

News from Derbyshire

2011 updates from Ken Orpe, County Recorder for Derbyshire.
Updates for 2012 can be found [HERE](#) and 2013 [HERE](#)

Please send your sightings to the relevant county recorder, details on [Committee page](#), and please use the recording forms available as pdf files on the [Downloads Page](#).

Update 37 - 23rd December 2011

Although we have just passed the shortest day of the year, there is still some butterfly activity in the area with a sighting of a Red Admiral in the garden of Andy Large in Newhall yesterday (22nd December 2011) and, on the same day, a Peacock was seen in Lincolnshire by a former Derbyshire resident (Phil Bowler). This date is the latest County date for both species and given that it was a sunny day and with a temperature of 12c proves that certain butterflies are capable of enjoying favourable weather conditions at any time of the year. Also, Nikki Mahadevan reports that Large White caterpillars are still enjoying eating their way through her cabbage plants at the moment, despite earlier frosts during this month.

So, if you are contemplating walking off the effects of all the Christmas food next week do look out for our local butterflies, as there is still a fair amount of nectar plants available to meet their needs as well!!

I hope you all have a good Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year.

Update 36 - 1st December 2011

2011 will be remembered for a strange combination of weather conditions with a warm and sunny Spring, a cool, cloudy Summer and a mild Autumn with very little rainfall. This has resulted in many November sightings of butterflies, mainly Red Admirals, with recent records coming from Weston on Trent on the 12th of the month (Martin Roome), Drakelow NR on the 17th (Tom Cockburn), and the latest records on the 19th November 2011 from Ogston Reservoir (Nikki Mahadaven), Whaley Bridge (Alan and Angie Seymour) and Attenborough NR, just over the County border in Notts, (Mark Sherwood).

Other species that have been noted include Small Tortoiseshell on the 12th November 2011 at Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), Comma on the 19th November 2011 at Whaley Bridge (Alan and Angie Seymour) and the Peacock on the 25th November 2011 at Coton in the Elms (Tom Cockburn). However, what is a quite remarkable sighting was that of a Humming Bird Hawk Moth seen on the 23rd November 2011 by Ben Taylor, son of Richard Taylor, at his school in Belper. This insect was seen flying around a stack of lockers inspecting each door in turn presumably looking for somewhere to hibernate!!! This again illustrates the fact that more insects previously thought to be incapable of spending winter here in Derbyshire are certainly making a more determined effort to do so.

Personally, 2011 has also been a memorable year as Pat and I recently attended the Butterfly Conservation National AGM in Cheltenham where I was privileged to receive an award for being the '2011 Butterfly Conservation Volunteer of the Year'. It was mainly due to the fact that I have completed 30 years of transect walking here in Derbyshire (which is equivalent to walking from Derby to Malaga and back!!) together with entering on to the National database the many butterfly records that you have all provided to me, many as a consequence of these updates. I would therefore like to thank you for the support and kind comments that I receive as a result of this method of keeping you all informed of what is happening on the butterfly scene, both locally and, sometimes nationally.

There are a couple of items that Butterfly Conservation have got available at the moment, one being a half price membership offer as a Christmas gift if ordered on line before the 9th December 2011 – please visit <http://www.butterfly-conservation.org> for details. Also, the follow up to the 2005-2009 butterfly distribution maps that were issued this time last year, in the form of a report titled 'The State of the UK's Butterflies 2011' will be available as a PDF download in the next couple of weeks from the same website. It will be interesting to compare the report with the recent findings from here in Derbyshire where the Wall Brown has declined drastically, whereas Essex Skipper, Brown Argus (migrating), Speckled Wood and the Ringlet have all increased their range throughout the County.

On a final note, I will, of course, be pleased to receive any further 2011 butterfly sightings that you may have yet to send to me.

Update 35 - 11th November 2011

With the continuing mild weather conditions since the last update, it is no surprise that butterfly sightings are still being made within the County. The Peacock was last noted on the 28th October 2011 at Carsington Water (Daniel Martin) and the Comma was last seen on the 4th November 2011 in the garden of Angie & Alan Seymour in Whaley Bridge. There have been slightly more sightings of the Small Tortoiseshell recently with records from Win Hill (Rod Dunn), Carsington Water (Dave Williams), Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), Roystone Grange (Paul Townsend) with the latest being on the 9th November 2011 at Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour). However, the bulk of sightings have been of the Red Admiral, which has been noted during this month at Shipley NR (Jim Steele), Chaddesden Park

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(Martin Roome), Allestree (Pat & Ken Orpe), Carr Vale (Paul Townsend), Beeley Moor (Martin Roome), Barlborough (Phill Holnes), Carsington Water (Dave Williams), Roystone Grange (Paul Townsend), Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour) and finally on the 8th November 2011 at Mickleover (Christine & Max Maughan). To have so many Red Admiral records at this time of the year is quite remarkable being in mind that here in landlocked Derbyshire these insects now appear to be settled in to an 'over wintering' mode, whereas in the not too distant past they were regarded as pure migrants who could not cope with the winters in this part of the UK. It will be interesting to see if any latest records are broken this year – these being the 11th November (2001) for the Brimstone; 4th December (1990) for the Comma; 22nd December (2007) for the Peacock; 22nd December (2008) for the Red Admiral; 23rd December (2009) for the Small Tortoiseshell.

