

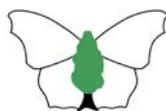
EAST MIDLANDS Butterfly

ISSUE 67 - AUTUMN 2020

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Wall Brown in Derbyshire**

**The Purple Emperor in
Leicestershire & Rutland**



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



**East
Midlands
BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATION**

Conservation for the whole of Derbyshire,
Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire & Rutland

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Cover Picture:
Puss Moth
in Glenfield
Photo:
Eliot Taylor

To the Autumn 2020 issue of the East Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation's Newsletter. Thanks to all those who have contributed articles for this issue.

What strange times we've been living in since March. Just when the butterfly transect season was about to start, the UK went into lock-down. All the branches field trips had to be cancelled because of Covid-19, as were the branch committee meetings.

You might ask, does this mean that the content of this Autumn's newsletter is going to be limited? Not a bit of it. There's news of the continued expansion of the Purple Emperor into our region, Ken Orpe has put together the results of a 25 year survey on the status of Wall Brown in Derbyshire and Bill Bacon give us an update on the Grizzled & Dingy Skipper Project.

Let's hope for a better 2021. Stay safe everyone.

Eliot Taylor

Purple Emperor Day

A merry band of members enjoying a Purple Emperor larva search in Central Nottinghamshire at the end of August 2020.

Dennis Dell an expert on the Purple Emperor and the species Champion for the East Midlands Branch is shown in the centre of the photograph on the left. Three larva were found and the site of a fourth located.



Above: Dennis Dell and others.
Photo Jane Broomhead.

Right: Purple Emperor larva
Photo: Samantha Brownley.

Photo far right:
Dennis Dell.

Branch Organiser's Notes

Who could have foreseen at the Transect Training Days back in early Spring 2020 organised by our Derbyshire Recorders Ken & Pat Orpe that Corona virus would completely turn the butterfly year upside down. Suddenly there was no recording, no transects, no field Trips, no money making events and no Bird Fair.

So what happened? The Government encouraged local exercise, the quieter roads and countryside benefited wildlife and people found they had time to check out what was in their own garden or local patch of countryside. Unfortunately by the time lock-down eased for myself it was nearing the end of the Dingy Skipper season and I was very disappointed by the low numbers of these butterflies on my transect. The numbers were extremely low for both Dingy Skippers, Common Blue and Small Heath. Did I leave it too late or like me are you becoming aware that Brownfield Sites, especially the old pit sites, are becoming too fertile. Grass is taking over where the Birds Foot Trefoil grew, gone are the bare rocky patches of ground. I feel that there is much to do in order to recover all the hard work we have done on these sites over the last ten years. I hope with the help of our new Regional Officer, Rhona Goddard, working in partnership with other organisations, we can change the downward trend.

Summer brought warmth and vast amounts of Tortoiseshells (41 on my large Asters and Buddleia), other butterflies did well too, Silver Washed Fritillary and most notable His Imperial Majesty, the iconic Purple Emperor. There were 15 sightings in Leicestershire and also at Cotgrave Forest in Nottinghamshire. There were also sightings in central Nottinghamshire much to the delight of our species champion and Iris Expert, Dennis Dell. The question on everyone's lips was where these releases? As a Branch we receive reports of Butterflies 'which should not be in our area' every year. These reports are recorded by the County Recorders, but not sent to Head office. It is generally thought that if the Butterfly is being recorded from the same site year after year, especially if larva is found then the butterfly should be included in recording. It is still early days for the Purple Emperor in the East Midlands, released or not, nothing can beat seeing this butterfly on the ground or watching its horned larva feeding on sallow.

Roll on 2021 and a wish for a return to normal everyday life. Keep safe.

Jane Broomhead
Branch Organiser

We are looking for members who would be willing to do a transect at Sherwood Heath and Vicar Water, Notts. Please email Jane Broomhead for further information malcsmonkeys@hotmail.com



Purple Emperor
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

25 Year survey of the Wall Brown in Derbyshire

– Ken Orpe

Probably the most iconic butterfly in Derbyshire during this Century is the Wall Brown which has disappeared from vast swathes of Southern England since the start of the New Millennium.

