

News from Derbyshire

2012 updates from Ken Orpe, County Recorder for Derbyshire.
Updates for 2011 can be found [HERE](#) or 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 39 - 20th December 2012

Since the last Update there have been sightings of the Peacock butterfly flying here in Derbyshire when Ben Young saw an individual on the 8th of December at Middleton by Wirksworth, and then Mike Williams saw one fly past the main bird hide at Drakelow NR on the 9th of December 2012.

The photo of the hibernating Peacocks that I sent out with Update no 38 which were hibernating in a Barn Owl Box, created a lot of interest from members of this egroup, so I thought that I would mention some of the places where butterflies have been seen hibernating locally. From my own experiences, I have seen Peacocks hanging from the ceiling of a bird hide in Elvaston CP in the past, and I have seen Small Tortoiseshells hanging from the ceiling of my garden shed, but the only Comma that I have witnessed emerging from hibernation was in January 2011 at a NR in South Yorkshire when an individual emerged out from ivy foliage, which was wrapped around a tree, and the butterfly then flew off down a woodland ride. I have also seen a Red Admiral emerge from the underside of the eaves of a house in Hilton in January 2007, fly on to the roof tiles to get the sun to warm it up, and then fly off presumably to look for nectar, but I have never seen a Brimstone in hibernation at all – they usually fly into the dense foliage of evergreens such as holly and ivy during the early part of the autumn where they remain undisturbed until early/mid March.

Marion Bryce informs me that she saw about 20 hibernating Herald moths in a mine at Middleton in February 2010, and also Peacocks in an artificial bat roost at Ruddington, Notts in February 2011.

John Barker disturbed a hibernating Peacock whilst trimming his leylandii bushes in his garden in Allestree during November 2012, and Dan Martin uncovered one in a folded tent at the back of his shed in Belper last winter. What is really interesting is that Alan & Karen Roe have seen a good number of hibernating Peacocks in a tunnel on the Calke Park Estate during the last couple of winters, so like those in the Barn Owl Box, they are using the same place each year, although, of course, they are different butterflies. Mind you it would be hard to beat the site that Malcolm Neal found hibernating Small Tortoiseshells last winter – there were dozens clustered around the edges of the ceilings to the entrance and ground floor of the former Hunting Lodge at Lyme Park in Cheshire (see photo of the Lodge below), so they certainly know how to hibernate in style in that County!!!



So if you live in the N W of Derbyshire and/or the adjoining part of Cheshire, it might be worth a walk to check them out soon and work off those extra calories that we tend to put on during the Christmas period. Thank you all once again for your support this year and have a great Christmas.

Update 38 - 12th December 2012

The increasing interest in conserving and recording our local lepidoptera has resulted in my Updates now being sent

to over 200 individuals including representatives of Natural England, Local Authorities in the area, Local Wildlife Trusts, including Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, Local Universities, Butterfly Conservation, and Severn Trent Water as well as recorders who represent many wildlife groups locally, so I would like to say a big 'thank you' for supporting my work and efforts over the last year, which as you all know, weather wise, has been quite a challenge.

Just when we all thought that the 2012 butterfly season was over, reports came in of 2 individual butterflies being observed, with a Small Tortoiseshell being noted at Pebley Pond in the N E of the County by Roy Frost on the 9th of December, and a Peacock was seen at Ambergate by Karen Peat on the 2nd of December. Unfortunately, neither of these observations have beaten the latest County record for these species as the Small Tortoiseshell last date is the 27th of December (2011), and the latest date for the Peacock is the 22nd of December (2007). The only other 2 butterfly species that have been seen in Derbyshire during December are the Comma, the last date being the 4th of December (1990) and the over wintering Red Admiral, whose last date is the 24th of December (2008), which must have been quite a surprise on Christmas Eve that year!! Now that brings me on to any late butterfly records for 2012? I am producing an in depth illustrated article on the state of Derbyshire's butterflies for the next Newsletter of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, so, if you haven't sent me your butterfly records as yet, I would really appreciate them before the end of December 2012.



Finally spare a thought for the butterflies that are tucked away in hibernation – the photo above was taken by Mike Williams in a barn owl box on an estate in South Derbyshire (during 2008). Well Mike has seen Peacocks again this winter hibernating in a similar box – I'm not sure how they will get on should the barn owl arrive to settle down for a knap!!!

Update 37 - 24th November 2012

It was great to meet up with a number of the members of this egroup at the AGM and Members Day of Butterfly Conservation last weekend, and from the emails that I have since received, everyone really enjoyed the occasion. Pat did a video of my talk on the 'Changing Butterflies of Derbyshire' so if anyone would like a CD of it then please send me an email with your postal address.

In what has been a stormy week on the weather scene, it has been quite a surprise that 3 butterflies have been noted in the area with a Red Admiral seen on the 17th of November just over the County border in Sheffield (Shaun Taylor), a Comma noted at the Avenue Washlands NR in Chesterfield on the 18th of November (Ron Turner), and amazingly a Brimstone seen in the garden of Tony Davison at Melbourne on the 23rd of November, this sighting being 12 days later than the previous record for this species, which was on the 11th November (2001).

Early in the new year I intend to publish a comparison of the last 6 years of butterfly activity in the County with that of 2012 so we can then see how bad this year really was, so I would be pleased to receive any further butterfly records from you for Derbyshire for 2012, in order that the information will be as accurate as possible.

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 July/ August 2012 – apparently 25,000 people took part across the UK, (compared to 34,000 in 2011 and 10,000 in 2010), and there were over 1,450 butterfly records for Derbyshire (compared to 2,200 in 2011 and 700 in 2010) – a great effort considering the very poor weather and the lack of opportunities to do a count - you have done us proud again!!!!

Update 36 - 12th November 2012

Despite last month being the coldest October since 2003, this did not prevent a number of our butterfly species being seen up to the end of that month, and indeed there have been some species sighted during November 2012. The last Small Whites were noted on the 27th October 2012 when Simon Beavis saw 2 individuals on his allotment in the suburbs of Derby, whilst in addition 4 other species have already been recorded this month. A Peacock, together with a Small Tortoiseshell, were both seen by Jim Steele at Shipley Lagoons on the 5th November, and a further Small Tortoiseshell was noted on the 30th October at Eyes Meadow, Duffield by Mick Ball. A reasonable number of

Comma butterflies have been observed with records from Allestree (Colin Bowler) and Fenny Bentley (Paul Mollatt) on the 5th November, and also at Cromford Canal, Whatstandwell (Ian Wilson, per Dave Clay), Aston Brickyards (Pat & Ken Orpe), and Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), all on the 7th November.

Over-wintering Red Admirals have also been seen recently with records from Heanor on the 29th of October (Colin Penny), Findern (Lindy Ellis) and Calke Park (Roger Martin) both on the 2nd of November, with the latest being at Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn) on the 8th of November 2012.

Finally, a couple of dates for your diary for this coming week :-

Friday the 16th of November 2012

'In Pursuit of the Ridiculous' – BBC Radio 4 at 1.45 pm. Neil Hume tells Matthew Oates the lengths to which he is prepared to go to catch a glimpse of his 'Imperial Majesty' – the Purple Emperor.

Saturday the 17th November 2012

The National AGM and Members Day of Butterfly Conservation (BC) is being held in our area at the Nottingham Belfry Hotel, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham NG8 6PY. (Woodhouse Way is the A6002, off the A610, close to Junction 26 of the M1 Motorway). The event is free to both members and non members of B C, and doors open at 9.30 am for a 10 am start. There will be stalls selling books, artwork, photo cards as well as displays from the local East Midlands Branch, including what's been happening in Derbyshire this year, and other wildlife organisations. There is a full and informative programme of illustrated talks including 'The State of Britain's Moths' by Richard Fox, 'My Butterfly Journey' by Patrick Barkham, and 'The Changing Butterflies of Derbyshire' by a certain Ken Orpe. Full details of the day's events can be obtained by logging on to the B C website at :-

<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org>

It is a great day out and an opportunity to meet fellow enthusiasts and also talk with both the local and national experts on Lepidoptera.

Update 35 - 25th October 2012

The fine weather over the weekend of the 20th & 21st October 2012 certainly enabled recorders to get out and about in our Derbyshire countryside and many were rewarded with sightings of butterflies. A total of 8 species were seen including numerous Red Admirals, Commas and to a lesser extent Small Tortoiseshells. In addition, both Small White and Speckled Wood were noted on the 20th October 2012 in the garden of Angie & Alan Seymour at Whaley Bridge, together with a Peacock butterfly. This latter species was also seen on the 21st October 2012 at both Castleton (Rod Dunn) and Curbar Edge (Nikki Mahadevan), but the surprise was the sighting of Brimstones at both Thurstaston (John Abrehart) and Millers Dale (Sandra Douglas) over last weekend, as this butterfly is normally one of the first to go into hibernation in this part of the UK. The other butterfly species that was noted was a Small Copper, which was seen at Buxworth, in the far N W of Derbyshire, by Angie Seymour on the 21st October 2012, a few weeks earlier than the County last date of the 16th November, so hopefully this butterfly could still be seen well into next month.

Bill Bacon of Butterfly Conservation (East Midlands) has produced his Annual Report on the results of the Dingy Skipper Survey in Lowland Derbyshire for this year. Fortunately it was one of the few butterfly species whose flight period managed to coincide with one of the brief dry and sunny spells that we had, and the provisional distribution map for this year shows that sightings were made at 58 tetrads, compared to 63 in 2011, and individual numbers were slightly up from around 600 last year to approximately 650 during 2012. If you would like a copy of this information then please send me an email and I will respond accordingly.

Finally, a Scientific Report produced by Butterfly Conservation, C E H and Others, was released last week on the subject of the 'Painted Lady Migration – Secrets Unveiled'. Apparently these striking insects return south in the autumn at an altitude of 500 metres and at speeds up to 30 mph, and during 2009 approximately 11 million entered the UK and about 26 million departed, which again illustrates how important favourable weather conditions are vital for the continued survival of our butterflies.

For full details of the information, please go to the Butterfly Conservation Website – link as follows:-

http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/article/9/307/painted_lady_migration_secrets_revealed_.html

Let's hope that the Scientists are able to unlock the mystery of the decline of the Wall Brown soon!!!

Update 34 - 18th October 2012

Although there have not been any new butterfly species noted this month since the last Update, there has been quite a number of sightings this last week in the County. What was of particular interest on the 14th October 2012 was a record of a Painted Lady seen by Paul Shaw at Dale Abbey, despite a sharp frost earlier that morning. Also seen there by Paul was a Speckled Wood, together with a Small Copper in nearby Kirk Hallam. Further north there were also sightings of this latter species when an individual was seen by Steve Orridge on the 9th of the month at Lightwood, Buxton, and also on the 14th a further late butterfly of this species was noted at Buxworth by Angie Seymour. Also a late flying Small White was seen in the Peak District by Paul Mollatt at Thorpe on the 12th October 2012, and both Large and Small Whites were seen on each day of the 12th and 13th of October 2012 by Simon Beavis on his allotment near to the centre of Derby.

It looks as though the weather for the next few days is forecast to remain mild with sunny spells so further sightings of the Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral could well be expected, with even the possibility of the odd Peacock and Brimstone, so let's hope that the season continues for a good while longer as we have been somewhat starved this year of seeing these fascinating insects.