On a final note, the BBC1 TV programme 'Countryfile' is showing a feature on the 'Contrasting Landscapes of the Derwent Valley in Derbyshire'. It will be shown commencing at 6.25 pm on Sunday 13th November 2011, so let's hope that it lives up to expectations!!!

Update 34 - 27th October 2011

Despite the relatively warm and mainly sunny weather that we have experienced during the last 10 days, the number of butterfly species that have been recorded has now dropped to about 6. Three of the four hibernating species have been noted during this period, with the Peacock seen on the 15th October 2011 at Sheepbridge (Paul Townsend) and at Drakelow NR on the 22nd October 2011 (Tom Cockburn), and both the Comma and the Small Tortoiseshell seen on chrysanthus in the garden of Angie & Alan Seymour at Whaley Bridge almost daily up to and including the 26th October 2011, the maximum count of the latter species being a remarkable 23 on that date. Unfortunately there have been no records of the Brimstone recently and the Whites also seem to have disappeared now. However, the Speckled Wood is still about with sightings from Darley Bridge on the 16th October 2011 (Simon Roddis) and also from West Hallam Tip on the 22nd October 2011 (Pat & Ken Orpe). A couple of individual Small Coppers were noted at Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn) and Eye's Meadow, Duffield (Pat & Ken Orpe), both on the 22nd October 2011.

By far the most sightings of butterflies seen recently have been of the Red Admiral with records from West Hallam (Martin Hall), Findern (Jean & Brian Hallam), Langley Common (Kath Patrick & Nick Brown), Darley Dale (Simon Roddis), Chatsworth Garden Centre (Rod Dunn), Beresford Dale (Ray Walker), Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), Allestree (Pat & Ken Orpe) and on the 26th October 2011 at Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour). In addition, large counts have been noted at Ashover (50 on the 15th October 2011 - Paul Townsend) and Darley Bridge (11 on 16th October 2011 – Simon Roddis) and all were seen on flowering ivy plants, maybe feeding up for a migration south so as to try and get back to the Continent. However, there are still a number of individuals about in our area which suggests that they will 'overwinter' here in Derbyshire. Not so the Painted Lady which cannot survive our winters in this part of the UK, although there was a sighting of one across the border in Sutton In Ashfield (Notts) on the 19th October 2011 (Elaine Woods). Also, there have been a couple of Humming Bird Hawk Moths seen in Derbyshire during this month with an individual at Linton on the 6th October 2011 (Gerry O'Brien) and another observed at Darley Dale on the 24th October 2011 (Rod Dunn).

A number of contributors to this group have been informing me of the plants and shrubs in their gardens that have been particularly attractive to insects, especially butterflies. So, with the approval of these recorders, I have compiled a spreadsheet of the plants and shrubs that are worth considering planting into either an existing border, or when planning a new border within a garden ([download pdf](#)). Whilst this list is by no means exhaustive it is a start, and I would be pleased if other contributors to this group would inform me of their successful planting regimes, so that we can all help to increase the availability of suitable plants for insects, including butterflies.

Update 33 - 17th October 2011

Another spell of warm and sunny weather recently has meant that many observers have been able to get out and about in their gardens as well as our wonderful Derbyshire countryside. Most people have seen Red Admirals with records coming from Dalbury (Wayne Cooper), Findern (Alan Roe), Wessington (Steven Roe), Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), Whaley Bridge (Angie Seymour), Errwood Hall (Sandra Douglas), with the maximum counts coming from Ogston Reservoir (6 on the 12th October 2011 – Nikki Mahadevan), Rodsley (8 on the 14th October 2011 – Nick Brown) and up to 15 seen on the 14th October 2011 along a stretch of the former Derby Canal near Swarkestone (Martin Roome). Most were seen on ivy plants in the general countryside, but Pat and I saw one yesterday (16th October 2011) in our garden in Allestree nectaring on a late flowering yellow buddleia (variety Weyeriana Sungold). This variety is well worth planting as it will carry on producing flowers in to November each year here in Derbyshire.

The odd Comma has also been noted during the last week but there have been no records for the Peacock which can go into hibernation (and remain there) very soon after feeding up on nectar bearing plants. However, the Small Tortoiseshell is still flying around in the County, with again up to 37 seen in the garden of Angie Seymour in Whaley Bridge, feeding mainly on chrysanthemums.

In the south of the County, Drakelow NR continues to produce late sightings of species with a tatty Brown Argus seen on the 4th October 2011 (Tom Cockburn), a Meadow Brown on the 9th October 2011 (Andy Large), which equals the latest County date for this species, a male Brimstone on the 14th October 2011 (Tom Cockburn) and a third brood Common Blue on the 15th October 2011 (Pat & Ken Orpe).