Top: Female Wall Brown

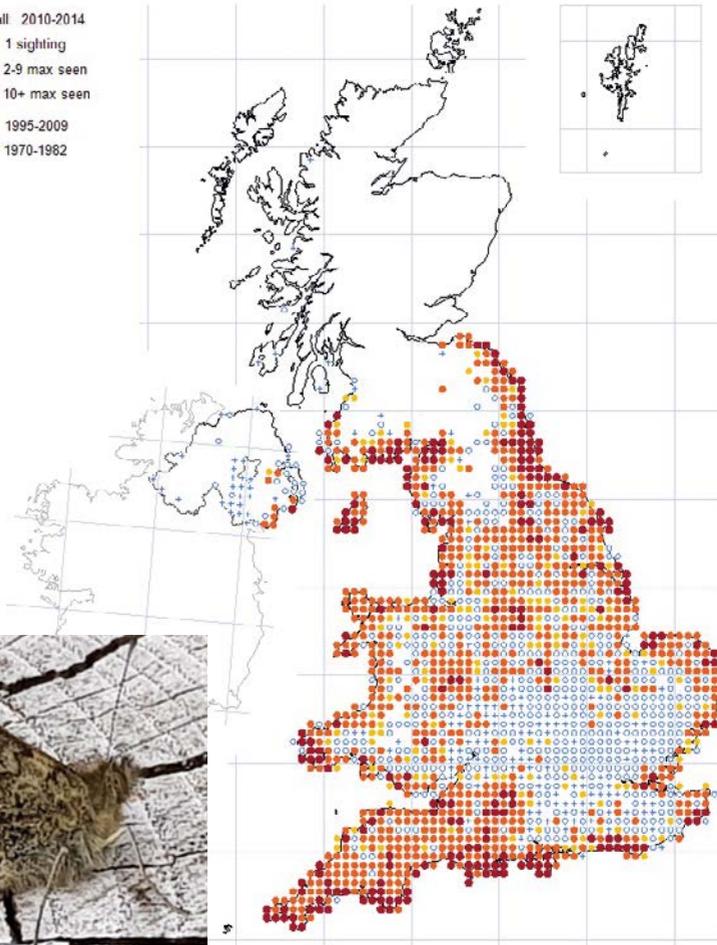


Bottom: Male Wall Brown (photo Derek Brownlee)

Below: Wall Brown underside (photo Eric Easom)



Wall 2010-2014
 ● 1 sighting
 ● 2-9 max seen
 ● 10+ max seen
 ○ 1995-2009
 + 1970-1982



Not only has its distribution changed but also its lifestyle has changed with eggs being laid on grasses which occur mainly at rocky outcrops on the 1,000 foot contour so Lowland Derbyshire has suffered the most in recent years whilst the distribution of the species is now mainly confined to the Peak District.

I have summarised the numbers seen together with the tetrads that the species has been seen in during the last 25 years here in Derbyshire (see table below) and

it can be seen that the low point was in 2008 when the Wall Brown was only noted in 19 tetrads with a total of just 37 butterflies seen. Move forward to 2019 and the butterfly was seen in 149 tetrads with a total of 1133 butterflies seen! Also noteworthy is the fact that it is trying to re-colonise former areas in Lowland Derbyshire although 5 sites in the South and 11 sites in the North East of the County is no comparison to 124 sites in the Peak District in 2019.

Below: Wall Brown butterfly results in Derbyshire during the last 25 years (Ken Orpe)

YEAR	TETRAIDS SEEN	TETRAIDS SEEN	TETRAIDS SEEN	TETRAIDS SEEN	TOTAL	TOTAL	AVERAGE PER	FIRST SIGHTING	LAST SIGHTING	NOTES
	PEAK DISTRICT	PEAK FRINGE	IN NORTH EAST	IN SOUTH	TETRAIDS	NUMBERS	TETRAD	IN YEAR	IN YEAR	
1995	7	2	22	31	62	343	5.5	5th May	29th October	Third Brood
1996	19	3	32	27	81	293	3.6	14th May	23rd October	Third Brood
1997	34	5	27	21	87	274	3.2	2nd May	31st October	Third Brood
1998	24	4	28	38	94	269	2.8	14th May	20th September	
1999	15	6	47	27	95	377	4.0	4th May	5th October	Third Brood
2000	24	7	57	22	110	643	5.9	2nd May	30th September	
2001	14	0	43	14	71	285	4.0	12th May	28th October	Third Brood
2002	17	3	39	11	70	295	4.2	23rd April	24th October	Third Brood
2003	30	1	27	10	68	264	3.9	4th May	18th October	Third Brood
2004	28	2	27	8	65	305	4.7	7th May	15th September	
2005	35	3	20	6	64	179	2.8	9th May	25th September	
2006	31	1	12	6	50	157	3.1	28th May	21st September	
2007	24	0	6	1	31	75	2.4	14th April	23rd October	Third Brood
2008	9	1	8	1	19	37	2.0	9th May	20th September	
2009	21	2	2	0	25	67	2.7	7th May	22nd September	
2010	26	4	9	0	39	94	2.4	15th May	5th September	
2011	26	1	2	0	29	104	3.6	11th May	29th September	
2012	36	1	2	0	39	209	5.4	22nd May	19th September	
2013	47	4	3	0	54	329	6.1	31st May	6th October	Third Brood
2014	67	1	6	1	75	438	5.8	6th May	2nd October	Third Brood
2015	58	1	2	0	61	452	7.4	15th May	12th October	Third Brood
2016	52	0	5	1	58	316	5.5	9th May	5th October	Third Brood
2017	62	1	6	1	70	567	8.1	23rd April	24th September	
2018	133	6	13	5	157	1391	8.9	5th May	22nd October	Third Brood
2019	124	9	11	5	149	1133	7.6	22nd April	6th October	Third Brood
TOTALS Sightings	963	68	456	236	1723	8896	5.2	14th April (2007)	31st October (1997)	Earliest/Latest



