

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

EAST MIDLANDS BRANCH - MEMBERS' DAY & AGM 2025

(held at 10.15am on 23 November 2025 at Allestree Club, Allestree, Derby)

Thirty-one people were in attendance.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jim Steele, Eliot Taylor, Geof Adams, Margaret Adams, Pat Orpe, Neil Pinder

2 MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2024

Having been published on the branch website <https://www.eastmidlands-butterflies.org.uk/news.html>, these were taken as read.

3 BRANCH ORGANISER'S ADDRESS – Richard Jeffery

RJ welcomed everyone to the 2025 AGM and Members' Day and explained that the formal business would be completed during the first hour, allowing the rest of the day for informative presentations.

Having been acting in the role of Branch Chair since Jane Broomhead stepped down at the last AGM, RJ was prepared to take on the role, and retain the position of Acting Newsletter Editor in the short term.

He commented on personnel changes during the year: Rhona Goddard, Regional Conservation Officer, had left BC; her replacement in the new role of Conservation Manager, Central Region, was Jamie Wildman and he looked forward to working closely with him in the future; Amy Ross had stepped down from her voluntary role as Conservation Officer for Derbyshire to take up a position with BC as Head of Ecology Services for England, but she would still be involved with the branch on a voluntary basis. He wished them all well in their new ventures.

RJ gave an update on membership, provided by CM: as of 26 September 2025, the branch had 1344 household memberships, compared to 1360 a year ago. The number had dropped to 1330 in January 2025 so there had been a slight recovery during the year. All new members were now welcomed centrally by BC Head Office and not by the branch.

In an update on field trips MM had reported that six field trips had been planned for this year, although one (Cloud Wood in July) was cancelled due to poor weather conditions. In total, 49 people had attended and 21 species of butterfly and day-flying moths had been recorded. An appeal was made for volunteers to come forward to lead a field trip in 2026.

RJ reported that during autumn/winter 2024/25 ten work parties were carried out for the Notts Grizzled Skipper project, led by Chris Jackson and supported by a team of dedicated volunteers, and ten were planned for this winter.

Election of Officers: a list of current committee members, all of whom were willing to stand again, was presented:

Branch Organiser/Chairperson - Richard Jeffery (RJ)

Treasurer/Events Organiser - Jane Broomhead (JB)

Butterfly Recorder for Derbyshire & Regional Transect Co-ordinator - Ken Orpe (KO)

Butterfly Recorder for Leicestershire & Rutland and National Forest Representative - Richard Jeffery (RJ)

Membership Secretary & Butterfly Reports Co-ordinator - Christine Maughan (CM)

Conservation Officer & Moth Officer - Melanie Penson (MP)
Field Trip Organiser - Max Maughan (MM)
Newsletter Editor (Acting) - Richard Jeffery (RJ)
Committee Members: Suzanne Halfacre
Nick Sparrow
Gary Atkins

RJ invited a proposer and seconder from the floor to re-elect the committee en bloc.

Proposed: Steve Orridge

Seconded: Simon Young

The nominees were duly re-elected.

RJ appealed for anyone interested in joining or working with the committee to come forward.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Jane Broomhead was invited to give her report.

JB confirmed that BC Head Office Finance Department had now changed the way branches run their accounts, and they no longer received funding from membership. Budget proposals for the next financial year 2026/27 had to be submitted by the end of November, so our budget would be set (if approved) for the coming year.

During the current financial year, the branch was almost on track with the budget set last November, although some of the planned conservation work was still being sorted due to delays, and waiting for contractors or land owners. The ongoing major project for the GS in S Notts was now underway, under the leadership of Chris Jackson from Nottinghamshire CC, and details of the work parties were on our website for anyone able to help. She hoped that in the future there would also be GS work parties in Leics. Work at Bardon Hill in Leics had not yet taken place owing to a mix-up with a funding grant from Aggregate Industries. It was also hoped that conservation work on several other sites including Markham Vale and West Hallam would be completed by the end of this financial year.

Regarding sales events, JB confirmed that she had attended 8 events throughout the four EM Branch counties, of which the biggest was the Global Bird Fair at Rutland Water over three days in July, where she had been supported by 8 branch members and Ian Paterson from the Lincolnshire Branch. The total takings so far this year were £3586.13. She thanked everyone who had helped at events and appealed for anyone able to help at the next Global Bird Fair from 10 – 12 July 2026 (mileage costs would be paid).