Although the last sighting of the Large White was on the 1st October 2011 this year, a late Green Veined White was seen on the 14th October 2011 at Darley Park in Derby (Pat & Ken Orpe), which again equals the latest County date for this species as well, and Angie Seymour had a Small White on the 16th October 2011 in her garden in Whaley Bridge.

Additional species that could carry on flying into November include the Speckled Wood and the Small Copper, both of which appear to have fresh specimens on the wing at the moment, including records of the latter from near to Repton (Bill Grange) and also Ogston Reservoir (Nikki Mahadevan) both on the 12th October 2011, and also at Langley Common (Nick Brown) and Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn) on the 15th October 2011.

Unfortunately there have been no further records of the Painted Lady in Derbyshire since the 1st of October 2011 so it looks as though this species has moved south in an attempt to get back to the Continent, unlike the Red Admiral, some of which appear to stay on in our area of the UK and 'over winter', as has happened in recent years, probably due to global warming. However, the severity of the last 2 winters does make one wonder if it is worth it for them, but the first sighting earlier this year was on the 18th January 2011 at West Hallam (Brian Hobby) so they are capable of withstanding even our harshest Derbyshire winter – it's worth remembering that when we are sitting in front of the fire with the snow falling outside and having a drink to keep warm!!!

Update 32 - 5th October 2011

The hot and sunny weather of the last week has slightly compensated for the poor conditions experienced during July and August of this year, and this is reflected in the fact that 13 species of butterflies have been noted so far during October 2011. Since the last update, a few more Brimstones were noted in the County with records from Kirk Ireton (Dave Williams) and Parwich (Ray Walker), whilst singletons of Painted Lady butterflies were noted at Mickleover on the 27th September (Max & Christine Maughan) and also in our garden at Allestree on the 1st October 2011 (Pat & Ken Orpe). There have been some reasonable counts of Small Tortoiseshells recently, especially in the Peak District, with 20 no seen on the 29th September at Curbar/Froggatt Edges (Rod Dunn) and an excellent count of 37 no in the garden of Angie Seymour at Whaley Bridge on the 1st October 2011, so let's hope that many of these insects survive the winter in these northern parts of the County. Also seen in the Peak District recently were late records of Small Heath at Bonsall Moor on the 28th September (Angie Seymour) and also at Curbar Edge on the 30th September (Elaine Woods).- however, the latest County record for this species is the 14th October (2003) from the Longshaw Estate. Meanwhile, in the Wirksworth area there have been sightings of fresh Common Blues on the 30th September at both Gang Mine NR (Gary Atkins) and at nearby Stoney Wood (Pat & Ken Orpe) so it would appear that these are third brood specimens. Another species that seems to have benefitted from the fine weather recently is the Small Copper with counts of 10 individuals from Bar Brook on the 27th September (Nikki Mehadevan) and 9 at Crich Chase on the 28th September 2011 (Kieron Huston). A surprising sighting of a Small Copper was made by Sue Jones when a singleton appeared in her garden at Mickleover on the 3rd October 2011. Finally, late sightings of both Meadow Brown and a 'tatty' Brown Argus were noted by Pat and myself at Drakelow NR on the 1st October 2011, the latter species being quite a surprise as there was a third brood individual seen at the site last year on the 11th October 2010 (Mike & Rose Williams; Tom Cockburn).

The last sighting that I have received of a Wall Brown was on the 29th September 2011 at Longstone Edge when a worn individual was seen by Dave Mallon. A number of observers have commented on sightings of 'dwarf' individuals of both Small Tortoiseshell and Small Copper – this usually occurs when their life cycle has been accelerated due to a hot and sunny spell of weather, which is just what we have experienced recently. It sometimes also occurs in the Spring when similar 'dwarf' Orange Tips are seen, again after an unusually hot spell of weather, something of which we may well have to wait for a long time to come!!! However, the strong run of westerly winds may yet send further Monarchs into the UK as an individual was seen in Dorset on the 28th September 2011, and the current weather forecast suggests that autumn is well and truly on the way.

Finally, on behalf of Butterfly Conservation, a large 'thank you' to all the butterfly enthusiasts who gave their time and effort to submit records under the 'Big Butterfly Count' held in late July 2011 – apparently 34,000 people took part across the UK, (compared to 10,000 in 2010), and there were over 2,200 butterfly records for Derbyshire (compared to approx 700 in 2010) – you have done us proud again!!!!