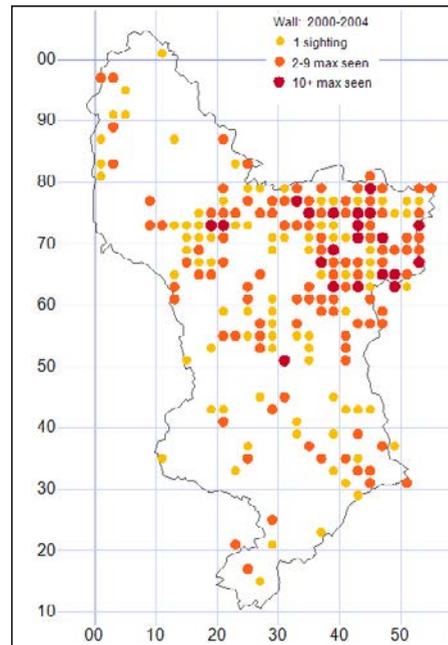
Hoe Grange Quarry
Derbyshire

Also partial third broods have occurred in October during 14 of the last 25 years here in Derbyshire.

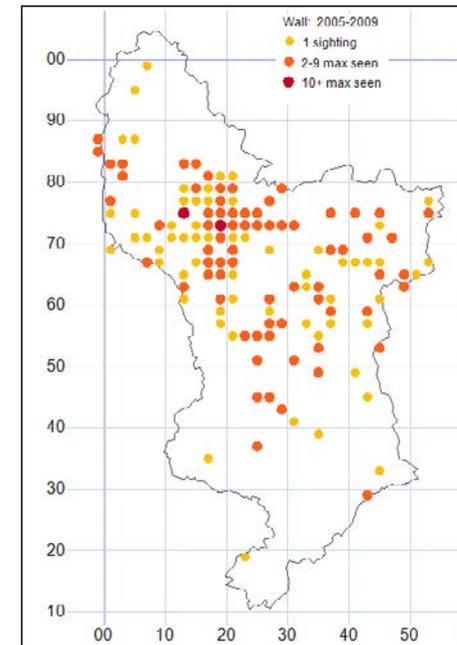
The first Butterfly Nature Reserve here in Derbyshire at Hoe Grange Quarry near to Brassington is an ideal place to see the Wall Brown in the County. The first brood is normally flying from early May to mid June and the second brood is on the wing from early August till mid September with the second brood doing better number wise. Other sites in the Peak District where the Wall Brown can be seen include Longstone Edge, Lathkill Dale, Hay Dale, Grin Low and also on the high ridges of footpaths such as Mam Tor near Castleton and Mount Famine above Chinley Head – these last 2 sites are above the 400 metre contour so good climbing boots are essential!

If you visit Derbyshire and record this butterfly then please email your sightings to me at :- ken@malaga.plus.com