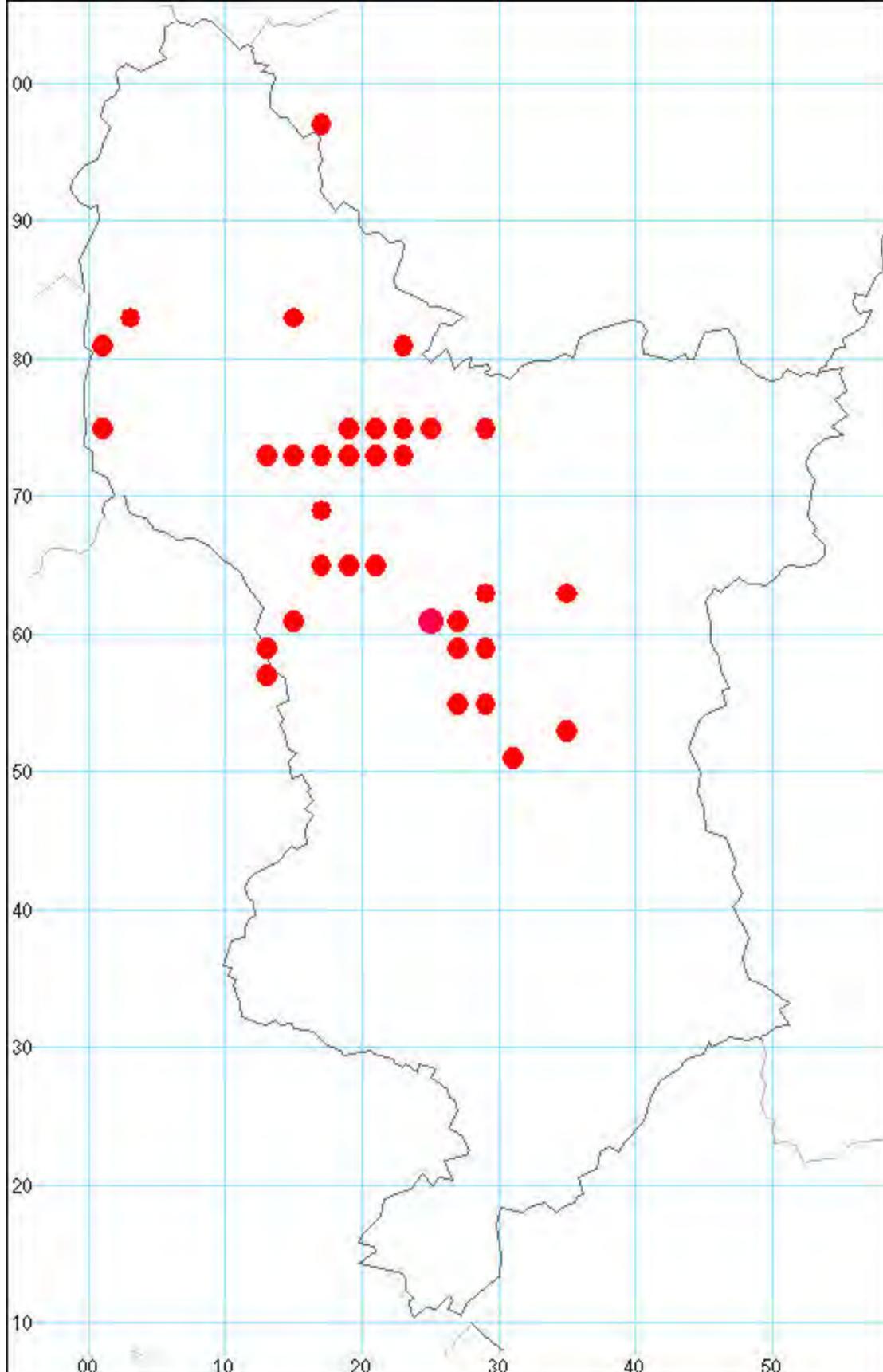
Update 33 - 10th October 2012

It is pleasing to report that the number of butterfly species seen so far this month has now increased to 13, with recent sightings of the Small Heath at Litton Mill on the 7th October 2012 (Marion Bryce), the Common Blue at Buxworth (Angie Seymour) also on the 7th, the Small Copper at Lightwood, Buxton on the 4th (Steve Orridge), Chatsworth Park on the 7th (Rod Dunn) and also at Buxworth on the same day (Angie Seymour), and a male Brimstone was seen in the garden of Angie Seymour at Whaley Bridge on the 7th October 2012. In addition, a Painted Lady is still holding on to its territory at Mickleover when Colin Bowler noted it again this month on the 9th October 2012, but unfortunately no further sightings of the Clouded Yellow have been made.

The other species noted this month include the Large White (latest is the 7th October at Litton Mill seen by Marion Bryce), the Small White (7th October 2012 at Allestree, Ken & Pat Orpe), Speckled Wood (9th October at Stoney Wood, Wirksworth, Angie Seymour) together with Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks, Commas and Red Admirals. Interestingly, flowering ivy plants are attracting many of the nymphalids with some large gatherings being noted, especially of Red Admirals (see the attached photo of the ivy plant and buddleia at the entrance to Allestree Park, where Felicity Jackson noted her many sightings on the 4th October 2012). The ivy is yet to flower in the upland parts of the County but I would hope that within a week the butterflies in that area will be able to take advantage of it before they go into their winter hibernation, although Red Admirals will hopefully 'over-winter'.



Finally, many thanks for the efforts of the many recorders who visited potential sites for the Wall Brown during the late summer and early autumn. Pleasingly, this species was reported from (provisionally) 34 tetrads in 2012 compared to 29 in 2011, and numbers were up from around 100 last year to about 130 this year. I have attached the provisional map for 2012 which should be compared to the 2011 map issued on the 7th August 2012 (Update no 24). The Wall Brown appeared to be very mobile this year with many observers noting that the butterflies did not stay long in one area but quickly moved on if they didn't find a suitable habitat. This may be because the butterfly knew that there was only a small 'weather window' of opportunity to seek a mate and get the eggs laid before the weather changed yet again. (they don't need weather forecasts like us!!!). So although a few sightings were made at 'Peak Fringe' sites, again there were no records from South Derbyshire or indeed N E Derbyshire, so sites in the Peak District, such as Clough Wood and Longstone Edge, remain vital for the survival of this former common butterfly species that can still be seen in some of the higher parts of our County.



Wall distribution in Derbyshire 2012 - provisional

Update 32 - 5th October 2012

Since the last Update a number of species appeared before the end of September 2012 with records of the Brimstone on the 27th of the month at Findern (Brian & Jean Hallam), Common Blue on the 28th at Buxworth (Angie Seymour), Small Copper on the 28th at both Buxworth (Angie Seymour) and Langley Mill (Colin Penny) and a Holly Blue on the 29th of September 2012 at Erewash Meadows NR (Colin Penny). Unfortunately, there have been no October 2012 records for these 4 species yet, and the Wall Brown flight period looks to be over as well, despite searches at both Longstone Edge and Clough Wood (Angie & Alan Seymour).

However, there have been sightings of 9 butterfly species in the first 5 days of October 2012 including Large White on the 1st of the month at Mickleover (Colin Bowler), Small White on the 4th at both Langley Mill (Colin Penny) and Allestree (John & Jessica Barker), and several sightings of the Speckled Wood including Buxworth & Whaley Bridge (Angie Seymour), Holymoorside (Bob Merritt), Cromford Canal (Dave Clay), Shipley (George Cox & Jim Steele), Heanor (Colin Penny), Kedleston Park (John & Jessica Barker) and on his allotment in Derby (Simon Beavis), who also saw there both the 2 whites mentioned above.

It looks as though many Red Admirals have decided that Derbyshire is the place for them to spend their winter, as many observers have reported seeing them feeding on late flowering buddleias, michaelmas daisies, ice plants and possibly their favourite plant, flowering ivy, where Felicity Jackson saw at least 25 nectaring on it at the entrance to Allestree Park on the 4th October 2012. Commas and Small Tortoiseshells are in lesser numbers and there are but a few Peacocks still flying as many of them have gone into hibernation already.

The other 2 species seen this month were quite a surprise and very pleasing to the eyes of the recorders – first, a Painted Lady was seen on the 1st October 2012 feeding on a buddleia in the garden of Colin Bowler at Mickleover, and then a Clouded Yellow was seen on the 4th October 2012 by Jo Taylor at the playing fields on Chester Green, Derby, where it briefly stopped to nectar and then flew off on a mission!!!

I have recently received some records from Catherine Chadwick, who was studying the distribution of the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly in the Derby area this year, and she managed to see some individuals at new sites including Markeaton Park, where she recorded one on the 6th September 2012. This is the first September record in

the County for this BAP species and brings the month's total to an amazing 25 species, with firsts for the Essex Skipper and the Ringlet as well.

Finally, I would like you to take time to check out a website produced by the well known and respected entomologist Dr Bill Smyllie of Sheffield, who has done much research on the evolution of the Brown Argus in the Peak District. You will see that he asks people to inform friends about backing further research on evolution in the Peak District. With the present governments efforts to cut out red tape for developers it could be that unimproved limestone grassland in the Peak will be chipped away, and it would be a pity if it had survived 17,000 years and was destroyed before it could be checked.

Bill has just created a blog on evolution: it is part of the Google stable and can be accessed at coherentevolution.blogspot.co.uk

Update 31 - 26th September 2012

It has been quite a week both weather wise and butterfly wise since the last Update and at last there has been a sighting of a yellow object in the sky late this afternoon here in Derby. After the most intense rainstorm for 30 years (with remarkably over 6 miles of rain laden clouds over us) which lasted at least 3 days, a Red Admiral suddenly appeared from out of the hedge and went straight on to one of the remaining flowering fronds of the buddleia in our garden in Allestree. That is what I call survival of the fittest.

Up to and including Saturday the 22nd September 2012 a number of species had been noted during the last week, including small numbers of Common Blues at Shipley CP (Jim Steele & John Blackburn), at Avenue Washlands & Drakelow NR (both Steve Plant), and at Buxworth in the far N W of the County (Angie Seymour). Holly Blues were still being noted last week with up to 4 seen at Palterton (Roy Frost), and a few migrating Brown Argus were also seen at both Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn) and West Hallam Tip (Pat & Ken Orpe). The brown butterflies were still being recorded with sightings of the Speckled Wood being fairly widespread within the County, and also late sightings of the Meadow Brown at both Hartshay (Maggie Campbell) and Creswell (Roy Frost – on the 22nd September 2012). The Wall Brown was also still on the wing with records from Eyam on the 18th September 2012 (Mick Taylor) and from Middle Hey, Cressbrook Dale on the 19th of this month (Tony Pioli), so it will be interesting to see if the final flight date of 2011 (29th September at Longstone Edge) for this species will be beaten this year.

A late Painted Lady was noted on the 18th September 2012 by Felicity Jackson, which was seen feeding on Michaelmas Daisies in Park Lane, Allestree, but one of the most surprising records of the last week was when Helen Naylor saw up to 5 Clouded Yellow butterflies nectaring on plants at the side of Ladybower Reservoir on Saturday the 22nd September 2012. It is most unusual to get multiple sightings of this species in the County at any one site, even in a 'Clouded Yellow' year, which this year has certainly not been, so the origins of these butterflies must be suspect.

So now that we approach a new month it will be very interesting to see how many species have survived the recent great rainstorms, bearing in mind 15 butterfly species were seen during October 2011 – these being, the 3 Whites, the Brimstone, Small Copper, Brown Argus (migrating), Common Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood and the Meadow Brown.

I'm sure that with your help we will be able to check on how our local butterflies fare in the latter stages of this year of extreme weather conditions. Thanks also go out to the recorders who have braved the elements so as to complete their butterfly transects (which finish this weekend), and also the volunteers who surveyed for butterflies in the 'Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey', and those of you who took part in the 'Big Butterfly Count', all of which are schemes run by Butterfly Conservation to help us monitor the fortunes of these fascinating insects.

Update 30 - 20th September 2012

The north westerly wind of the last few days has certainly given our butterflies, together with ourselves, a reminder that the autumn is well and truly with us now, and the fact that the equinox is just about to occur, many observers feel as though 2012 was a complete disaster for our local butterflies. Sadly, that is mostly true, but the Dingy Skipper and the Ringlet managed to put in decent appearances, so much so that the first ever September record for the latter species in the County occurred on the 7th of this month when Tony Warren saw an individual at Ambergate Hag. This has brought the September 2012 total to 24 species for Derbyshire, and with yet more Purple Hairstreaks seen on oak by Angie Seymour on the 15th September 2012 at Errwood Reservoir in the N W of the County, yet another latest date for a species. Also, in Notts, a Purple Hairstreak was seen by Marion Bryce at Thoresby on the 16th September 2012. Further late records have been received for the Small Skipper, with singletons being seen at Chee Dale on the 10th September by Michael Glendenning, and at the Avenue Washlands, Wingerworth on the 17th September 2012 (Ron Turner), which is 1 day short of the County record of the 18th September (1998). Still very few Common Blues have been noted recently and similarly the migrating Brown Argus was only noted from a couple of locations in the south of the County (Chellaston Brickyards LNR [Mark Sherwood], and Aston Brickyards [Pat & Ken Orpe]).

Fortunately the Wall Brown is still on the wing, albeit in even lower numbers now, with records this week from Longstone Edge and Pindale (Dave Mallon), Stoney Middleton (Paul Townsend) and at Clough Wood (Paul Mollatt & Ken Orpe). At last the Speckled Wood seems to have come good with several observers noting this species in reasonable numbers, with the highest counts coming from Woodside NR, Shipley, when Brian & Jean Hallam saw 24 on their transect on the 18th September 2012, and a staggering 50+ were noted by Marion Bryce at the Fairholmes Car Park, Bamford on the 15th September 2012.

As the records for the few migrants that we have had here in land-locked Derbyshire seem to have come to an end, with only a single Painted Lady seen recently at Shottle by Roger Martin, maybe the possibility of the full force of ex hurricane Nadine will give us not only a good soaking (again) but the chance of the odd Monarch in our part of the UK, the last confirmed record being back in 1996.

Update 29 - 12th September 2012

The continuing hot and sunny weather of the last week has enabled 23 species of butterflies to be seen within the County this month, including a late record of a Large Skipper at Whitting Valley, Chesterfield on the 2nd September 2012 (Paul Townsend), and the sighting of the migrating Brown Argus at a number of sites, including Willington Gravel Pits and Sutton on the Hill (both Colin Bowler), Whitting Valley (Paul Townsend), and West Hallam Tip and Aston Brickyards (both Pat & Ken Orpe). Interestingly, the second brood of this latter species emerged in Week 19 of the transect season during 2011 at Aston Brickyards, but was not seen until Week 24 of the transect season in 2012, which just goes to show how much the poor summer conditions have affected the lifestyles (and numbers) of many of our butterflies this year.

A few additional late sightings of the Small Skipper have been made this last week with records from Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour), Dale Abbey (Paul Shaw) and in Monsal Dale on the 9th September 2012 (Phil Pemberton). Also, a late Essex Skipper was seen by Roy Frost at Bolsovermoor Quarry on the 2nd September 2012, which equals the last date of Colin Bowler's sighting of this species at Mickleover Meadows, near Derby.