Update 31 - 30th September 2011

This year will no doubt be remembered for the extremes of weather conditions cumulating with the very high temperatures of the last few days, with 29c being noted in Derby today. If only we had seen weather like this in July and August 2011 then no doubt populations of butterflies would have been much higher than those seen in the past months. Nevertheless, at least 15 species have been noted since the last Update including further sightings of the Painted Lady butterfly. An individual was seen at Mickleover on the 27th September 2011 (Colin Bowler) and 3 were seen by Angie & Alan Seymour at Bonsall Moor/ Wensley on the 28th September 2011, which suggests that they were possibly 'hill topping' on a migration southwards. Apparently there are many Red Admirals along the south and south west coasts of England feeding up on plants such as ivy so as to prepare for a southward migration to the Continent. Let's hope that some stay here in Derbyshire and 'over winter' as they seem to have done in the last few years.

Interestingly the Brimstone appears to have been tempted out of hibernation this week with records from Hilton on the 24th September 2011 (Alan Roe), Denby on the 28th September 2011 (Jim Steele) and also at Drakelow NR on the same day (Pat & Ken Orpe). Surprisingly, a couple of very tatty Holly Blue butterflies were seen by us at Drakelow NR on the 28th September together with 2 Meadow Browns, although the last County record for this species is the 9th October (2006), also at Drakelow NR.

Unfortunately, there have been no further sightings received for the Wall Brown since the last Update, and based on records received to date for this year, this species is now down to 20 tetrads, compared with 39 for 2010. So, since the year 2000, the Wall Brown distribution in the County has crashed by approximately 82%, with an even worse (89%) crash in numbers of individual butterflies. This once common butterfly has now disappeared from South Derbyshire and is also virtually absent from the 'brownfield' sites in the North East of the County. So, let's hope that this fine weather allows for a third brood of this species to emerge during October so as to increase populations, as some other butterflies may go on to produce additional broods, such as Holly Blue; Common Blue; Brown Argus and even Orange Tip – only with your help in recording will we know the answer!!!

Update 30 - 22nd September 2011

This last week has seen an increase in sightings of Painted Lady butterflies mostly on plants in gardens, such as michaelmas daisies, verbena and buddleia, and also on plants at the occasional garden centre, including records from Mickleover (Sue Jones), Heanor (Paul Tomblin) and Swarkestone (Brian Hallam).

Today (22nd September 2011) has produced a sighting of a Humming Bird Hawk Moth in the garden of Mick Pollard at Ilkeston, and earlier in the week, Colin Bowler saw a Clouded Yellow at Pasture Lane in Long Eaton, so the question is whether these sightings have originated from a recent migration or whether they are as a result of the offspring of earlier migrations in to southern England? I think that probably the latter is the answer, but as the forecast is for a 'Spanish Plume' of hot air to arrive across our part of the UK this weekend it will be interesting to see if numbers of these striking insects increase even further as a result of a direct migration.

Further north in Derbyshire it is pleasing to note that Wall Brown butterflies are still being recorded with sightings from Longstone Edge on the 15th September 2011 (Dave Mallon) and yesterday (21st September) from the garden of Angie Seymour at Whaley Bridge, so, hopefully there is still time to see this scarce butterfly in our County this weekend.

Despite the fact that the autumn equinox is virtually upon us, there are still a number of butterflies that can be seen now with Speckled Wood, Common Blue, Small Copper and hopefully Wall Brown in the general countryside, and the nymphalids (Red Admiral; Comma: Small Tortoiseshell; Peacock) in gardens, parks and garden centres, not forgetting the occasional White butterfly as well!!!

Update 29 - 16th September 2011

Although there have been no reports of Monarch butterflies since the departure of hurricane 'Katia' the after effects has seen a large windfall of many plums, apples and pears much to the approval of the Red Admiral and Comma which were seen feeding in the Ilkeston garden of Mick Pollard on the 13th September 2011, despite the still windy conditions.

However, there have been some sightings of migrants this week including 2 Clouded Yellow butterflies at Pasture Lane, Long Eaton on the 15th September 2011 (Richard Rogers) and also a Painted Lady seen feeding on Lavender in the garden of Mick Pollard, again on the 13th September, and another seen in our garden in Allestree (Pat & Ken Orpe) both yesterday (15th) and today the 16th September 2011, each time feeding on Verbena Bonariensis.

The above 2 plants are part of the top five plants recommended by Butterfly Conservation to attract butterflies in to the garden – the others being Buddleia (no surprises there), Perennial Wallflower (Bowles Mauve) and Marjoram (Oregano).

An interesting fact has become apparent recently regarding the second brood Wall Brown butterflies as sightings since the 9th September 2011 have been of fresh individuals, which suggests that, due to inclement weather recently, their lifecycle has been interrupted. The first sighting of this butterfly was on the 2nd August 2011 at Longstone Edge, where recent sightings have been of fresh individuals as well. Other records this week have come from Deep Dale, Sheldon on the 10th September 2011 (Nick Law), Whaley Bridge on the 12th (Angie Seymour) and on the 15th September 2011 at Bonsall Moor (Ken Orpe). The sites where the most butterflies have been seen are all at around the 300 m elevation mark – Longstone Edge, Bonsall Moor and Alport Heights, which suggests that a more temperate climate at these rocky outcrops is a requirement for the future stability of the population of this species in Derbyshire. Any further sightings within the County would be greatly appreciated.

