chance to identify other species along the way, including the possibility of the impressive Dark Green Fritillary. Part of the walk will involve walking part way down a steep slope and along a narrow path. Sturdy footwear is advised. A walking pole may also be useful. This is a joint meeting with the Stroud Valleys Project for which booking is required in advance via the Stroud Valleys Project website - https://www.stroudvalleysproject.org/events. Phone: 01453 753358 Email: info@stroudvalleysproject.org.uk Details of parking arrangements to be sent on booking.

Saturday 12th July. 10.30am – 3.30pm Cotswold Farm Park. Wildlife Weekend. Join us at the farm for a fun packed day of butterfly spotting plus children's crafts and activities. Explore the Wildlife trail and their newly planted flower meadow and learn about the great variety of insects that

make a wildflower meadow their home. Cotswold Farm Park, Guiting Power nr Cheltenham, GL54 5FL, SP114266 What3Words: poster. shoelaces. synthetic. events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk.

Saturday 19th July. 10am – 4pm. Crickley Hill. Family Fun Day and Big Butterfly Count. Why not come dressed as a butterfly or moth, bring a picnic and enjoy the views? There will be guided butterfly safaris (11.30am and 2.30pm), a self-guided butterfly trail, bug hunts, craft activities as well as colourful moths to discover. Explore the wildflowers, birds and bugs that make Crickley Hill special. Held in partnership with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the National Trust. Park at SO929163, nearest postcode GL4 8JY. What3Words: downturn.cowboy.listening. Note that there is a charge for parking. To reserve a place on one of the guided safaris email: events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk.

Sunday 20th July. 10.30am – 4.00pm Prinknash Abbey and Painswick Beacon. Butterfly ID day. There will be a presentation in the morning of butterflies seen in Gloucestershire. This will be held in the meeting room by the café at Prinknash Abbey. After a picnic lunch in the garden or lunch in the café we will take the 5 minute drive to Painswick Beacon to ID the butterflies flying that day. This is a free event but booking is required as numbers are limited. Park at Prinknash Abbey. SO880137, GL4 8EX, What3Words: apples.broke.salads. Please contact Ken Newcombe 01242 515727 education@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk for more details and to book a place.

Thursday 24th July 11am - 4pm The Big Butterfly Count at Barnwood Arboretum. Join us and the Friends of Barnwood Arboretum to take part in the Big Butterfly Count. Discover the arboretum's special trees and flower rich grassland and help us to count the butterflies which make this local nature reserve home. There will be also be a quiz trail, craft activities and live moths. Barnwood Arboretum is accessed via a footbridge from Barnwood Park. There is no car parking on site but there is easy pedestrian access to the Arboretum and Park from surrounding roads. Church Lane, Barnwood, Gloucester GL4 3JB. What3Words: winter.rate.wizard. Contact events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Thursday 7th August 10.30am – 3.30pm Lower Woods. Walks and family event. Come and hunt for the largest British butterfly, the Silver-

Washed Fritillary, in this magical forest. Guided walks at 11am and 2.30pm. Get crafty and make your own butterfly to take home and learn about their life cycle and how to make your garden a better place for wildlife. What3words: duet.driveways.supper ST746881 Contact events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Monday 11th August. 11.00am-1.00pm. Sapperton (Wilder). A walk around Sapperton Wilder including lucerne fields where there may be significant numbers of Common Blues. Limited parking available at the end of Sapperton Broad Ride, What3words resonated.payback.period. Contact Matthew Oates 07771971488 matthew@matthew-oates.co.uk