Another sighting of the Purple Hairstreak was made on the 4th September 2012 by Angie Seymour on oak at Errwood Reservoir, so the last County record for this species (10th September 2011) could well be broken this year. The Common Blue has now appeared at more sites in Lowland Derbyshire, although in very small numbers, and the Holly Blue is still on the wing at a good number of locations, although now becoming somewhat 'tatty' in appearance. Some sites have had good numbers of Small Copper butterflies recorded recently, so this species, hopefully, is set to continue flying well into the autumn. Not so the Peacock, whose numbers have declined quite rapidly this last week as many seemed to have decided that hibernation is the wise thing to do before the autumn gales and the first frosts arrive. This has meant that buddleia bushes that are still in flower (much later than usual) are now attracting reasonable numbers of both Small Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals, with many of the latter species likely to remain in the County to 'over-winter' and give us all a fillip in the shorter sunny days ahead.

The few sightings of the Painted Lady, which have been at Mickleover (Colin Bowler), Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), Clough Wood and Wirksworth (Angie & Alan Seymour), Pleasley (Elaine Daykin) and Chee Dale (Robert Davies), are to be enjoyed as very few observers have seen this migrant species in Derbyshire this year, and this butterfly is not be able to survive our winter in this part of the UK with some even flying back to the Continent at the first sign of cold weather. (not a bad idea!!). Similarly the Clouded Yellow has had an even worse year in these parts, but Roger Martin recorded an individual at Long Eaton Gravel Pits on the 5th September 2012. This species seems to enter Derbyshire following waterways and is often noted in adjacent gravel pits (or former pits), especially if they have large areas of clover amongst the damp meadows, with Willington GP and Drakelow NR being other likely sites in the south of the County.

Many of the County lepidopterists took advantage of the recent warm and sunny weather to look for the Wall Brown so thanks go out to you all, many of whom were delighted to see this threatened species. Records were received from mainly the southern part of the Peak District together with 'peak fringe' areas, with very few from the northern part of the P D, so maybe they are still to emerge in places such as the Hope Valley and also the Goyt Valley. The full list for the last 7 days includes – Crich Chase Meadows and High Tor, Matlock Bath (both Kieron Huston), Stone Centre, Wirksworth, Ryder Point, Hopton, Bonsall Moor and Clough Wood (all Angie & Alan Seymour), Harborough Rocks, Brassington (Colin Bowler), Gang Mine, Cromford (Gary Atkins & Paul Mollott), Ashover and Alton (both Roy Frost), Longstone Edge (Brian & Jean Hallam, and Max & Christine Maughan) and Curbar Edge (Elaine Daykin), and also on the butterfly transect at Chee Dale (Robert Davies). Most sightings were of 1 or 2 individuals and they all appeared to be very 'skittish' with the females being quite fussy in trying to locate suitable places to lay their eggs (usually on grass underneath overhanging rocks), and the males looking for females in order to set up new colonies, so there have been very few opportunities to photograph this species doing what they are noted for – basking in the sun on walls!!!

Finally, I have just received an interesting record of a White Admiral which was seen on the 19th August 2012 at Elvaston Country Park, near Derby, by Mike Tong. This rather 'tatty' specimen was seen by Mike on a buddleia bush in his garden within the grounds of the CP and is another species that is trying to move northwards within the County. There are occasional records from the National Forest area of South Derbyshire and with this wooded area becoming more mature these days, the habitat could well be suiting the White Admiral, provided of course there is plenty of honeysuckle for its caterpillars to feed on. So if you are aware of areas of woodland which have an abundance of this larval foodplant then it might well be worth checking it out next July for a glimpse of this spectacular insect.



Photo of a Derbyshire White Admiral feeding on bramble.

Update 28 - 4th September 2012

The recent spell of warm and sunny weather has enabled many recorders to get out and about in the Derbyshire countryside and this has resulted in 21 species of butterflies being noted during the first 3 days of September 2012. So the expected 'Indian Summer' is having a positive effect on our local lepidoptera and the forecast into next weekend is for more of the same. This has enabled late records for a number of species including the first September record for the Essex Skipper in the County when Colin Bowler saw an individual at Mickleover Meadows on the 2nd of this month, a few Small Skippers noted in the Goyt Valley (Angie Seymour & Sandra Douglas), and a late sighting of a Purple Hairstreak yesterday on oak on the banks of Errwood Reservoir (Angie Seymour). A few Common Blues have finally emerged in their second brood in lowland Derbyshire with individuals being noted at Stanton Lagoons (Steve Plant), West Hallam Tip (Pat & Ken Orpe), Mickleover Meadows (Colin Bowler) and at Ogston (Caroline Wakefield), but no sightings of the Brown Argus yet for this month.

With many buddleia bushes still in bloom, the Peacock numbers have remained fairly high at some places, but numbers of Red Admirals, Commas and Small Tortoiseshells are mainly seen as singletons. Occasional Painted Lady butterflies have also been noted with records from Kedleston Hall (Felicity Jackson), Mickleover Meadows (Colin Bowler), Ripley (Maggie Campbell), Thorpe (Barbara Wager) and Parwich (Ray Walker), and there was also a sighting of a Clouded Yellow yesterday on the Monsal Trail (George Challenger), so there could well be a few more migrants about during the remainder of this month.

Fortunately the emergence of the second brood Wall Brown has coincided with the recent spell of fine weather, and despite some recorders failing to connect with this butterfly at previously known locations, records have been received from new sites in the Peak District including Wolfscote Hill (Paul Mollatt), and also Stoney Wood, Wirksworth (Pat & Ken Orpe/ Wendy & John Abrehart). Other records for this species have come from Chinley (Frank Bell), Clough Wood (Roy Frost & Peter Faulkner), Bonsall Moor (Paul Mollatt), Middleton Moor (Roy Frost) and on the 2nd September 2012 at Alport Heights (Paul Mollatt & Kieron Huston).

As well as the rocky outcrops that the Wall Brown prefers (see photo 6020 taken at Redhill Quarry, Middleton Top), at some of the sites it also occurs along sheltered lanes which have stone walls either side (see photo 6043 taken on Bonsall Moor), and if you live in the Peak District there is always the possibility of them appearing in your own garden, as in the case of Peter Faulkner who noted both a male and female on his buddleia bush at Two Dales on the 2nd September 2012.



Red Hill Quarry, Middleton Top (6020)



Bonsal Moor (6043)

Update 27 - 27th August 2012

It is not really surprising that as I write this latest Update on a Bank Holiday Monday the rain is falling steadily here in Derby and probably the rest of the County as well!! However, some sunny spells during the last week has meant that many buddleia bushes in Lowland Derbyshire have had quite a showing of Peacock butterflies, with maximum counts of about 60 coming from Botany Bay, near Linton (Malcolm Giles) and Scarcliffe Park (Roy Frost). However, as you move in to the Peak District numbers of Peacocks are more likely to be in single figures, whilst over the border in Cheshire, Sandra Douglas has yet to see this species at all. Surprisingly, Mick Ball had a Peacock flying around his moth light at 1.15 am on the 20th August 2012 in Duffield (I have seen Purple Hairstreaks being attracted to a M V in an oak woodland, but I have never seen a Peacock flying round a moth light!!)

Small Tortoiseshells, Commas and Red Admirals have been noted in small numbers and the Painted Lady is even scarcer with records coming from only Allestree (Mike Daykin), Parwich (Ray Walker), Botany Bay (Malcolm Giles), Stanley (Paul Shaw) and Willington GP NR (Colin Penny).

Similarly, the Brimstone has only been noted from a few localities including Eyes Meadow, Duffield (Mick Ball), Scarcliffe Park (Roy Frost), Thurstaston (John Abrehart), Heanor (Paul Tomblin), Etwall (Kath Patrick & Nick Brown) and Two Dales, Darley Dale (Peter Faulkner).

Both the Common Blue and the migrating Brown Argus are still giving cause for concern as second broods have yet to appear most sites, with records for both species only coming from Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn) and Stanton Ironworks (Maggie Campbell), and Roy Frost had a singleton Brown Argus at Arkwright in the N E of the County.

After many searches in the N W of the County, Angie Seymour finally noted 3 Purple Hairstreaks on oak near to Taxal on the 26th August 2012, so it is possible that the latest County sighting for this species could be beaten this year, which is the 10th September (2011).

Since the last Update, Peter Faulkner has had the pleasure of seeing both male and female Wall Brown butterflies in his garden at Two Dales – this must be one of the few gardens in Derbyshire where it is still possible to see both sexes of this declining butterfly. Other recent records for the Wall Brown include Millers Dale & Lathkill Dale (Richard Ground), Longstone Edge (Angie & Alan Seymour), Bonsall Moor & Redhill Quarry, Middleton Top (Paul Mollatt & Ray Walker) and at Narrowdale (just over the County border in Staffs) (Helen Naylor).

The good news is that the 'Azores High' is likely to make its presence felt by next weekend, and beyond, so we might be in for an 'Indian Summer', which hopefully gives recorders the opportunity to visit our wonderful Derbyshire countryside and to see, amongst other species, the Wall Brown!!!

To assist in this possibility, I list below additional sites where first brood Wall Browns have been seen in the County during 2012 :-

Alport Heights, near Wirksworth; Gang Mine, near Cromford Hill; Hopton; Longcliffe; Hartington Meadows; Clough Wood; Youlgrave; Deep Dale, Sheldon; Middleton Moor Lagoon; Wardlow; Hathersage; Whaley Bridge; Chinley; and Bunstall, Goyt Valley.

Additionally, the Wall Brown was noted at these sites during 2011 – New Mills; Buxworth; Pin Dale; Chapel en le Frith; Tideswell; Bradwell; Hope Brinks; Taddington Moor and Cocking Tor.

So with your help we will hopefully be able to get a complete insight in to the status of this threatened resident butterfly species here in Derbyshire.

Thanks in anticipation.

Update 26 - 20th August 2012

Despite the changeable weather conditions over the last week at least the temperature has remained relatively high in this part of the UK and this has enabled the Peacock butterfly to emerge in even greater numbers, including sightings from the Peak District, from where records have now been received from the Longcliffe area, Parwich, Bonsall Moor (all Ray Walker & Paul Mollatt), Two Dales (Peter Faulkner) and at Whaley Bridge in the far N W of the County (Angie & Alan Seymour).

The Holly Blue continues to do well and records have now been received from further north in the County with sightings from Wensley Dale and Whaley Bridge (both Angie & Alan Seymour) and also from Chatsworth Park (Jim Steele). The downside has been a lack of records for both the Common Blue and also the Brown Argus, with the second brood of the former species yet to appear on our transects in the Derby area, and very few sightings of the latter species, the most being at Woodside NR, Shipley when 6 were noted by Jim Steele on the 14th August 2012.

Surprisingly there have been a few records of both the summer hairstreaks recently with a White Letter Hairstreak

seen feeding on a buddleia bush in Parwich on the 14th August 2012, presumably as a result of honeydew being washed off elm leaves by the rain of the previous evening. (I have also seen this once when a Purple Hairstreak was also feeding on buddleia at Kedleston Park some years ago). Further north there have been sightings of the Purple Hairstreak this last week at both Walton, near Chesterfield (Phil Gilbert) and at Brockholes Wood in the Longdendale Valley (Dave Mallon).

Finally, further sightings of the Wall Brown have been noted this weekend with individuals seen on Bonsall Moor on the 18th August 2012 (Paul Mollatt) and a male seen on the 19th August 2012 in the garden of Peter Faulkner at Two Dales, near to Darley Dale. Let's hope that this male manages to find a suitable female Wall Brown very soon!!!

Update 25 - 13th August 2012

It looks as though the 'jet stream' is back over the UK for the rest of this week so the weather is likely to be changeable yet again. However, with warm air being brought across us from the near Continent there is the possibility of more migrant butterflies being caught up in this air flow, so there may be evidence of 'hill topping' for species such as Red Admiral and Painted Lady. The only record that I have received for the latter species during the last week was an individual seen in Sandiacre by Ian Viles.

Thanks to all the recorders who sent me emails confirming that last Wednesday (8th August 2012) appeared to be the day when the new brood Peacocks were noted in lowland Derbyshire. At the moment the northern limit of this emergence appears to be in the N E of the County with records from Ogston (Caroline Wakefield), Shirland (Nikki Mahadevan) and Wingerworth (Helen Naylor), so any records from the Peak District would be appreciated. Also, the new brood of the Holly Blue is doing well in the south of the County with records as far north as Heanor (Colin Penny) and the Golden Valley near to Riddings (Maggie Campbell). However both the Common Blue and the migrating Brown Argus are still doing badly, with the latter species being noted only at Stanton by Dale recently (Jim Steele). A few new Brimstones have been sighted with records from Newhall (Andy Large), Aston Brickyards (Pat & Ken Orpe) and Chaddesden, Derby (Pauline Mycock) but no records yet from the Peak District.

It is not surprising that our summer hairstreaks have fared poorly yet again this year with no records received recently for the White Letter Hairstreak, and only a couple of sightings of the Purple Hairstreak, with records from Mercia Marina, Findern (Mike Williams) and close to Ticknall (Jim Steele). However, better news regarding the expansion of the range of the Essex Skipper with records from Ogston (Caroline Wakefield) and the first ever record for SK 26, when Peter Faulkner noted an individual at Two Dales, Darley Dale on the 8th August 2012.

Finally, the Dark Green Fritillary is still being noted fairly widely in the Peak District, although sightings of the Brown Argus in the area is somewhat sporadic, so any further records for this species would be welcome. Also, second brood Wall Brown butterflies were noted on Saturday (11th August 2012) at Longstone Edge when Dave Mallon saw 2 individuals there, so let's hope that this species manages to improve its status in the County, despite the threat of yet more changeable weather conditions.