Update 28 - 11th September 2011

It is not very often that I ask recorders to look out for Monarch butterflies in this part of the UK, but as the tail end of hurricane 'Katia' arrives, it is just possible that individuals of this large spectacular migrant from America could be seen locally.

During their migration southwards along the eastern seaboard of the USA towards their wintering forests in Mexico, they can get caught up in large turbulent storms and then be transported across the Atlantic Ocean, as a result of which they are seen fairly regularly in the Scilly Isles during the autumn. Back in 1996, the after effects of hurricane 'Lilli' resulted in a sighting of a Monarch at Matlock here in Derbyshire, so please look out for this large impressive butterfly – it is deep orange in colour with black markings and white spots and is instantly recognisable!!

Meanwhile, a number of the new offspring of earlier Painted Lady migrants have been seen locally with sightings of individuals at Belper on the 4th September 2011 (Daniel Martin), from Chellaston LNR on the 9th September (Mark Sherwood) and also on the 9th at Brailsford (Mike Williams).

It is pleasing to note that the Wall Brown butterfly is still on the wing this weekend with records from Longstone Edge on the 9th September 2011 (Dave Mallon), and, on the same date, Rod Dunn and I saw 4 individuals at Bonsall Moor (3 males + 1 female). We observed 2 males spiralling round in a manner very similar to male Speckled Woods when their territories are invaded, and it does make one wonder whether there is any correlation between the rise of the Speckled Wood and the fall of the Wall Brown.

Unfortunately, at the moment we do not know the answer to this conundrum.



Update 27 - 6th September 2011

Since the last update a number of interesting butterfly sightings have been received including confirmation that the Essex Skipper has finally reached the dales, when an individual was seen by Paul Townsend at Coombs Dale on the 14th August 2011 - this was however expected, as previously there had been a sighting of this species back in 2008 at nearby Baslow. Also further sightings of Painted Lady butterflies were made during August when Brian Cuttall saw individuals at both Wingerworth on the 18th and at Westhouses on the 24th of that month. More recently, prior to its hibernation, the Brimstone was noted at Darley Dale on the 1st September 2011 (Rod Dunn) and at Langley Common on the 3rd September 2011 (Kath Patrick & Nick Brown). Also a very unexpected sighting of a Small Heath was noted by Mark Sherwood at Chellaston LNR on the 1st September 2011 - this being the first record for this species at that site. It is also very unusual to see Small Heath in SK33 (the Derby 10 km square).

The updated news on the status of the Wall Brown is very mixed despite recent records from Youlgrave (Mike & Mary Gwilliam), Pin Dale (Dave Mallon), and also the sighting of a very tatty female at Alport Heights on the 4th September 2011 (Colin Bowler). On the negative side, there have been no sightings from Taddington Mere (Tony Pioli), and two experienced recorders from the North East of the County (Paul Townsend & Phil Gilbert) have both failed to see the Wall Brown on the many 'brownfield' sites in that part of Derbyshire, so unfortunately the provisional distribution map for 2011 shows records from only 17 tetrads within the County (none in either the South or the North East, and a couple from the Peak Fringe).

If the weather improves later this week there will probably be only a few more opportunities to look for this very vulnerable butterfly during 2011 - your further help would be very much appreciated.

Update 26 - 1st September 2011

What a difference a new month makes to the weather!!! - thank goodness we have had some sunshine today at last. It was hardly surprising that the Met Office has advised us that this 'summer' was the coldest since 1993 - I think the very poor weather around the middle of July has had a real effect on butterfly numbers, particularly those that were about to emerge as a second brood. Still, the number of species remains quite high now with the Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and the Small Heath still flying in the Peak District, with the latter two species being seen in the South of the County as well. Small numbers of Peacocks and Brimstones have been noted taking nectar before hibernating whilst slightly more Small Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals seem to be about as well. Today, I noted a fresh Comma at Aston Brickyards so now all the expected butterflies have emerged this year in Derbyshire, and Dot Morson even had a mint Painted Lady at Coton in the Elms on the 25th August 2011, so there is still time to see one of these impressive migrants in the County. Another late species on the wing in the Peak District is the Purple Hairstreak when Dave Mallon saw 6 at Brockholes Wood on the 23rd August 2011, whilst Nick Brown and Kath Patrick had a Holly Blue today at Langley Common. No further reports of the Brown Argus from the Peak District but the 'migrating' version of this species can still be seen further South in the County, together with a few Common Blues.