RJ concluded the formal business by thanking his fellow county Butterfly Recorders and their Verification Assistants for verifying and processing countless butterfly records throughout the year; JB for leading sales events throughout the region, raising funds and awareness for EMBC, and for planning future budgets; MP for her work on the Clearwing and Forester moth projects, and for her active role in the county Local Nature Recovery Strategies; and fellow committee members in their individual roles for keeping the branch running smoothly. On behalf of the committee, he also thanked members for their continued support throughout the year which was vital in enabling the branch to speak out for our butterflies and moths in the region.

The formal meeting closed at 10.35am.

4 BUTTERFLY RECORDING – DERBYSHIRE - Ken & Pat Orpe

KO first showed a video of Purple Emperors recorded in Derbys last summer.

He then gave a review of the year. In terms of weather in 2025, it had been the warmest and driest on record, but not the sunniest, particularly during August. These conditions had led to an increase in butterfly numbers recorded on transects by 120% over 2024, especially in lowland Derbys.

The warmest and sunniest spring ever had resulted in 1100 hibernating butterflies seen flying in the first 3 months of 2025, the 6th highest during the period since 1995. Other butterflies that had done well this spring included Orange Tip, Whites, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper. The good weather had also resulted in new records of earliest sightings for several species across the county: Brown Argus (Peak District Race), Large Skipper, Meadow Brown, Dark Green Fritillary, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, and Essex Skipper. Latest county records beaten (so far) were Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak, the latter as late as 12 October, 10 weeks later than previous records.

There had been more positive news in 2025:

- Small Copper had done well in late summer/autumn;
- Some species had partial third broods in autumn 2025 – including Holly Blue, Dingy Skipper and Wall;
- Essex Skipper had reinforced its population at Lightwood above Buxton;
- Purple Emperor had consolidated its status in Derbys with 5 sightings in the south of the county (first sighting of the species on a transect), and a further 5 sightings in the north-east of the county;
- Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady had reasonable years;
- The Blue family performed better in the second brood including the Common Blue and Brown Argus;
- Marbled White made steady progress north, including the first sighting at Hoe Grange Quarry (33 species now recorded on site);
- The use of neonicotinoids was banned – a 40,000 BC petition had been submitted.

KO then gave more detail about the spread of Purple Emperor within the county, and the progress of Wall further south and east, in conjunction with an increase of 20% in its numbers.

An analysis of records had revealed that the increase in numbers of butterflies had not been uniform across the county: increases in the Peak District were lower than other areas in 2025 as they had not lost so many in the poor year of 2024.

East Midlands transects totalled 231 in 2025 (Derbyshire 153, Nottinghamshire 33, Leicestershire 46), an increase of 25 since 2024. Figures had not yet been published from other regions to establish whether the branch was still leading the country, ahead of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. 500 volunteers were involved, walking a distance of 1.5 times round the world, with 350 of those carrying out transects in Derbyshire.

Under the Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme, which involved four surveys a year from May to August over a set route, all 15 sites had been walked in 2025 with an increase of 100% in numbers recorded. A vacancy still existed at Bradley near Ashbourne and KO asked for anyone interested to see him.

A total of 20 butterfly banks had now been created in the county and most of the limestone (400 tonnes) had been provided free of charge by Longcliffe Quarries Ltd.

Online entry of transect data on the UKBMS site had been completed by more than 120 volunteers during 2025 and KO was looking for another 10 people to undertake direct entry next year. He commented that the flow of data on record sheets had gone smoothly, enabling timely resolution of any queries.

He summarised the results of the 2025 Big Butterfly Count across the region, with counts all showing an increase on 2024. The most common butterflies recorded were Large White, Small White, Gatekeeper, Peacock, and Red Admiral. The number of whites had been increased by a lot of migrants from the continent.

KO concluded by confirming dates of forthcoming events:

- Work party at Coombs Dale jointly with Peak District National Park volunteers on Sat 13 and Sun 14 December 2025 (10am – 3pm);
- Transect training and butterfly ID on Sunday 1 March 2026 at the Allestree Club with KO;
- Transect training day on 14 March 2025 at Pleasley Pit with Willy Lane.

There would be no Open Day at Hoe Grange Quarry next year.

KO also invited subscribers to his email newsletters for latest sightings and photographs, which currently had 1850 subscribers.

5 BUTTERFLY RECORDING - NOTTINGHAMSHIRE – Steve Mathers

(a pre-recorded video presentation was shown, summarised as follows:)

A review of 2025 - 'A much better year for butterflies in Notts'

SM commented that the weather had been good with a record 12 species flying by 1 April thanks to the sunny, warm spring. The summer had also been warmer, drier and sunnier than the average for the region. As a result, the number of butterfly records had increased to 25,000 so far, excluding the Big Butterfly Count, and analysis showed a progressive increase in recording across the county over time, excluding 2020 and 2024 which had been adversely affected by Covid and bad weather respectively.