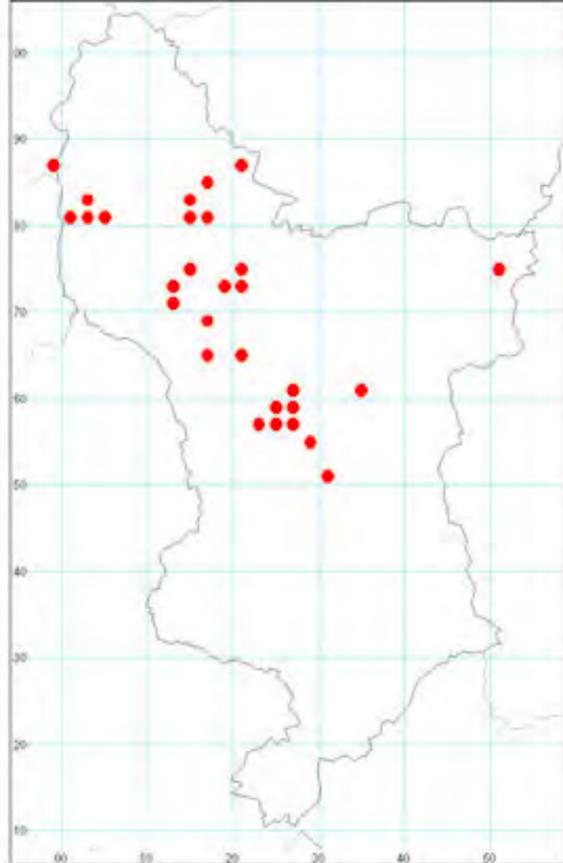
Update 24 - 7th August 2012

It looks as though the forecasters are predicting another spell of warm and sunny weather during the next week or so which will hopefully lead to an increase in the numbers of new brood butterflies that should have emerged during July. There has however been an increase in sightings of the Small Copper recently with records from Wensley Dale (Angie & Alan Seymour), Jack Flat (Nikki Mahadevan & Helen Naylor), Jim Mart NR (Nikki Mahadevan), Belper Parks (Pat & Ken Orpe) and Ilkeston Hospital, where Ian Viles noticed an individual sitting on the bonnet of his car presumably enjoying the sunshine!!. Similarly, the Holly Blue has been noted in the south of the County with records from Newhall (Andy Large), Sandiacre (Ray Walker), Mickleover (Colin Bowler), Long Eaton (Richard Rogers), and Melbourne and also Allestree (Tony Davison). However, additional sightings of the Peacock, together with the migrating Brown Argus, have failed to materialise as yet, and today I noted my first new brood Common Blue in lowland Derbyshire at Belper Parks, where a pristine male enjoyed the afternoon sunshine basking on birds foot trefoil.

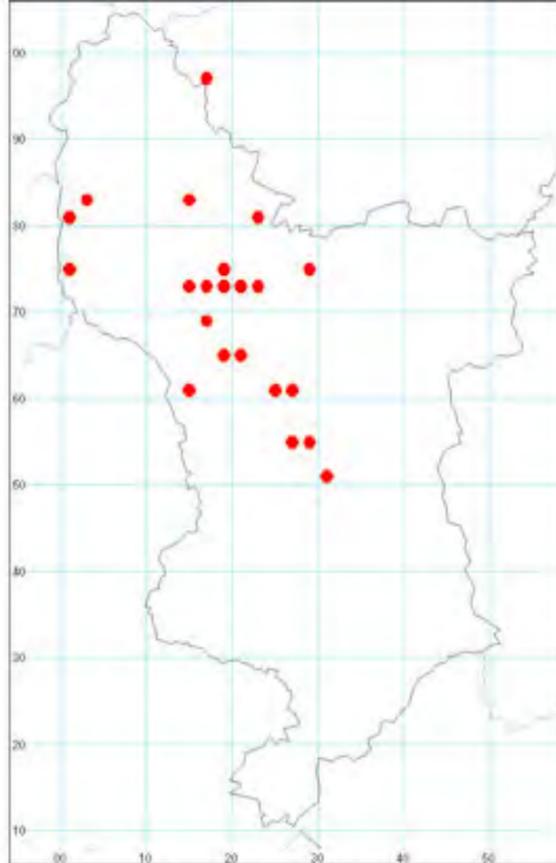
Many observers have commented on the fact that although the buddleia bushes are now in full bloom (about 1 month later than usual), there are very few butterflies nectaring on them. However, Colin Bowler had the pleasure of seeing a Painted Lady on one of his buddleia bushes yesterday, but that is the only sighting of this species since the last Update.

Searches for the Essex Skipper have been promising with records recently from Walton, Chesterfield and Pleasley Pit (both Phil Gilbert) in the N E of the County, and Denby Pottery and Eyes Meadow, Duffield (new site) in the south of the County (both Pat & Ken Orpe).

Hopefully, the fine weather that is promised will result in more sightings of the second brood Wall Brown butterflies, which is now restricted in its distribution to the Peak District, where most counts are at sites on the 300 metre contour (eg Longstone Edge; Bonsall Moor; Alport Heights). The last record for N E Derbyshire was made in May 2011 when a singleton was noted by Roy Frost at Bolsover Moor, so any sightings from this part of the County would be very interesting indeed. I have attached a couple of distribution maps which show that in 2011 the total numbers of squares recorded for the Wall Brown was 29, whilst the first brood for this year was noted in 22 squares (provisional).



Subject: Wall Brown distribution in 2011 – 29 squares



Subject: Wall Brown (First Brood) 2012 (Provisional) – 22 squares

Finally, Simon Beavis has asked me to mention an open day at his Allotment Association, so if you live in the south of the County you might want to visit this urban wildlife site in Derby next Sunday the 12th August from 11am to 3pm. The site, on the Firs Estate, is a good place in the city for butterflies and other wildlife - details are on the website at <http://firsestateallotments.co.uk/>

Update 23 - 2nd August 2012

A number of recorders have expressed their interest in searching for the Essex Skipper in the County during the next few weeks, so I have now attached a photo of the Small Skipper (kindly provided by Christine Maughan) which clearly shows the brown tips of the underside of the antennae of this species, as opposed to the glossy black tips of the Essex Skipper (see photo attached to Update no 22 for details). Since it first arrived in the County at Drakelow NR in 1999, the Essex Skipper has made dramatic progress in a northward movement along the eastern side of the County so that it has been seen in a total of 77 squares for the period 2000–2011 (see attached distribution map). There are only 2 records from both 10 km squares 25 & 27 – Carsington Water (2009) and Wirksworth (2010) from SK 25, and Baslow (2008) and Coombs Dale (2011) from SK 27, so it appears that there is a 2 front pincer movement in progress as this species is poised to enter the Peak District in style.

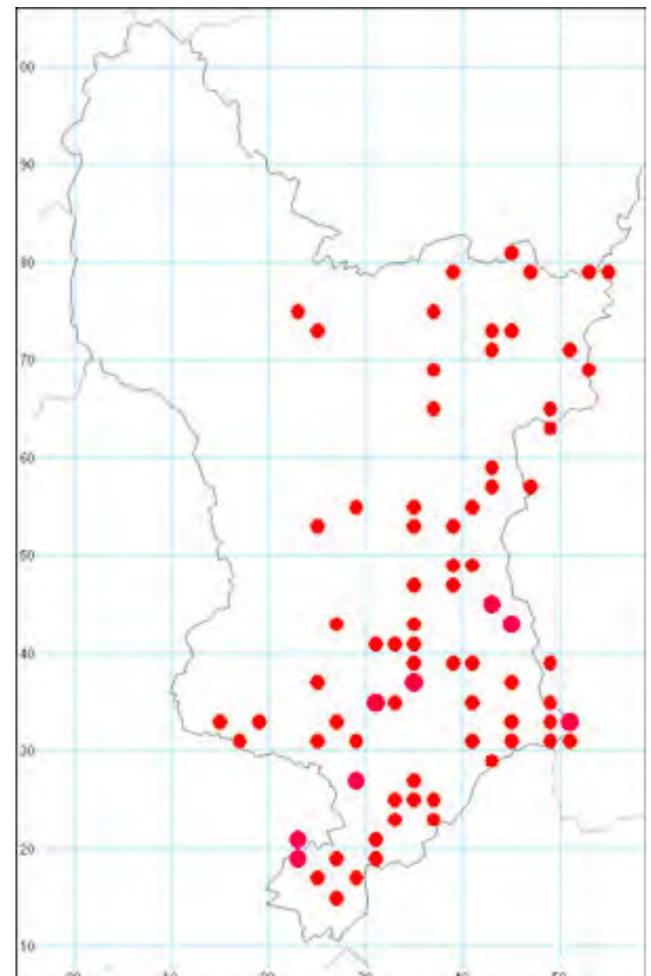


As the Essex Skipper appears about a couple of weeks after the Small Skipper, a fresh skipper seen now is more likely to be an Essex, as opposed to a worn individual, which is likely to be a Small, but it is the underside of the tips of the antennae which determines the type of skipper.

Your help in assessing this movement in to the Peak District would, as always, be greatly appreciated.

Update 22 - 31st July 2012

It looks as though the rest of the summer is going to consist of a combination of the occasional 10 day 'superheat' followed by a return to showers and 'normal' temperatures, but at least the latest hot spell has certainly helped second brood butterflies to emerge. In lowland Derbyshire, sightings of the 'blue' family have just commenced with Common Blues at Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), migrating Brown Argus at North Wingfield (Roy Frost) and Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), Small Copper at Wirksworth (Pat & Ken Orpe) and Findern (Brian & Jean Hallam), and Holly Blues at Cotmanhay (Jim Steele), Hatton (Pat & Ken Orpe), Chaddesden (Pauline Mycock) and Findern (Brian & Jean Hallam). Also seen recently were fresh Peacock butterflies at Hopton (Maggie Campbell) and Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn). Further north in the Peak District, a second brood Wall Brown was noted in Monsal Dale by Sandra Douglas on the 28th July 2012, so let's hope that this species recovers some of its status within the County. Unfortunately, the Brown Argus in the Peak District is still in very low numbers with the highest count of 33 on the 23rd July 2012 coming from the Long Dale/Grattan Dale areas (Robert & Margaret Davies), where also present were reasonable numbers of up to 50 Dark Green Fritillary butterflies (also seen by Charles Palmer on the



22nd July 2012). The most remarkable sighting for this species was on the 24th July 2012 when Martin Hall was about to enter the main shopping mall in Derby when he noticed a DGF on flowers outside the main entrance. (Hm, I must think about going there more often!!).

Moving on to the 'Brown' family, the Ringlet has appeared in good numbers on the transect in Millers Dale Quarry NR (Peter Faulkner & Rol Hawksworth), and it has also been noted in the far N W of the County at Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour). After a very slow start, the Gatekeeper is now about at its peak numbers with over 100 noted at Woodside NR, Shipley (Max & Christine Maughan).

Of particular interest with this species is the occurrence of individuals seen without any 'eyes' on the lower wings – this has been noted at the Jim Mart NR (Nikki Mahadevan) and also at Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour).

The Essex Skipper has now become fairly widespread in the south of the County with records from Long Eaton Railway Sidings, Foston, Breadsall Cutting, Stanton Ironworks, Drakelow NR, Gresley Wood, Findern, West Hallam Tip and Aston Brickyards. Any sightings for this species from the Peak District would be appreciated as it is, like the Ringlet, poised to become resident there. I have attached a photo of the underside of the tips of the antennae of this species, which are glossy black as opposed to brown in the case of the Small Skipper, (photo kindly provided by Christine Maughan).



The summer hairstreaks are still very much at a low level with observers noting only singletons, with a maximum of 4, of both the Purple Hairstreak and also the White Letter Hairstreak. The former species has been seen at Kedleston Park (John Barker), Allestree Park (Colin Bowler), Chatsworth Park (Roy Frost) and Fernilee Reservoir (Frank Bell). Mike Williams noted further individuals at Mercia Marina near to Findern recently when some were seen inspecting the buds of ash trees, perhaps for either chemicals or honeydew because the leaves of their larval foodplant (oak) had been washed clean by heavy showers. Meanwhile, the White Letter Hairstreak is faring no better with many known sites failing to show this species so far – records to date only coming from Baslow (Roy Frost), Mackworth Castle (Nick Brown), and in the garden of Peter Faulkner in Two Dales, near to Darley Dale. Fortunately, most of the recorders who turned up at Chapel Street Car Park, Derby on the 21st/22nd July 2012 managed to see this rare species, some for the very first time in their lives, so thanks to the 40 or so people who came over the 2 mornings. In this connection, I have produced a register of sites within the County where this BAP species has been seen during the last 15 years, so if you would like a copy (in Excel), then please send me an email and I will send one to you. Any help in confirming or not that the species is still present at these sites would be greatly appreciated.

Another positive from the recent spell of hot and sunny weather was the recording of a few Painted Lady butterflies together with a singleton Clouded Yellow. This latter species was noted by Malcolm Giles in his garden at Botany Bay, near to Linton, whilst the Painted Lady sightings came from Duffield (Mick Ball), Mickleover (Simon Beavis), Kedleston (John Barker), West Hallam (Martin Hall) and also at Shirland where Nikki Mahadevan saw 2 on the buddleias in her garden.