The recent wet and dull weather has not helped the status of one of our most threatened resident - the Wall Brown. Since the last update, searches have been made at Gang Mine near Wirksworth (Gary Atkins); Deep Dale, Sheldon (Kieron Huston), Crich Chase Meadow (Kieron Huston); Grattan Dale (Ken Orpe) and quarries near to the Stone Centre, Wirksworth (Ken Orpe), all to no avail. The main areas that appear to have a few of this species flying at the moment are Alport Heights (Nick Brown and Kath Patrick) and Longstone Edge (Bill Smyllie). A most bizarre sighting of a female Wall Brown was made at Whaley Bridge on Bank Holiday Monday the 28th August 2011 by Angie Seymour when the said butterfly was found dead on her Porch floor. Let's hope this butterfly managed to lay her eggs before taking a suicidal flight during the weather on a British Bank Holiday Monday!!!

Update 25 - 24th August 2011

First of all, many thanks to all the recorders who have taken up the challenge to check sites in Derbyshire for the Wall Brown during the last week. As expected, the results are somewhat mixed with 'no show' reports from potential sites at Froggatt; Curbar; and White Edges (Max & Christine Maughan); Rainster Rocks, near Brassington (Ken Orpe); and Crich Chase, near Ambergate (Kieron Huston). However, on the positive side, a total of about two dozen individuals have been noted at the following locations, mainly in the Peak District :- Cocking Tor (Frank Hudson); Alport Heights (Kieron Huston & John Barker); Longcliffe (Ken Orpe); Cavendish Mill (Brian Hallam); Longstone Edge (Brian Hallam & Kieron Huston); and Chinley (Frank Bell). Worryingly, the sightings are mainly of singletons at the moment, but hopefully populations will increase as the flight period can extend in to the middle of September, and beyond if the weather is good. The 'hot spot' is still Longstone Edge where up to 5 individuals have been seen on a single visit and this confirms that 'rocky outcrops' appear to be the main habitat requirement. Your continued help to monitor the fortunes of this very vulnerable butterfly in our County would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, for those of you who receive BBC TV East Midlands Today there is a brief feature on our local butterflies during the news programme between 6.30 pm and 7 pm on Thursday 25th August 2011.

However, don't blink otherwise you might miss it!!!!

Update 24 - 15th August 2011

The scarcity of butterflies at the moment makes it hard to believe that it is only mid August, but a combination of an early Spring and the relatively poor weather that we have experienced since the third week of July 2011 has seriously affected the number of butterflies that are currently on the wing. Most observers are commenting on the lack of butterflies, including on the buddleias in gardens, with only a few Peacocks, Red Admirals and the odd new Small Tortoiseshell, so the chances of an improvement to this situation this year look fairly remote. Despite this, second brood species are now starting to appear with records since the last update of Small Heath in the south of the County from Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn) and Long Eaton (Richard Rogers), and today (15th August 2011)

Dave Mallon saw a second brood Common Blue at Longstone Edge in the Peak District, where he also noted a second brood Dingy Skipper.

Also seen there today were 6 Wall Brown butterflies, but there has been no further sightings received of this species since the last update. In view of this serious predicament could I ask that you forward any further sightings of this now scarce species to me as its very existence within our County is 'on the line'. To help recorders, I have listed below the areas where the second brood Wall Brown was seen during 2010, so if you are in any of these parts of the County during the next few weeks, please look out and advise accordingly, even if there is a 'no show'. The areas are :- Long Dale; Coombs Dale; Millers Dale; Biggin Dale; Deep Dale, Sheldon; Rose End Meadows; Alport Heights, Wirksworth; Crich Chase; Hope; Foolow; New Mills; Chinley; and in the north east of the County at Linacre Reservoir; Eckington; Brampton; Newbold and Grassmoor.

Additionally, the first brood of 2011 produced sightings at Ladybower Wood; Bradwell; Buxworth; Taddington Moor; and near to Gang Mine in Wirksworth. There have been no sightings at all in the south of the County since 2008, and news on the research to establish what is causing this serious decline is not good, so at the moment all we can do is monitor its existence and hope that it doesn't follow the fortunes of the Large Blue back in 1979.

Update 23 - 4th August 2011

It is pleasing to report that sightings of the new brood Wall Brown butterfly were made on the 2nd August 2011 at Longstone Edge (Frank Bell & Brian Hallam), albeit in low numbers at this stage. So hopefully this scarce resident butterfly will fare better this month rather than its weak showing in the first brood. The recent poor numbers of both Common Blue, and to a lesser extent Small Copper, may be due to the wet and cloudy period of the third week in July, which is when the second brood Common Blues usually appear in lowland Derbyshire. This period of inclement weather may well have finished off the majority of the Common Blues in the Peak District as well, as when I visited 2 sites in the area earlier this week, there were none to be seen, nor in fact any of the Brown Argus that is resident in these parts as well. The annual gripe and hysteria about the Ragwort plant has seen a resurgence recently and a lot of unnecessary clearance of this plant has had an effect on numbers of both Gatekeepers and Small Coppers as it is an important nectar plant, let alone as the foodplant for the Cinnabar moth caterpillars that rely on it. If you want more information on the plant go to the following website www.ragwortfacts.com



A sighting of a Dingy Skipper was made this week at the Peter Fidler NR near to Bolsover that could have been a natural second brood individual, but unfortunately this site is prone to the efforts of the 'breed it and release it' brigade, so all records from here must be treated with caution. However, it is known that very occasionally the Dingy Skipper does have a partial second brood in our County so any further sightings of this species would be appreciated.