Sunday 17th August. 11am-1pm Coombe Hill, Wotton-under-Edge. Walk to see Chalk Hill Blues etc. Meet at ST758943 on the Old London Rd at a stile to a footpath going south to Coombe Hill. What3words reworked.humans.embodied. There are several small parking places nearby on the Old London Rd. Please note that the site has very steep slopes and very uneven ground, so walking boots are essential. If the weather is forecast to be bad, or for any other reason, please contact Vic Polley 01453 842896 vic@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Friday 22nd August 10am to 4pm. Rococo Gardens, Painswick. Rococo Family Fun event. Learn how to make a Wild Space for butterflies and moths, get creative with some craft activities, go on a bug hunt and explore the garden's butterflies and moths. Please note that there is an entry fee for the gardens, but not for our event. SO864105, GL6 6TH, What3Words: plant.latter.cubs. Contact events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Saturday 23rd August. 2pm – 4.30pm Longwood Common,
Nottingham Hill, Bushcombe Lane, Cleeve Hill. A walk around the two
fields of generally level but uneven ground comprised of flower rich
grassland and scrub, which make up this fantastic site for butterflies. We
shall be looking for late summer species including some of the site's
special species, hopefully seeing Chalk Hill Blue, Adonis Blue, Brown
Argus and possibly Small Copper and Wall Brown. Meet at the small
parking area at SO983279, What3words: handbag.glimmers.replays
nearest postcode GL52 3PN. (otherwise roadside parking). Contact: Tricia
Atkinson 01242 512584, chair@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

How to get in touch and stay up to date

Branch website



The Branch has kept its dedicated website as some applications were not compatible with the branch area of the national Butterfly Conservation website. www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk





Facebook

We have two facebook groups,
Gloucestershire moths and Gloucestershire
butterfly Group. They are closed groups but to
get access search and click join.

WhatsApp

There is also a Gloucestershire Butterflies WhatsApp group GlosButts. Once you have an account please contact Matthew Oates on 07771971488 to get added.



National Website

For National news and events go to https://butterfly-conservation.org and navigate from the main menu. All of the Gloucestershire BC events are posted here and please feel free to share these with friends, family.



For information on volunteering opportunities in Gloucestershire Branch and other branches go to:

https://volunteer.butterfly-conservation.org/opportunities#display=grid&s=date advertised&o=desc&limit=14&include=image&public search=true



Gloucestershire Branch Committee

Chair/Secretary Tricia Atkinson Tel: 01242 512584

email: chair@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Treasurer Serena Meredith Tel: 01242 524138

email: treasurer@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Chris Wiltshire Tel: 01453 545509 County Butterfly Recorder

> The Brambles, Stinchcombe Hill, Dursley GL11 6AQ email: butterfly-recorder@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Asst. County Butterfly Vic Polley Tel: 01453 842896

Recorder email: vic@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Moth Conservation Steve French Tel: 07531 316893

Coordinator email: moth-officer@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Forest of Dean Contact vacant

Newsletter Lynne Turner Tel:07946 759892

email: lynne@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

H & S Co-ordinator Serena Meredith Tel: 01242 524138

email: healthandsafety@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Membership Secretary Christine Blythe Tel: 01242 678148

email: membership@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Tricia Atkinson Prestbury Hill Tel: 01242 512584 Reserve Contact email: chair@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Events Organisers Christine Blythe and Rosie Woolley

email: events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Education Coordinator Ken Newcombe Tel 01242 515727

email: education@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Wild Spaces Coordinators David and Karen Nicholls

email: wildspaces@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Committeee John Coates Tel: 01242 510946

> Lynne Turner email: lynne@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk Graeme Davis email: graeme@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk Seb Buckton email: seb@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk Rosie Woolley email: rosie@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk Simon Fenner email: simonf@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Moth Recorders:

VC33 Robert Homan email: vc33-eastglos@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk VC34 Michael Bradley email: vc34-westofsevern@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk VC34 Ali Bourne email: vc34-eastofsevern@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Webmaster Sue Thompson Tel: 07963 861964

email: webmaster@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk

Emails for associate committee members are given on the branch website https://www.butterfly-conservation.org/in-your-area/gloucestershire-branch/committee





Butterfly Conservation

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468)
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and in

Scotland (SCO39268) VAT No GB 991 2771 89

Tel: 01929 400209

E-mail: info@butterfly-conservation.org Web site: www.butterfly-conservation.org