Finally, just a reminder that the Big Butterfly Count continues until Sunday 5th August 2012 so please make every effort to participate and put Derbyshire firmly 'on the map'!!! Many thanks to those of you who have already contributed to the project. Details are at www.bigbutterflycount.org

Update 21 - 19th July 2012

As the rain continues to fall and the wind turns to the NW it is difficult to believe that we are finally in for an improvement in the weather conditions, as at last the 'Jet Stream' is about to move north to where it should be to give us a chance of a reasonable summer. It could also just about save some of our butterflies which have had a really tough time so far this year, with only a couple of exceptions. Yes, the Dingy Skipper managed to emerge during the last time that we had some warm and sunny weather (the end of May - remember?) and it did really well in the County, and recently good numbers of the Ringlet have been seen in lowland Derbyshire. Meanwhile, in the Peak District, the Ringlet has now emerged at a number of locations including Wirksworth (Paul Townsend); Hopton Quarry (Jim Steele); Millers Dale Quarry (Charles Palmer); Coombs Dale (Brian & Jean Hallam); Lathkill Dale (Simon Roddis); Hassop (Dave Mallon); Goyt Valley Reservoirs (Angie & Alan Seymour), and Hartington Quarry (Victor Pearson), where an individual was seen without rings on the upper wings (aberration 'arete'). Records for this species have also been received from the 'Peak Fringe' areas including Ashover (Karen Wright); Holmesfield (John & Al Roberts); High Peak Junction (Simon Roddis) and at Carsington Water (John Matkin).

Unfortunately, our 2 summer Peak District 'specialities' are still having a very tough time of things with the Brown Argus being particularly badly hit. Records for this species are all in single figures with sightings from Longstone Edge (Brian & Jean Hallam); Lathkill Dale (Simon Roddis) and Coombs Dale (Brian & Jean Hallam and John & Al Roberts). The Dark Green Fritillary is not doing very much better with maximum counts just reaching in to double figures – in addition to the sites mentioned above, this species has also been seen recently at Hopton Quarry (Jim Steele); Millers Dale Quarry (Charles Palmer & Michael Glendenning), and in the Goyt Valley near Bunsal Cob (Angie & Alan Seymour).

Finally, sightings of our summer hairstreaks are very few and far between but yesterday evening Martin Roome managed to see some Purple Hairstreaks at Chaddesden Wood in Derby after the rain had finished and just before the sun set in the west. Our other summer hairstreak, the White Letter Hairstreak, has appeared at a few localities including Wingerworth (Pauline Hardy), Mackworth Castle (Nick Brown) and on a transect at Crich Chase Meadow (Kieron Huston). With the 'Elms for White Letter Hairstreaks' project still gathering momentum within the County, Pat and I have organised a site meeting at Level 10 at Chapel Street Car Park in Derby at 11 am on both Saturday 21st July 2012 and Sunday 22nd July 2012 when it will be possible to look in to the elm canopy and hopefully then be able to see these reclusive insects. Please bring binoculars with you so that you can have a close up view of them. Car Parking at this location is £1.60 for 1 hour, and £2.30 for 2 hours.

There will also be an opportunity for us to show you other elms nearby at street level, all of which have had WLH butterflies recorded on them in the past, and we will probably be present in the area for a couple of hours each day. I am in the process of producing a register of sites in Derbyshire where these insects have been recorded in the past, so I hope to let you all have a copy by the weekend to enable you to check areas that are close to where you live. So please join us and hopefully see the main reason for the planting of Disease Resistant Elms within our County. The bird watchers amongst you may also have the opportunity to see the Peregrine Falcons that have nested at Derby Cathedral recently, as they also use the top of a nearby hotel to check out a meal that might just be flying by!!!

Update 20 - 12th July 2012

Since the last Update it is pleasing to note that both our summer hairstreaks have finally emerged with the Purple Hairstreak seen on oak on the 9th July 2012 at Mercia Marina, near Findern (Mike Williams), and a singleton White Letter Hairstreak was seen today on elm in King Street, Derby by Colin Bowler and myself. Whilst the Purple Hairstreak is just about 'on schedule' for emergence in the south of the County, the White Letter Hairstreak is over 1 month later than when it emerged in 2011.

I did make contact with other County Recorders and the feedback from S E England is that it was not until late June 2012 that it appeared there, which again is about 1 month later than last year. We can only hope that numbers increase soon and with this in mind, I will organise a site visit in Derby to look for this species next weekend (21st/22nd July 2012) - confirmation will be emailed nearer to the time.

Another species that has been noted recently are fresh Comma butterflies when individuals were seen at Drakelow NR on the 25th June 2012 (Tom Cockburn), at Aston Brickyards on the 10th July 2012 and at Breadsall Cutting on the 11th July 2012 (both Ken Orpe). These butterflies had paler undersides and are known as the form *hutchinsoni*, as opposed to the hibernating versions, which are dark on the underside. The length of daylight during the larval/pupal stages determines whether the 'summer' Commas are pale or dark - increasing daylength individuals tend to become *hutchinsoni* adults, while those experiencing shortening days generally emerge as hibernators.

Despite the spells of wet weather that we are still experiencing, the Ringlet appears to be widespread again in lowland Derbyshire this year and can be seen flying even when it is raining (almost daily). Although there have been no records yet from the Peak District, it will be interesting to see how well it fares in this part of the County during 2012 as well.

Finally just a reminder that the Big Butterfly Count is taking place from this Saturday (14th July 2012) until Sunday 5th August 2012, so please make every effort to participate especially as our butterflies are having a very difficult year due to the very wet weather conditions.

www.bigbutterflycount.org

Update 19 - 6th July 2012

Every week seems to bring a new record weatherwise and today we are experiencing more than 1 months rain in a single day, that after the wettest June ever. You really don't want to know what the forecast is for the rest of July, but when that sun in the sky appears, please take advantage of it if you can because our local butterflies are more adaptable than most people think!!

On Wednesday afternoon (4th July 2012) Max & Christine Maughan saw 174 butterflies and well over 200 day flying moths on the transect that they completed at Woodside NR near Shipley Country Park. There were good numbers of Meadow Browns; Ringlets; Small Heaths and Large Skippers but only a single Common Blue, a species that has done very badly during the first brood. On the moth front, there were over 200 5 spot Burnet moths, together with the odd Cinnabar moth, Burnet Companion Moth, Latticed Heath, Yellow Shell and Common Carpet moths.

New species that have appeared since the last Update include Gatekeeper on the 30th June 2012 at Burbage (Sandra Douglas); Small Skipper on the 4th July at Chellaston LNR (Mark Sherwood) and at Woodside NR (Max & Christine Maughan); and Essex Skipper at Drakelow NR on the 5th July (Tom Cockburn).

In the Peak District there have been further sightings of the Dark Green Fritillary at Millers/Chee Dale (Margaret Spencer) and Pin Dale (Rod Dunn), together with a few Brown Argus butterflies noted at Millers Dale Quarry (Rod Dunn) and Lathkill Dale (Peter Faulkner).

Unfortunately no sightings have been received for the White Letter Hairstreak as yet, but some years ago this species was regarded as a July/August butterfly so it is perhaps good news that it has not emerged yet given the current weather conditions.

Big Butterfly Count 2012 is taking from Saturday 14th July - Sunday 5th August 2012 at the following website www.bigbutterflycount.org, and we need your help to make it bigger and better than ever. The website is open for sightings already and stays open until the end of August. Last year an incredible 34,000 people took part, with over 2,200 records coming from Derbyshire, but we hope to beat that total this time.

Taking part in the Big Butterfly Count is more important than ever this year because butterflies could suffer serious population crashes following record-breaking wet weather. You don't need to be an expert - just spend 15 minutes watching butterflies in any sunny place then submit your sightings online. You can do as many Counts as you like at www.bigbutterflycount.org. You'll be helping conservationists to track the fortunes of these beautiful but declining insects.

Why should you bother? Well, Big Butterfly Count is a key means through which Butterfly Conservation can raise awareness, generate publicity and engage new audiences. It provides a simple and engaging way of starting to get more involved with recording and conservation. It gets Butterfly Conservation noticed and the Big Butterfly Count partnership with Marks & Spencer has already provided more than £100,000 income to support recording and conservation.

Let's make it the biggest count ever - I just know that Derbyshire recorders will not let us down!!

Update 18 - 29th June 2012

With only one day to go it looks as though June 2012 will be in the top 2 of the wettest June months ever recorded, the consequences of which for our local butterflies is an almost complete lack of them in both gardens and the general countryside. Fortunately we have some great Nature Reserves here in Derbyshire, and wonderful areas of the Peak District which never fail to come up with something, and the last 10 days have not been any different. Three new butterfly species have managed to emerge during this period – the Brown Argus in the Peak District was first seen on the 19th June 2012 at both Longstone Edge (Angie & Alan Seymour) and Coombs Dale (Bill Smyllie); the Ringlet was seen on the 24th June 2012 at Woodside Nature Reserve, Shipley (Jim Steele) and the first Dark Green Fritillaries were seen on the 26th June 2012 at both Coombs Dale (Angie & Alan Seymour) and in Lathkill Dale (Rod Dunn).

Another new species has been recorded since the last 'Update' when Ian Viles noted a Painted Lady butterfly feeding on red valerian in his garden at Sandiace on the 24th June 2012. This would confirm that there has been a small migration in to the area as both pristine and 'tatty' Red Admirals have been seen recently (Dan Martin had both types in his garden in Belper on the 28th June 2012) and also Silver Y moths have been noted both during the day and also in moth traps at night time. However, no sightings of the Clouded Yellow have been received to date but the occasional 'plumes' of warm southerly winds from the Continent may change that situation during July 2012.

As the flight periods of the Spring butterflies comes to a close, there have been late sightings of the Dingy Skipper at Pleasley Pit on the 25th June 2012 (Dave Clay); a late Orange Tip in the Goyt Valley on the 20th June 2012 (Sandra Douglas); and a late record for the Green Hairstreak from Hopton Quarry on the 19th June (Nikki Mahadevan). Two species that should produce a further brood later in the year have also been noted recently when a Holly Blue was seen on the 25th June 2012 at Allestree (Steve Plant) and a Wall Brown was noted on the 27th June 2012 in the Goyt Valley (Sandra Douglas).

There have also been sightings of fresh Small Tortoiseshell butterflies recently, the odd 'tatty' Peacock, the occasional Brimstone, but the last record for a Comma was at the end of May 2012.

Unfortunately, the proposed meeting to look for White Letter Hairstreaks has had to be postponed due to the fact that the butterfly has yet to be seen in the County, and that a sustained period of warm, sunny and still weather has yet to be encountered in this so called 'summer', but hopefully the meeting will take place sometime in July 2012, details of which I will inform you closer to the time of the event.

Update 17 - 18th June 2012

Many thanks to all the recorders and transect walkers who have braved the awful weather of the last 3 weeks to get out and about in our countryside and try to see as many butterflies as possible. The contrast in weather conditions has been quite remarkable and, according to the experts, we can only blame the position of the 'Jet Stream' which is some 500 miles further south than 'normal' and this has spurred the many storms that we have experienced during this time. At least the Water Companies must be happy!!

Fortunately, both the Dingy Skipper and the Wall Brown took advantage of the fine weather during the last 2 weeks of May 2012, and the former species was noted from over 50 localities in the County thanks to all the efforts of recorders to visit both known and also find new sites for this BAP species.

The Wall Brown seemed to be very 'skittish' and anxious to take advantage of the warm weather during the said period and this meant that identification was sometimes difficult but a medium sized 'orangery brown' butterfly can only be a Wall Brown at that time of the year. Nevertheless confirmed sightings were obtained from 18 localities (compared with 28 in the whole of 2011) but this species usually fares better in the late summer brood during August and September.

On the migrant front, it is hardly surprising that neither the Painted Lady nor the Clouded Yellow have yet to be recorded in Derbyshire but there have been 4 recent sightings of the Red Admiral, these possibly being the offspring of earlier 'over-wintering' parents. Records came from Drakelow NR on the 28th May 2012 (Tom Cockburn); Repton Church on the 4th June 2012 (Colin Bowler); Allotments in Derby on the 14th May 2012 (Simon Beavis) and Wyaston on the 15th June 2012 (John Abrehart).

A couple of new species have been recorded during the last 2 weeks – the Meadow Brown was noted on the 4th June 2012 at Stanton Ironworks (Maggie Campbell) and then on the 17th May 2012 at Shipley CP (George & Tamsin Cox), who also saw the Large Skipper there yesterday, together with Pauline Mycock who saw the same species at her allotment in Chester Green, Derby.

Finally, although the White Letter Hairstreak has yet to make an appearance in the County, it is intended to have a site meeting at a known location in the centre of Derby, possibly late June/ early July to hopefully see this rare insect at close quarters, so details will be given nearer to the time.

Update 16 - 1st June 2012

The last 10 days or so of gloriously warm and sunny weather was an absolute perfect reason for many observers to get out and about and enjoy both our superb Derbyshire countryside as well as the butterflies that were on the wing. So much so, that some two thirds of the 150 members of this egroup took the time and trouble to email me their butterfly sightings, which is a tremendous achievement and for which I am extremely grateful.

This period proved to be particularly good for one of our spring BAP species, the Dingy Skipper, with many sites being checked for them and positive results forthcoming, including 21 seen at Swadlincote Woodlands on the 25th May 2012 (Tom Cockburn), 36 seen at Stanton Ironworks on the 26th May 2012 (Richard Rogers) and 19 noted at Woodside NR on the 28th May 2012 (Jim Steele). In addition, the great news is that at least 3 new sites had Dingy Skippers for the first time this year, including the Toton Railway Sidings, which is in both Derbyshire and Notts, when individuals were first noted by Richard Rogers and then by Roger Martin during the last week in May; Chellaston Tip

LNR (the first Dingy Skipper records in SK33 for many years) seen by Mark Sherwood last weekend, and finally at Sheepwash, Carsington Water on the 27th May 2012 (Kath & Peter Cartlidge). This last record brings the site total up to 25 species and fortunately this species is pictured on the recently erected Butterfly Interpretation Board which stands outside the Wildlife Centre at Carsington Water!!!