Red Admirals seem to be appearing more regular now, often on buddleias where they more or less have the monopoly of the plant, due to lack of Peacock butterflies presently. Many observers are commenting on the lack of butterflies generally and it may be due to the extremes of weather that we have had this year, which suited some species (such as the Ringlet and Dingy Skipper), but seems to have had a detrimental effect on many other species. Let's hope that the remainder of this month shows that second brood butterflies can recover from the currently pretty dire situation that they are in.

PS I have attached a photograph that I took recently of horses in a field on Eaton Bank near Duffield – I don't think that the farmer there is worried very much about the effects of ragwort on his livestock!!!

Update 22 - 31st July 2011

Following the dull and wet weather around the third week of July 2011, numbers of the Ringlet butterfly have diminished quite dramatically with just a few individuals about now, mainly in the Peak District, including Barber Booth near Edale (Frank Hudson). However, numbers of the Gatekeeper are now probably at their highest and it's distribution within the County is still increasing with recent sightings from the High Peak, including Whaley Bridge (Angie Seymour) and the Goyt Valley (Sandra Douglas). July has seen an improvement in the numbers of the Small Tortoiseshell throughout the area, but the new brood of the Peacock is somewhat disappointing with very few sites reaching double figures, the maximum that I have heard about being 15 individuals at Kedleston Park on the 26th July 2011 (Kath Patrick & Nick Brown). In the south of the County, both the Holly Blue and the Essex Skipper are doing reasonably well, with the latter species still making progress north and west within the County.

However, on the negative side, both the Brown Argus and the Wall Brown have not had a good year so far in the Peak District – the former species being recorded at 12 locations with an approximate total of only 70 individuals seen, whilst the Wall Brown first brood was seen at only 8 sites with about 20 individuals seen, so hopefully the second brood, which is due out about now, will show a vast improvement to the status of one of our most vulnerable resident butterfly species.

Sightings of the White Letter Hairstreak seem to have finished following the wet period around the third week of July but at least the Purple Hairstreak is still flying with recent records from the National Forest in South Derbyshire and also Kedleston Park (Kath Patrick & Nick Brown). What was a first for Pat and I yesterday was the sight of 4 individuals of this BAP species flying around young oaks at West Hallam Ash Tip at noon. I have monitored this site for 25 years and I have seen how these oaks have now grown to about 12 feet high so it was great to see a female egg laying on twigs at head height, and just goes to show that they will use smaller oaks in a sheltered hedgerow as well as 70 feet high veterans. It also helps to avoid a stiff neck whilst trying to look for them!!!

On the migrant scene, there have been sightings of up to 4 individuals of Red Admirals noted recently on flowering buddleia bushes but the only sighting of Painted Lady was on the 25th July when Pat and I saw an individual, again on buddleia, in a village near to Ashbourne. This butterfly was in pristine condition but very small, which suggests that it was the offspring of earlier migrating Painted Lady butterflies. Finally, Pat was delighted to see a Clouded

Yellow butterfly on the 28th July 2011 but it was just over the border near to Burton, in East Staffordshire, so there is a chance that this species will once again make an appearance in Derbyshire – let's hope so and very soon!!!!

Update 21 - 15th July 2011

Since the last update earlier this week, a further 2 Painted Lady butterflies have been seen in the County, both of which occurred on the 11th July 2011 – one at Carsington Water (Ray & Margaret Perry, per Gary Atkins) and one at Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn, per Mike Williams). So at least we have had a few sightings of this very mobile and striking migrant butterfly in Derbyshire during this month.

The Ringlet butterfly is still making rapid progress throughout the County this year with recent sightings from Wheston and Hay Dale (Paul Townsend), and yesterday (14th July 2011), Pat and I noted this species at both Grattan Dale and Lathkill Dale NNR. This last site has been continually monitored by a butterfly transect since 1979 and this year is the first time that it has been recorded there. Further proof of it's continued movement in the County was noted today (15th July 2011) when we also saw a couple of individuals on a roadside verge at Sudbury in the SW corner of Derbyshire. This 10 km square (SK13) is often referred to as the 'prairie land' with very few areas suitable for butterflies, so it was pleasing to note Essex Skipper at the same location as well. This species is difficult to distinguish in the field from the Small Skipper but the Essex Skipper has jet black tips to the underside of it's antennae as opposed to brown tips in the case of the Small Skipper. Whilst the Essex Skipper is undoubtedly making progress in the County it seems to have stalled in it's movement in to the Peak District, but the next couple of weeks might produce some sightings from this part of Derbyshire. In the meantime, records have been received this week from Thurvaston (John Abrehart) and Foremarke Reservoir (Brian Hallam). Also noted during the last few days were new brood Common Blue butterflies at Erewash Field, Long Eaton (Richard Rogers) and good numbers of Purple Hairstreak butterflies at both Allestree Park (Colin Bowler) and Chaddesden Wood (Martin Roome). An individual of this species at Drakelow NR on the 11th July 2011 by Tom Cockburn was also a notable occurrence. Whilst the weather forecast for this weekend is not good, the charity 'Butterfly Conservation' is launching it's nationwide 'Big Butterfly Count' whereby recorders are asked to spend 15 minutes noting the butterflies seen from a location of their choice. Fortunately, the period lasts from the 16th to the 31st July 2011 and individuals can submit on line as many different counts from as many different locations as they like. Last year when the scheme was launched, over 10,000 people took part and over 210,000 butterflies and day flying moths were recorded, so if you would like to take part in this years project, log on to ; - www.bigbutterflycount.org
You all know how important your sightings are!!!