For the fifth year running 32 species had been recorded in Notts during 2025. SM reviewed those butterfly species worthy of note:

- Speckled Wood was the highest recorded species;
- Common Blue had a good year;
- Small Tortoiseshell appeared to be regaining some of the losses during previous years;
- Green Hairstreak had continued to expand its range from the original linear distribution between Nottingham and Mansfield, and was being recorded further east in Sherwood, and south of Newark, particularly along the Sustrans route;
- Clouded Yellow had shown its second-best year since 2000, and records were based on the number of recorded sites, rather than individual sightings which could positively skew the data;
- Painted Lady had a poor year;
- Purple Emperor appeared to be infilling its range between the two established sites of Sherwood Forest and Cotgrave Forest (introduced population);
- Silver-washed Fritillary was now being recorded at an increased number of sites, spreading from its initial release sites.

SM highlighted several moth species moving into county from S England: L-album Wainscot, Cypress Carpet, and the very impressive Clifden Nonpareil which had been increasing in numbers since 2019.

In summary, SM discussed the move by Government from 'conservation' to 'species recovery' through providing grants to restore and save threatened species. In Notts, the species most affected had declined mainly due to habitat loss or national trends. Grizzled Skipper was the most threatened, and considerable efforts had been made over the last 15 years to boost its numbers locally through conservation and

monitoring, but as it was at the northern limit of its range and was not scarce elsewhere it was unlikely to be a national priority. He commented that some of the most successful reintroductions/releases/relocations in Notts had been made by small groups or individuals in a clandestine manner (for example Purple Emperor, Marbled White and Silver-washed Fritillary), and questioned whether conservation organisations should now engage with these individuals to take advantage of their expertise to formulate future grant proposals. He concluded by encouraging recorders to record everything, but that records relating to reintroductions etc should possibly be categorised and held in a separate data set as only through establishing a timeline and understanding of these species would it be possible to inform future re-establishment and recovery of these species.

6 BUTTERFLY RECORDING – LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND – Richard Jeffrey

RJ summarised transects in VC55 for 2025, presenting a map which indicated that most were concentrated on the western side of the region, especially in the National Forest and Charnwood areas. Launde Big Wood further east was a new site in 2025, and he was hopeful that a new transect would be added at Market Harborough in the SE corner of the region for 2026. There were no transects in Rutland.

He highlighted the nine new transects which had been added in 2025. Graphs showing the increase in the number of transects from 2017 to 2025 showed a strong correlation with the total number of butterflies recorded during those years, except for 2024 which had been adversely affected by bad weather.

The top four butterflies were the same in 2024 & 2025: Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Gatekeeper & Speckled Wood, but in a slightly different order. RJ then highlighted some of the more notable transect records in 2025 including those of Wall, Dingy Skipper, Common Blue, Purple Emperor, Marbled White and Silver-washed Fritillary.

A UKBMS 50th Anniversary Event had been held at the Study Centre - Bardon Hill Quarry on 13 November 2025, and RJ expressed his thanks to all transect recorders.

Total butterfly sightings for 2025 processed to the current time through iRecord and iNaturalist (excluding transect records) had shown a 68.9 % increase over 2024, and notable sightings included new sites for Green Hairstreak, Black Hairstreak & White-letter Hairstreak, and 6 distinct locations for Clouded Yellow.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for VC55 had been launched in July 2025, and RJ summarised the status of the 8 priority species covered by the plan (Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Wall, Black Hairstreak, Small Heath, White-letter Hairstreak, Dark Green Fritillary and White Admiral). Although most were increasing in numbers, White Admiral was a cause for concern, and Grizzled Skipper was barely hanging on in Leicestershire, but he hoped it would gain more attention in the future.

Other notable sightings for 2025 were Clouded Yellow recorded at 6 locations, and Swallowtail with 4 records in the Charnwood area, although these were likely to have been unauthorised releases of the Continental sub-species.