Another spring butterfly, which is confined to the Peak District, the Green Hairstreak, managed to produce some further individuals since the snow in early April 2012, although numbers have been very low. Sightings were received from Chee Dale (Nikki Mahadevan), Millers Dale (Peter Faulkner), Lathkill Dale (Margaret Spencer), Deep Dale, Sheldon (Marion Bryce), Coombs Dale (Phil Gilbert), Hopton Quarry (Nikki Mahadevan), Hopton (Jim Steele), Lightwood Reservoir (Steve Orridge & Angie & Alan Seymour); Longtone Edge & Hillbridge Wood (Angie & Alan Seymour), Cutthroat Bridge (Peter Faulkner & Jim Steele) and finally High Tor, Matlock Bath (Steve Plant & Bill Grange).

The Orange Tip has finally produced some counts of 20 or more individuals, mainly from the dales including Chee Dale NR (Paul Beard), Lathkill Dale (Sandra Douglas) and over 50 seen in Biggin Dale (Rod Dunn), so this species has had quite a good year considering it first emerged in late March 2012. The Holly Blue has been noted from a number of gardens recently within the County, but the Common Blue has yet to produce any large counts, with the exception of the 35 seen at Stanton Ironworks on the 25th May 2012 (Jim Steele). Similarly, the migrating Brown Argus has only appeared at a few sites including Drakelow NR (Tom Cockburn), on wasteland near the centre of Chesterfield (Roy Frost), as well as Stanton Ironworks, where 6 were seen on the 26th May 2012 by Richard Rogers.

Possibly fortunately, the Brown Argus resident in the Peak District has not been recorded to date, bearing in mind the forthcoming Bank Holiday weekend weather is forecast to be the of the usual British Standard type, with rain and cold winds!!!

However another BAP species has now emerged in the Peak District, the Small Heath, and it has also been recorded fairly widely in other parts of Derbyshire, away from its stronghold in the dales and on the moors. In the south of the County sightings have been received from Botany Bay, Overseal, & Gunby Lea Woods (Dot & Barry Morson), Drakelow NR & Swadlincote Woodlands (Tom Cockburn), Stanton Ironworks (Jim Steele), Woodside NR, Shipley (John Blackburn & Jim Steele), and at a new site at Eyes Meadow, Duffield (Mick Ball).

Finally, it is pleasing to note that the Wall Brown has been seen recently fairly widely in the Peak District, including the Peak Fringe area, although sightings are mainly of 1 or 2 individuals. Records for the period 23rd May 2012 to the 30th May 2012 have been received from the following locations:-

Leash Fen (Mick Taylor); Bradwell (John Atkin); Middleton Moor Lagoon and Clough Wood (Roy Frost); Hathersage (Robert Davies); Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour); Longstone Edge (Paul Beard & Angie & Alan Seymour); Chinley (Frank Bell) and further south from Hopton (Jim Steele); Gang Mine, Wirksworth (Gary Atkins) and Alport Heights (John Barker). In an attempt to establish the special requirements that this species seems to have for egg laying, Pat and I have this week been videoing the female Wall Browns who were seen inspecting overhanging rocks and also the overhanging edge of the topsoil strata at Longstone Edge for suitable places to lay their eggs. It would be very useful if any other recorders were able to observe any behaviour relating to choice of sites for egg laying and then advise me accordingly. We do know that this species prefers 'rocky outcrops' and these do not necessarily have to be on a large scale, as Tony Pioli found out earlier this week when he saw 2 at Wardlow Hay Cop at the site shown on the attached photograph.



Update 15 - 25th May 2012

Well what a contrast in the weather during this week in Derbyshire, so much so that many butterfly species decided that by lunch time it was even too hot for them, and they disappeared into the undergrowth. Nevertheless, it meant that the Dingy Skipper was seen in good numbers in most parts of the County, whilst 3 new species also made an appearance. The migrating Brown Argus was first noted on the 21st May 2012 at both Stanton Ironworks (Darryn Nash) and Woodside NR, Shipley (Jim Steele) and a further individual was seen today (by Pat & Ken Orpe) at Foston in the South West of the County. This is an indication that this species is trying to do a 'pincer movement' by approaching the Peak District from the South West, as well as the previously known attempt from the direction of Chesterfield in the North East of the County.

The next new species noted was the Small Heath which was seen on the 22nd May 2012 at both Stanton Ironworks (Jim Steele & Colin Bowler) and also at Pleasley Pit (Max & Christine Maughan), so this species could well appear in the Peak District this weekend.

The third new species was confirmation of the emergence of the Wall Brown, when an individual was seen on the 23rd May 2012 at Longstone Edge (Brian & Jean Hallam). There have been a few 'possible' other sightings of this species, but at the moment the butterfly appears to be very mobile and can make confirmation difficult, but it is likely that an individual was also seen today at Whaley Bridge (Alan & Angie Seymour), so this is another butterfly species that could well be noted in the Peak District this weekend.

Update 14 - 16th May 2012

Despite there still being a dearth of butterflies in the general countryside it is pleasing to note that a further 2 new species were noted in the County over the last weekend, with a Common Blue seen at Crich Chase Meadows on the 12th May 2012 (Kieron Huston), together with a number of sightings of the Small Copper during the period 12th -

14th May 2012. Records were received from Crich Chase Meadows (Kieron Huston); Clough Wood (Simon Roddis); West Hallam Tip (Pat & Ken Orpe); Longshaw (Helen Naylor); Jim Mart NR (Paul Beard); Eyes Meadow, Duffield (Mick Ball); and Breadsall Cutting (Col Bowler). Also observed during this period were fresh individuals of both the Large White and also the Speckled Wood, whilst the Holly Blue was noted at Allestree (Sue Sharp); Darley Park (Pat & Ken Orpe); Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour); and just over the border in Toton, Notts (Marion Bryce).

Thanks, also, to all the recorders who made the effort to check sites for the Dingy Skipper last weekend and consequently this species was noted at a number of locations in the south and east of the County, including Crich Chase Meadows (Kieron Huston); Mercaston (Kath Patrick & Nick Brown); Intake Quarry (Pat & Ken Orpe); Shipley CP (George Cox); Stanton Ironworks (Richard Rogers); Heanor & Stanton by Dale (Paul Townsend); West Hallam Tip (Pat & Ken Orpe); and Swadlincote Woodlands (Andy Large). Hopefully the next 3 weeks will provide some favourable weather for additional surveys to be carried out at more sites so that we are able to monitor the status of this BAP species within Derbyshire.

Finally, thanks also to the many transect walkers who managed to complete their surveys last weekend, as it was the best weather since the transect season started, despite some sites still having a nil result. Surely things can only get better – we hope so, and very soon!!!

Update 13 - 10th May 2012

Since the last Update there has been a sighting of a Red Admiral in the County when an individual was seen at Crich Chase Meadows by Kieron Huston on the 30th April 2012, but the general trend of low butterfly numbers and species continues unabated. However, the first new species to emerge in the County for over a month was noted on the 8th May 2012 when Brian & Jean Hallam saw a fresh Dingy Skipper at Longstone Edge in the Peak District. As it is possible that a high pressure system may actually coincide with a weekend so as to produce a sunny period of weather, it may be that this small BAP species could soon be on the wing at other locations, so it could be worth checking on some of the 'brownfield' sites in other parts of Derbyshire. Meanwhile in the Peak District there could also be sightings of the Wall Brown at some of its favoured locations, so any records of this BAP species would be much appreciated as well.

Update 12 - 3rd May 2012

As expected the Met Office has confirmed that April 2012 was colder than March 2012, and also that it was the wettest April ever, with rainfall being three times the average for this area of the UK, so when the sun finally came out on the 30th April 2012 it was a real bonus to see so many butterflies around. Thanks go to all the recorders and transect walkers who managed to get out on the day and take advantage of the brief break in the weather conditions and then email me their sightings. A total of 9 species were noted including at least 20 Brimstones, many Orange Tips, some Small and Green Veined Whites, Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks, Commas and Speckled Woods, but the surprise was that of a 'tatty' Holly Blue which was seen in the Darley Dale garden of Rod Dunn. Now this individual probably emerged in late March 2012 so to survive 30 days of cold, wet and windy conditions is quite remarkable for such a small butterfly.

Yesterday (2nd May 2012) we were fortunate to get another warm and mainly sunny day and again the butterflies responded with the same 9 species being recorded, but this time there were sightings of pristine Holly Blue butterflies at Whaley Bridge (Angie & Alan Seymour), Newhall (Andy Large), Langley Common (Kath Patrick & Nick Brown) and Darley Park (Pat & Ken Orpe), so it appears that this species is trying to recover its status in the County this Spring. Additionally yesterday, Steve Orridge reported fresh Green Hairstreak butterflies on the moors above Buxton, so if you are planning a visit to the Peak District this coming Bank Holiday weekend and there is a chance of some sunny weather, then you could well be able to see this species, either on the moors or within some of the limestone dales. In any event, it would be good if you could email me your butterfly sightings.

There are a couple of species that were not seen during April 2012, despite being noted up to the end of March 2012, and they are the Large White and the Red Admiral. No doubt the former species will be seen as soon as we get some prolonged sunshine, but the latter species might not re-appear until we get some migration of them from the nearby Continent, which at the moment looks very unlikely.

As we enter May, it is usual for a number of new species to emerge within the County so hopefully it will not be too long before the following resident species can be seen – Small Copper; Common Blue; Brown Argus; Wall Brown and Dingy Skipper. The last 2 named are both BAP species in Derbyshire and it is really important to check on their status each year, so I would appreciate any sightings of them that you make in the County. The Wall Brown is now virtually confined to the Peak District, whereas the Dingy Skipper can be seen both in the Peak District and on mainly 'brownfield' sites in the rest of the County. I am therefore asking if many of you can participate again in surveying these sites so that we can monitor the existence, or otherwise, of this rare and threatened species.

Butterfly Conservation (East Midlands) has produced a schedule of the sites that were monitored in 2011 so please let me know if you would like me to email you a copy of the document.

Thanks very much in anticipation of your continued help with the project.

Update 11 - 24th April 2012

The heavy snow of the 4th April 2012 together with the subsequent sharp frosts and cool air flow since has had a dramatic effect on the populations of our local Lepidoptera. Since that date it is not too surprising that very few records have been received, and indeed there have been no sightings of 4 species that had previously been seen during March 2012, namely, Large White; Holly Blue; Green Hairstreak and Red Admiral. The Brimstone was experiencing a good Spring emergence with sightings from over 40 localities in the County but since the change in the weather, there has been only 1 further sighting at Allestree on the 20th April 2012 (Steve Plant). Also, the Comma had been observed from a similar number of localities but, again, there has been only 1 further sighting, this time at Drakelow NR on the 11th April 2012 (Tom Cockburn & Mike Williams).

The remaining species that had been recorded before the end of March 2012 (Small White; Green Veined White; Orange Tip; Small Tortoiseshell; Peacock; and Speckled Wood) are making only brief appearances in the current spell of wet and cool conditions with only brief sunshine between the heavy showers. The maximum counts received of the Speckled Wood butterfly are 4 on the 17th April 2012 at Long Eaton (Marion Bryce), and a healthy 10 on the 22nd April 2012 seen by Simon Beavis on his allotment in Derby. Meanwhile, the harbinger of Spring in the butterfly world, the Orange Tip, is making a determined effort to make its presence felt with records from 35 localities in Derbyshire, and it is such a pleasure to see this species in both gardens and whilst walking in the countryside during this cold April, which may have the distinction of being colder than March during 2012!!!

Finally, the Butterfly Interpretation Board at Carsington Water was officially declared open yesterday by Sally Pepper of the BBC at a ceremony outside the Wildlife Centre. Despite the changeable weather, a film on butterflies and their habitats, (which have been created by Severn Trent Water and the many volunteers there), took place afterwards, and the result is due for transmission on BBC1 TV East Midlands Today this Thursday evening (26th April 2012) between 6.30 pm and 7 pm. One can only hope that the subject receives more time on air than the 15 seconds that was shown last year!!!

Update 10 - 3rd April 2012

Since the last Update a number of very interesting butterfly records have been received, so it is thanks to members of this egroup who take the time and trouble to inform me of what is happening locally during these highly changeable weather patterns that we are currently experiencing.

Further sightings of the Speckled Wood have been received including one on the 29th March 2012 at Nottingham University Main Campus (Marion Bryce), together with individuals seen on the 30th March 2012 at Holymoorside (Bob Merritt) and Darley Park (Pat & Ken Orpe), and finally sightings at both Ilkeston (Mick Pollard) and West Hallam Tip (Pat & Ken Orpe) on the 1st April 2012. A further Red Admiral was noted at Kelstedge on the 28th March 2012 (Karen Wright) and another Holly Blue was recorded in the Botanical Garden area at Nottingham University on the 30th March 2012 (Marion Bryce).