Update 20 - 11th July 2011

Since the last update, I'm pleased to report that there has been a couple of sightings of Painted Lady butterflies, with one at Cromford (per Richard Taylor) and another at Taddington Moor on the 6th July 2011 (Tony Pioli). Also, I have today received an email via Nick Brown and Martin Roome that Graham Langley saw a Clouded Yellow in Derby on the 2nd July 2011, so at last we have had a few sightings of the rarer migrants in the County. Red Admirals continue to be seen on a regular basis now and there were 3 seen on a buddleia bush at Aston Brickyards today by me, together with a new brood Peacock. This latter species was also noted in his garden today at Mickleover by Colin Bowler, so they are now emerging in the south of the County a little earlier than the usual date of mid July. Like 2010, the Ringlet is having another good year, both in numbers and distribution, with more records now coming from gardens – Nick Brown and Kath Patrick at Kirk Langley; John Abrehart at Thurvaston and Mick Pollard at Ilkeston, being 3 examples. Further north, this species is now common in the Wirksworth area with large numbers seen at Stoney Wood and the High Peak Trail (Paul Bennett), and at nearby Rose End Meadows (Steve Plant & Gary Atkins). In the Peak District, records have been received from Hartington Meadows; Millers Dale Quarry, the Goyt Valley and Taddington Moor (Tony Pioli) so the message is to check all 'Meadow Browns' as the Ringlet is making a determined effort to become even more successful than our most widespread summer butterfly. Now this begs the question – are we witnessing a similar event that occurred some 10 years ago when the demise of the Wall Brown coincided with the vast expansion of the Speckled Wood in Derbyshire? Back then, the Ringlet was seen at only 23 locations, whereas in the year 2010 records came from 120 tetrads – a 5 times increase in range. Approximate individual butterflies seen is even more dramatic – 200 compared with over 3,000 in 2010, a 15 times increase. During this period the Meadow Brown has started to decrease slightly in it's distribution and the last 2 years has seen a significant decrease in numbers at some sites in the County. It is thanks to all your recording efforts that we are able to gather data and then provide statistics to check on the performance of our local butterflies during these very interesting times that we are living in.

Update 19 - 4th July 2011

First of all, thanks to all the recorders who have submitted sightings to me during the last 3 weeks – I will acknowledge and also reply to individual queries as soon as possible.

June 2011 eventually became an 'average June' weather wise despite large differences in both temperature and amounts of sunshine during the month. Neither the Gatekeeper or the Essex Skipper were noted before the 23rd of the month – the former was first seen on the 29th June 2011 at Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), followed in the Peak District at Monsal Dale on the 2nd July 2011 (Sandra Douglas).

The Essex Skipper was first noted on the 1st July 2011 at Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn) and then on the 3rd July 2011 at Friargate Station in Derby (Pat & Ken Orpe). Also seen on the 3rd July 2011 was a single Purple Hairstreak on oak in Breadsall Cutting (Ken Orpe), so at the moment all the expected new species have emerged, including new broods of both Comma and Holly Blue butterflies. Meanwhile in the Peak District, the last sightings of the Dingy Skipper were noted on the 14th June 2011 at Coombs Dale (Dave Clay) and also at Longstone Edge (Frank Bell & Brian Hallam). This date also saw good numbers of Dark Green Fritillary butterflies emerge with counts of up to 25 individuals at a number of sites, and this species continues to be doing well during the current spell of hot weather. Not so good is the migrant situation, with only Humming Bird Hawk moths being noted in the County during the period 19th – 29th June 2011, despite the recent 'Spanish Plume' of hot air, and no records were received for either Painted Lady or Clouded Yellow butterflies. Having just returned from the Mediterranean area, it was disappointing not to see many of the above butterflies and there were no Painted Lady butterflies seen heading north from Africa at Europa Point in Gibraltar. Mind you, a sudden change of wind direction could alter things – let's hope it does, and

soon!!.

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