Break for coffee

The following presentations were then delivered:

THE EAST MIDLANDS CLEARWING & FORESTER PROJECT 2021–2025 – Melanie Penson

MP summarised the project, now at its half-way point, by listing the main achievements so far:

- Eight Clearwing Training Events had been run in 2024 and 2025 in Sherwood Forest, targeting Welsh and Large Red-belted Clearwings, but also including Yellow-legged;
- A total of 47 participants from RSPB, Sherwood Forest Trust, Forestry England and students from Brackenhurst Campus of NTU had taken part;
- 460 Clearwing and Forester records had been added to East Midlands data set on iRecord since July 2021;
- Information had been provided on threatened Clearwings and Foresters to all three Nature Recovery Strategies;
- 5,300m of Large Red-belted habitat (adults to lure and larval signs) had been mapped onto the Notts NRS database in March 2025;
- Further sightings and areas of habitat found in May 2025 were to be added when practicable.

MP commented that recent use of a new luring system had been more reliable and had produced better records.

Distribution maps of individual species for periods between 2010 and 2025 were then described in more detail. Gaps in distributions were generally attributable to unsuitable habitats, and concentrations were often due to more diligent recording:

- Cistus Forester – mainly in the White Peak, doing reasonably well;
- Forester – a priority species, recorded from the Clumber/Budby area of Notts, and Charnwood in Leics, but the former stronghold in the Peak Fringe and Coal Measures of Derbys had disappeared. Restoration of Coal Measures grassland was necessary to create suitable habitat;
- Large Red-belted Clearwing – management at Sherwood Heath was being trialled;
- Red-belted Clearwing – recorded all over Nottingham city and around Leicester, but in restricted habitats of old orchards. None had been recorded in lowland Derbys;
- Hornet moth – recorded all over S Notts, Loughborough & Leicester, but appeared to have died out in W Derbyshire (Hilton Gravel Pits). A suburban moth, it tended to move through a landscape, dependent on ailing poplars;
- Welsh Clearwing – restricted solely to Sherwood Forest;
- Yellow-legged clearwing – reliant on oak trees, and was now being found anywhere.

MP commented on a record of Raspberry Clearwing from Spalding in Lincs, suggesting that it could be in our region too but not yet found.

Future work for 2026 onwards would be to:

- Continue monitoring Welsh and Large Red-belted in Sherwood, including population dynamics and effects of habitat management;
- Look for Sallow Clearwing in Leicestershire and South Notts in 2026 (and 2028);
- Continue leading training days across the East Midlands for Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and other landowners/managers/friends-of groups;
- Continue working with all three Nature Recovery Strategies on our most threatened species;
- Document habitat restoration for Forester at Markham Vale in Derbyshire and target Coal Measure Grasslands across the County and into Notts as part of their NRS;
- Add a specimen chapter of her book onto the EMBC website by March 2026.

MP thanked everyone who had helped with this project so far, landowners who had allowed access, Stephen Mathers for mapping and iRecord support, and all the recorders.

50 YEARS OF THE UKBMS AND PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF 45 YEARS OF TRANSECT RECORDING IN DERBYSHIRE – Ken Orpe

KO summarised how transect walking had been developed in 1975 at Monks Wood Experimental Station and the first transect had been walked in nearby Potton Wood on the 10th of April 1976. During that year a total of 39 sites were monitored across the UK. By 1979 the first Derbyshire transect was set up in Lathkill Dale NNR, and was still being walked in 2025.

To date 715,000 surveys had been completed and volunteers had walked 950,000 miles covering 7,000 sites resulting in 41m butterfly records (Meadow Brown being the commonest at 11 million sightings). Currently about 3,000 sites were monitored.

KO outlined his own involvement starting with his first transect in May 1981 on an old railway site in Derby (recording his first butterfly, a Wall), and later Breadsall Cutting, West Hallam Ash Tip and Aston Brickyards. According to BC he was believed to be the third longest time-served transect volunteer in the UK!

He itemised statistics relating to East Midlands transects and how the data had revealed information about the phenology of certain species over time, affecting flight times and numbers of broods. Data gathered had also highlighted movement of species either into the area with subsequent colonisation, or movement within the region to more favourable habitats (eg Wall).

KO concluded by commenting on several species which could possibly migrate from the continent into the UK and subsequently appear in the East Midlands.

He thanked all the volunteers monitoring over 200 sites for their continued support.

Break for lunch

This was followed by a presentation on:

DERBYSHIRE MOTHS: THE DERBYSHIRE MOTHS RECORDING TEAM AND DERBYSHIRE MOTHS WEBSITE
by Tony Davison, Joint Derbyshire Moth Recorder for Micro and Macro Moths which featured tackling verification of the backlog of Derbyshire moth records, and setting up the new and very informative website.

*The event concluded with a selection of **Members' photographs**.*

RJ thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.

Christine Maughan (minutes)