Two new species have emerged before the end of March – one was expected, and the other was a new County record. The Large White was noted at Kirk Ireton on the 30th March 2012 (John Matkin) and at Thurstaston on the 31st March 2012 (John Abrehart), but the complete surprise was the emergence of the Green Hairstreak on the moors in the Peak District. Derek Whiteley informed me that a member of the Sorby NHS in Sheffield (David J Morris) had seen 8 of this species flying around bilberry on the 28th March 2012 at Ronksley Moor in the Upper Derwent Valley – this being the first ever March record for this species in Derbyshire that I am aware of. Then followed sightings of the Green Hairstreak at Lantern Pike near Glossop on the 1st April 2012 (Frank Bell), both these records beating the previous earliest date of the 6th April (2007). Also, Barry Shaw (B C Cheshire Recorder) emailed me to say that this species had been recorded in that County on both the 27th & 29th March 2012 – again another first March record for a County.

So as you retire to bed later tonight just spare a thought for those little tough critters that are hoping to survive a snowstorm on the high ground in the Peak District – life can be really tough!!!

Update 9 - 30th March 2012

What an amazing spell of sunny and warm weather we have just experienced in Derbyshire during the last ten days, with the temperatures varying here in Derby from 2c to 22c during the same day!!! No wonder our wildlife is somewhat confused for the time of year, but it didn't prevent reports of additional butterfly species seen within the County.

First of all, the Speckled Wood was noted at Glossop on the 22nd March 2012 by Dave Mallon, and this was followed by sightings on the 27th March at Darley Dale (Rod Dunn) and the 29th March at Allestree (Steve Plant). This species was then followed by the Holly Blue which was first seen at Creswell Crags on the 25th March 2012 (per Kieron Huston), then the next day by Peter Faulkner at Two Dales, followed by a sighting at Darley Park (Ken Orpe) on the 27th March and finally at Mickleover by Mike Thompson on the 29th March 2012. A confirmed Green Veined White was seen on the 26th March 2012 at Matlock Bath (Pat & Ken Orpe) followed by another at Drakelow NR on the 28th March (Tom Cockburn). But the real surprise for many observers (including myself) was the appearance of so many Orange Tips for March, which commenced on the 25th of the month at Haddon Hall (Kieron Huston) and was carrying on up till today (30th March 2012). The areas of the County where they were noted include Creswell Crags, Darley Dale, Two Dales, Whaley Bridge, Jim Mart NR, Clay Cross, Ogston, Conksbury, Cressbrook Dale, Ramsley Moor, Whatstandwell, South Normanton, Allestree, Findern, Midway, Drakelow and Swadlincote Woodlands – a truly remarkable range for so early in the year. The areas of the County where the Brimstone has been sighted recently is also very impressive with records from Lathkill Dale, Carsington Water, Darley Dale, Hilcote, West Hallam Tip, Spondon, Whatstandwell, Willington GP, Weston Underwood, Thurstaston, Burnaston, Mackworth, Mickleover, Overseal, Drakelow, with maximum counts of 5 individuals seen on the 25th March 2012 at Forbes Hole NR (Marion Bryce) and also on the 26th March 2012 at Creswell Crags (Kieron Huston, Nick Brown & Tim Brooks). A further 2 records for the Red Admiral have been received since the last Update – Tony Warren saw an individual at Codnor Park Reservoir on the 17th March 2012, and Colin Bowler saw one in his garden in Mickleover on the 27th March 2012, so it is pleasing to note that at least ten of this 'over-wintering' species have survived the last winter here in Derbyshire. What is even more surprising is that a Humming Bird Hawk moth was seen by Rod Dunn on the 27th March 2012 at Darley Dale – I wonder if it was the same individual that was seen at Cromford on the 10th March 2012? Thanks again to the members of this egroup for making this report possible, and for the emails that were received from the following additional recorders during the last 6 days (Max & Christine Maughan; Viv Evans & Michael Glendenning; Alan Jones; Sue Jones; Nikki Mahadevan; Helen Naylor; Angie & Alan Seymour; Simon Roddis; Ray Walker; Sue Sharp; David Howson; Martin Hall; Dave Drury; John & Aline Roberts; John Abrehart; Petra Hedges; Caroline Wakefield; Keith Walker; Dot & Barry Morson; Dave Clay; Ian Wilson; Mike Williams; Alan & Karen Roe – with apologies if I have missed anyone).

The first of April sees the commencement of the butterfly transect recording season so it is great to report that at

least 5 new transects will be commenced this year in the County. So many thanks to all the recorders who have volunteered to either carry on from last year or who have agreed to get involved this year. Four new sites are as a result of a decision by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to carry out this important survey work on their nature Reserves (Millers Dale Quarry; Chee Dale; Avenue Washlands and the new Shipley NR). However, the Lathkill Dale transect is short of a couple of volunteers to carry out survey work this year at this Natural England site in the Peak District, so if you would like to become involved in the work, then please send me an email and I will put you in touch with the relevant person.

Finally, a joint venture between Severn Trent Water and Butterfly Conservation (East Midlands) has enabled a Butterfly Interpretation Board to be erected this week in front of the Wildlife Centre at Carsington Water (see attached photo). Since the reservoir was first opened, many volunteers have helped to carry out butterfly transects at this important site, which is at the junction of lowland Derbyshire with the Peak District uplands. A total of 24 species of butterflies been recorded there during the last 18 years and these, together with a further 6 species that could well arrive in the near future, have been illustrated on the board. So, next time you visit Carsington Water take time to check it out, and, better still, send me some more [butterfly records from the site](#), or [any where else](#) where you happen to be in Derbyshire!!!



Update 8 - 24th March 2012

Since the last Update the weather has been a mixture of cold nights and mainly sunny days but the countryside is fairly devoid of butterflies at the moment possibly because the life cycle of the emerging spring species is being held back due to the night temperatures. Nevertheless, a very early Orange Tip was noted on the 11th March 2012 at Allestree Park (Mick Day) and on the same date, a Green Veined White was seen at Hoveringham, Notts by Richard Penson. However, no further sightings of these 2 species have been noted since that date. A few more Small Whites have been noted from the South of the County at Midway (Mike Williams), Mickleover (Max & Christine Maughan) and Allestree (Sue Sharp). A further Red Admiral was seen at Findern on the 20th March 2012 (Brian & Jean Hallam) and the remaining records have been of the 4 hibernating species (Brimstone; Peacock; Comma and Small Tortoiseshell). Thanks go to the following additional recorders who have submitted sightings to me during the last 12 days (Sue Jones; Nick Brown; Kath Patrick; Simon Roddis; Dave Williams; Angie & Alan Seymour; Andy Large; Paul Townsend; Margaret Spencer; Gerald Williams; Trevor Taylor; Colin Bowler; Marion Bryce; Dave Clay; Mick Pollard; Ray Walker; - apologies if I have missed anyone).

With the promise of more fine weather to come in the next few days, hopefully we will see the appearance of more butterfly species, including Holly Blue, Speckled Wood, Large White, and in the Peak District, the possibility of a first ever March record of the Green Hairstreak.

Update 7 - 12th March 2012

Before the spring equinox arrives, it is usual at this time of the year for us to experience a spell of mild and sunny weather in this part of the UK, and Sunday the 11th March 2012 certainly lived up to expectations. It was very pleasing to receive so many emails from recorders, many of whom experienced the thrill of seeing their first butterfly of the year. All 4 of our hibernating species were noted during the day with records for the Brimstone coming from Findern, Long Eaton, Drakelow NR and Allestree Park, together with sightings of the Peacock from Long Eaton, Drakelow NR, Allestree, Mickleover, Kedleston Park and the Longshaw Estate in the far north of the County. The Small Tortoiseshell was seen at Mickleover, Findern, Chellaston LNR, Coton in the Elms and Allestree Park whilst the Comma was noted at Carsington Water, Kedleston Park, Chellaston LNR, Long Eaton and Drakelow NR. (since the last update, thanks go to Colin & Nici Bowler; Nick Brown & Kath Patrick; Richard Rogers; Lisa Booker; Mark Sherwood; Brian & Jean Hallam; Mike Williams; Tom Cockburn; Alan & Angie Seymour; Derek Whiteley and Felicity Jackson, with apologies if I have missed anyone).

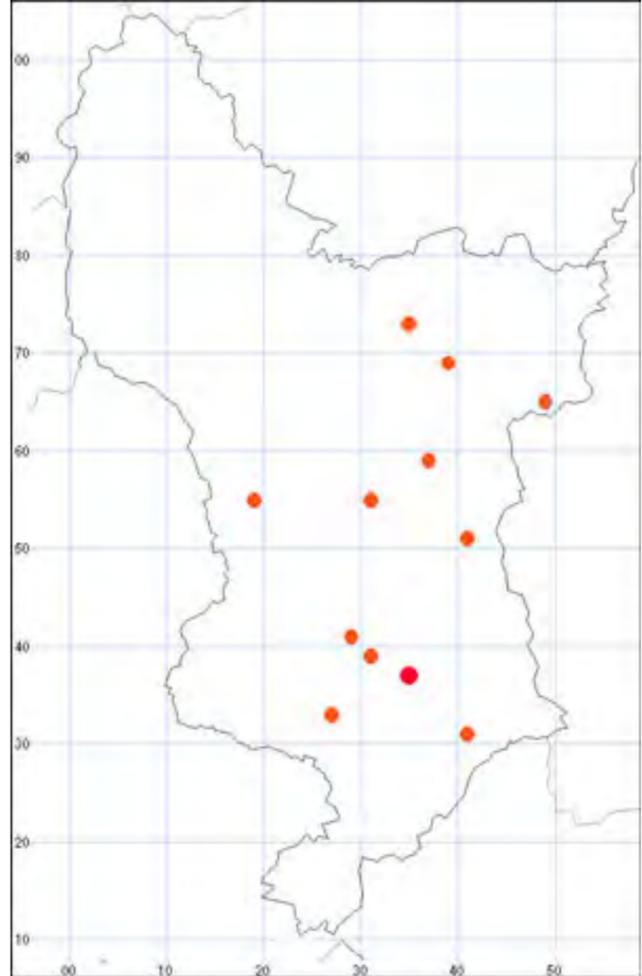
Unfortunately very few Red Admiral records have been received recently, with Ken Hughes sighting one in his garden in Draycott on the 28th February 2012 and Kieron Huston noting another individual whilst walking along the Cromford Canal near Ambergate yesterday (11th March 2012). Also, today, just over the County border in Nottinghamshire, Marion Bryce saw 2 individuals of this species on the main University Campus in Lenton, Nottingham.

The first record of a butterfly in Derbyshire to emerge from a pupa this year comes from Brian Hobby of Kirk Hallam when, on the 7th March 2012, a Small White flew round his computer room, presumably having entered his house last Autumn as a caterpillar and deciding that it was an ideal place to prepare for a quick start to life in the Spring. This was followed yesterday by a further Small White flying in the Allestree garden of Sue Sharp, which suggests an imminent general emergence of this species is due very soon in the County. If the fine weather continues, other species that could well emerge this week include Green Veined White, Large White, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and, for me, the harbinger of Spring, the Orange Tip.

A very interesting sighting was received from Richard Taylor this week who informed me that Peter White had a Humming Bird Hawk Moth flying around his spring plants in his garden in Cromford on the 10th March 2012. This is further evidence that this superb day flying migrant moth is now increasingly 'overwintering' in our County, similar to the current situation with the Red Admiral butterfly.

On a final note, the 'Elms for White Letter Hairstreak' project is now attracting media coverage and I have attached an article that appeared in today's edition of the Derby Telegraph outlining the scheme, together with a list of the places in the County where disease resistant elms are currently being planted. It is hoped that other wildlife groups,

local authorities etc will join the 'crusade' to help one of our rarest resident butterflies, which in 2011 was noted from only 12 localities (see the attached distribution map), despite thorough searches at sites where they were previously seen. As the species is not easy to observe, it is intended to carry out a visit to one of its favoured sites which happens to be in the centre of Derby, probably on a Sunday morning in late June 2012, when the butterfly should be on the wing. I will inform members of this egroup of the place and date nearer to the event as it will be very much a last minute decision based on weather conditions prevailing at the time.



Subject: White Letter Hairstreak – 12 squares recorded in 2011

17-01-12 DET

12th MARCH 2012 - DERBY TELEGRAPH

DERBY TELEGR

Dozens of new trees could halt 'serious decline' of rare butterfly

BY CHRIS JONES

A RARE type of butterfly could prosper in Derbyshire after community groups decided to plant a new kind of tree to help it breed.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is interested in helping to preserve the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly within the county.

The creature – with its distinctive brown wings shot through with jagged white streaks – breeds on elm trees, the numbers of which are in decline after the ravages of Dutch Elm disease.

But the trust, along with groups including Derby City Council and Amber Valley Borough Council, are set to plant dozens of Autumn Gold elm trees, a particular variant of elm tree, which is resistant to the disease.

It is hoped that these new trees will then provide a haven for the butterflies.

Kieron Huston, senior local wildlife sites officer at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, explained how the project would work.

He said: "We aim to create a network of breeding sites for White-letter Hairstreaks in the future."

"The work is long term and forms part of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's living landscape strategy in which we aim to ensure animals and plants can survive and disperse throughout the county in the coming decades."

The living landscapes plan

is a new way of working for the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. It will see members work with farmers, schools and homeowners to encourage them all to work conservation into their routines.

In this way, the trust has asked local volunteers to help plant the Autumn Gold trees at sites across Derbyshire including West Park Meadows, Nutwood and Darley Abbey, Ferrer's Way and Allestree Park, Duffield Millennium Meadows, Carr Wood in Ripley and Pennytown Ponds in Somercotes.

In total, more than 60 trees

"This is a very important project for the county's biodiversity."

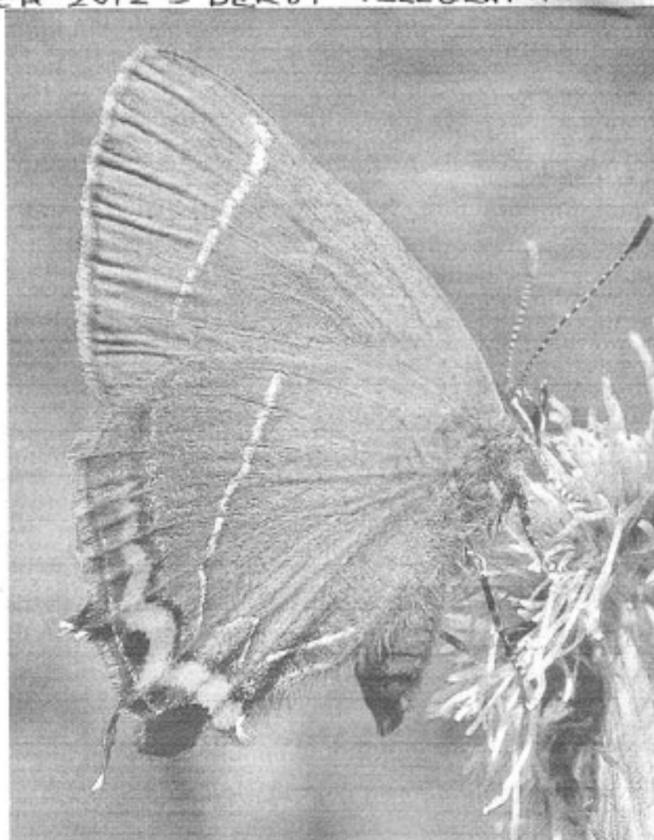
KEN ORPE

are to be planted over the coming weeks, with more pencilled in for the autumn.

The Derbyshire Wildlife Trusts' Appletree Hundred and Trent and Lower Derwent groups are helping to carry out the work, alongside volunteers from St Mary's Charity and Butterfly Conservation.

Tree officers – experts on tree conservation – from Derby City Council and Amber Valley Borough Council, and members of the University of Derby are also helping to supervise the work.

One area which will be populated with the new trees is Elm Wood local nature re-



Above, a White-letter Hairstreak butterfly. Left, volunteers planting the trees, from left, Anne Morgan, Rod Starbuck, Elaine Starbuck, Richard Norton, Di Hancock, Ken Orpe and Pat Orpe.

lands, said he hoped the work could stop the butterfly's numbers declining.

He said: "We are at the northernmost edge of a national problem, which is causing the serious decline of this rare butterfly."

"By planting disease-resistant elms now, we hope to reverse the situation here in Derbyshire. This is a very important project for the county's biodiversity."

chrisjones@derbytelegraph.co.uk

serve, in Moor Lane, Al-

lenton. The woodland is more than 400 years old and one of only two woodland areas in the city classed as ancient, the other being Chaddesden

Wood, in Oakwood.

Volunteers there are planting about 20 of the Autumn Gold trees.

Ken Orpe, the Derbyshire Recorder for Butterfly Conservation in the East Mid-

Update 6 - 2nd March 2012

Since the last Update there have been a few sunny days which have tempted out additional numbers of our hibernating butterflies with a Brimstone seen on the 23rd February 2012 at Millfields, Carsington Water (Petra Hedges), 2 Peacocks at Drakelow NR on the 24th February 2012 (Tom Cockburn) and a Small Tortoiseshell on the 25th February 2012 at Kelstedge (Karen Wright). However, the first 2 days of March 2012 has seen quite a surge of sightings in the County and the pleasant surprise is that the Brimstone has been seen at a number of sites including Carsington Water (again) (Lisa Booker), Overseal (Dot Morson), Findern (Brian & Jean Hallam) and Ilkeston (Martin Hall). Also records have been received for both the Small Tortoiseshell and the first records this year for the Comma on the 1st March 2012 in the Whaley Bridge garden of Angie & Alan Seymour. I also saw a Peacock in Darley Park on the 1st March, but today (2nd March), Pat and I were pleased to see a Red Admiral basking on some gravel in our garden in Allestree. This is the first sighting of this species in the County since the 15th February 2012 and it is possible that the severe cold and snow of the first 2 weeks of February 2012 has had quite a detrimental effect on

'overwintering' numbers of this species in this part of the UK.

A joint venture that started in January 2012 between both the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation (East Midlands) to fund and promote the planting of disease resistant elms in the County is gathering pace and it is great to report that various wildlife groups in Derbyshire will be planting their trees on Nature Reserves and public spaces commencing this weekend. The project is aimed to protect one of the rarest resident butterflies, the White Letter Hairstreak, which is totally reliant on elm for its survival. If you belong to a Community Group, a Parish Council or a local Natural History Group, then Derbyshire County Council has 'Greenwatch Action Grants' available until the end of the month, with grants of up to £500 per project, in order to benefit the local environment and enhance the Biodiversity in the County, such as the Elms for White Letter Hairstreak project. If you would like details of the scheme, please send me an email and I will forward the link to you.

Update 5 - 24th February 2012

It is really pleasing that the first 'spring like' day of the year produced a number of butterfly sightings in the County yesterday (23rd February 2012). After a cloudy start here in Derby, the promised blue skies started to emerge around lunch time and, with the temperature rising to around 18C, Pauline Mycock had the perfect start to her 'butterfly year' when, at 12.30 pm, she saw a male Brimstone flying in her garden at Breadsall Hilltop. She said that it gave her 'a lift' and I think we all know what a good feeling it is to see your first butterfly of the year, and better still when it is a perfect male Brimstone!!! Further records followed during the day, with Mike Williams seeing a Peacock at Findern Marina, and Andy Large seeing both Brimstones and a Small Tortoiseshell in the wooded areas around Rosliston in South Derbyshire.

Earlier in the month Paul Townsend reported a Red Admiral at Dronfield on the 15th of February 2012, so the only expected species yet to be recorded in Derbyshire this month is that of a Comma, unless, of course, you know something different!!!

Update 4 - 5th February 2012

With the first heavy snowfall of the Winter now upon us, it is pleasing to note that BBC TV is going to show a 3 part series to remind us of warmer days ahead, hopefully sooner rather than later. The series is called 'Bees, Butterflies and Blooms' and the intention is to show us how we can assure the future of pollinating insects by planting suitable shrubs, flowers etc. The first programme is to be shown on BBC2 at 8 pm on Wednesday 8th February 2012.

Meanwhile, the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) is proposing to carry out butterfly transects at a number of their Nature Reserves, starting in 2012. In order to help volunteers, I have agreed to hold a 'teach in' at the Belper offices of the DWT on the 27th February 2012, commencing at 11 am. If you are interested in volunteering for this important project, then, either turn up on the day, or send me an email so that I can forward it on to the correct contact. The transect season starts on the 1st April and there is usually a rota for the volunteers so that the survey work is organised to suit individual commitments. After all, what could be better than walking through the spectacular Derbyshire countryside knowing that you are contributing to the knowledge of our local butterflies?

Update 3 - 11th January 2012

Despite the mild spells of weather that we experienced earlier this month, there has been very little butterfly activity in the County, with the exception of an early Small Tortoiseshell seen on the 10th January 2012 in the Belper garden of Dave Evans. Also, a Red Admiral was seen flying around an office at County Hall in Matlock by Brenda Dunn on the 26th January 2012 and it promptly flew out of an open window, no doubt looking for some nectar nearby. What was a very interesting record of another Red Admiral, over the County border in Leicestershire on the 16th January 2012, was an individual flying in the garden of Eliot Taylor at Glenfield when the temperature was only 3c, following a sharp overnight frost. This is certainly the lowest temperature that I have heard of a butterfly flying in the wild and it shows that these strong flying insects can possibly extend their range in to the Arctic Circle in northern Norway.

As a final note on the 2011 butterfly season here in Derbyshire, records that have been received show that 6 species were seen at their earliest date (and 2 species equalling the previous earliest date), and 5 species were seen at their latest date (with again 2 species equalling the previous latest date). Of particular interest was the first appearance in the County of both Common Blue and Brown Argus (migrating version) in April, together with the first sighting of Dark Green Fritillary in the Peak District during May. Later in the year, the warm and sunny Autumn ensured that there was a partial second brood for both the Dingy Skipper and the Brown Argus (Peak District Race), although both species were in very low numbers. The season finally ended with sightings of both Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell in late December 2011.

Next Sunday (5th February 2012), the BBC1 TV programme 'Countryfile', together with the help of members of Butterfly Conservation, will be showing a feature on the Brown Hairstreak butterfly in the Blackdown Hills on the Devon/Somerset border. Unfortunately, this species does not occur in Derbyshire but we do however have small colonies of the White Letter Hairstreak (WLH) butterfly, whose existence is entirely due to elms. Unfortunately, this species is under pressure at the moment due to further losses of elm trees within the County as a result of the resurgence of Dutch Elm Disease. The latest national distribution map for the WLH clearly shows that there has been a dramatic reduction in colonies of this rare insect to the south of 100km grid line SP, which runs through the City of Leicester. Recently, the local group of Butterfly Conservation together with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT), and also Derby City Council, have joined forces to finance the purchase and planting of disease resistant elms in the County so as to try and help the situation. Following a recent meeting at the University of Derby, a number of other wildlife groups and local authorities pledged support for this important project, so it is pleasing to report the interest and commitment from like minded groups in Derbyshire. If you, or your wildlife group, would like to become involved then please send me an email and I will be pleased to forward your request on to the organiser at the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

Finally as we enter February, and probably our coldest spell of weather for this winter, it is worth remembering the 6 Peacock butterflies seen hibernating by Alan Roe on the 22nd January 2012 in a tunnel on the Calke Estate – the

must have known what was heading our way weather-wise!!!

Update 2 - 11th January 2012

With all the media coverage of the early emergence of many wild flowers and wildlife generally in the UK, together with the local evidence of the early arrival of Spring, it is pleasing to report the first 2012 sighting of a butterfly here in Derbyshire. Martin Hall noted a Red Admiral at 11.30 am this morning, which was seen flying around a garden in Ilkeston, which possibly could have been the same individual seen by him on the 24th December 2011 at the same locality. Interestingly, this latter date is the latest County record for this species, whereas today's sighting is 1 week later than the earliest County record, which stands at the 4th January (2007).

Any further early butterfly sightings would be appreciated, especially of the Comma, whose earliest County date is the 18th January (2000).

Update 1 - 1st January 2012

It comes as no surprise to report a couple of butterfly sightings over the Christmas period due to the exceptionally mild and relatively sunny weather that we have just experienced, despite there being only a maximum of 7 hours of daylight now. Felicity Jackson had the pleasure of seeing a Small Tortoiseshell outside her kitchen door basking in the sun on Christmas Day, and on the 27th December 2011, Simon Roddis saw another Small Tortoiseshell flying in his garden at Darley Dale. Both these sightings are later than the previous County record for the species, which was the 23rd December (2009).

As most of the 2011 butterfly records have now been received, it is possible to advise on the overall status of some of the more interesting species within Derbyshire, and it is no surprise to report that the Ringlet had another exceptional year with records coming from over 120 localities, compared to only 32 back in the year 2000. The continuing thorough surveys for the Dingy Skipper in the County resulted in sightings from over 60 localities in 2011 (similar to 2010), and well in excess of the 28 squares in 2000, which was of course prior to the project commencing. Interestingly, one of our BAP species (the Small Heath) is managing to maintain its status in Derbyshire with records from 83 squares in 2011, compared to 81 in 2010, and 85 in the year 2000.

The two butterfly species that have spread into the County since the New Millennium are still making steady progress on their migration NW across Derbyshire, with the Essex Skipper reported from 31 localities in 2011, and the Brown Argus sighted at 29 localities during the year, despite some poor weather during the peak flight period in the summer. However, our resident Brown Argus in the Peak District has had a very poor year with total numbers seen down to less than 100, and these sightings coming from only 15 localities, so let's hope for a vast improvement in weather conditions during July and August 2012.

Unfortunately, despite thorough searches by many of the contributors to this egroup, the Wall Brown appears to have now become restricted to the Peak District, with the highest counts coming from 'rocky outcrops' on the 300 metre contour. The latest distribution map for 2011 indicates that this species is on the 'high risk' register and was seen at only 25 localities, compared to 110 in the year 2000. During this period numbers of insects seen has also crashed from around 700 to less than 100 in 2011.

On the migrant scene, both the Painted Lady (33 squares) and the Clouded Yellow (5 squares) had another poor year in the County, but the Red Admiral appears to be going from strength to strength and has now virtually become a Derbyshire resident, whose population is 'topped up' each Spring. In fact this species was seen at over 200 localities during 2011 and was noted during every month of the year, including sightings on every day during the 4 months between July and October, and on at least half the days during November. This confirms its status as certainly capable of 'overwintering' in this part of the UK, no doubt as a result of global warming, considering that 2011 was the second warmest on record and that 7 of the warmest years ever have occurred during the last decade.

Thanks very much again for sending me your butterfly sightings during 2011 – the recording network here in Derbyshire is second to none, and with your help, I look forward to carrying on monitoring these fascinating insects during 2012.

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