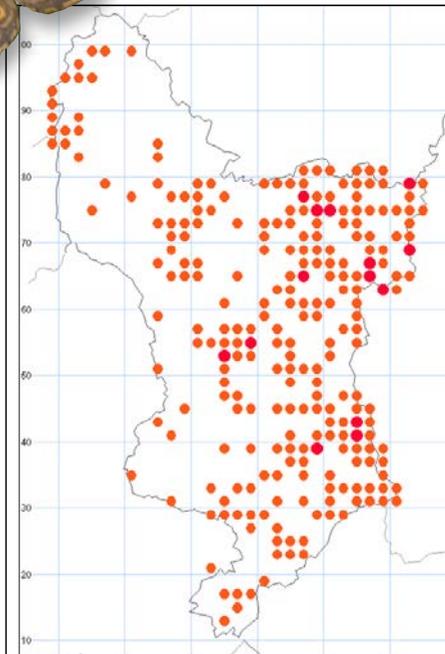
Ken Orpe



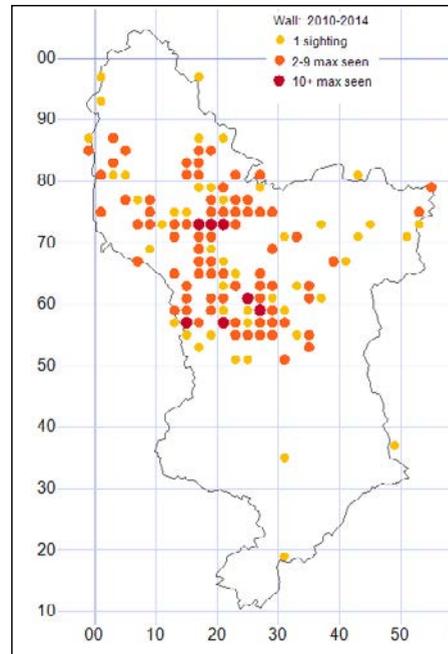
Wall Brown 2000-2004 seen in 208 squares



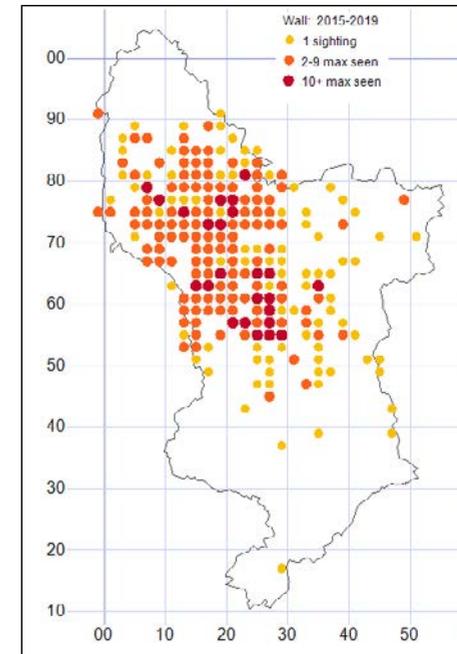
Wall Brown 2005-2009 seen in 134 squares



Wall Brown 1995-1999 seen in 251 squares



Wall Brown 2010-2014 seen in 128 squares



Wall Brown 2015-2019 seen in 225 squares

The Purple Emperor Butterfly in Leicestershire & Rutland

His (or her) Imperial Majesty, the Purple Emperor crossed the county border into Rutland only a few years ago, creating great excitement at the time. I remember rushing over to Rutland Water one afternoon shortly after news filtered through about this initial sighting. Search as I might, I failed to spot him/her. Feeling thoroughly deflated I returned home, wondering whether I would ever witness this remarkable species of butterfly become resident in our counties in my lifetime.

The summer of 2016 saw H.I.M. put in an appearance at Stretton Woods in Rutland, and the following year produced a repeat performance, and, with additional sightings in Clipsham Woods and Pickworth Great Wood, it seemed that the Purple Emperor had decided to settle in Rutland. So, how long would it be before the butterfly ventured into deepest Leicestershire?

The answer to that question was 12 months, for in 2018 Purple Emperor were recorded in Martinshaw Wood and at Sence Valley Forest Park. Seeking out new habitat, it would appear, is in the butterfly's DNA. It was good to hear that the sites where it was recorded in Rutland in 2017 also produced sightings in 2018 too. Last year, 2019, brought more welcome surprises. H.I.M. was recorded at the LRWT nature reserve at Charnwood Lodge on the 16th of July. Five days later came a report of an individual on nearby Beacon Hill, and two days after this a pair were seen on the summit of Bardon Hill. This, to me, was every bit as exciting as hearing about the Large Blue in Somerset or the Chequered Skipper in the Rockingham Forest. I needed my own Purple 'fix'. On a warm but cloudy morning, on the 29th of July, I ventured up to the top of Bardon Hill, looked around the lofty Oaks, saw nothing and

waited...and waited, and after a couple of hours I finally caught sight of a single male Purple Emperor feeding on Oak sap on a reasonably mature tree. A brief glimpse of sunshine encouraged an aerial trip from Oak to Sallow, and then a return trip. This time I left totally elated and determined to make a date with the butterfly in 2020. Would his offspring be prepared to meet me there?

The Purple Empire was expanding, but where would the species turn up next? The new National Forest would be the logical next step, especially as it is over 25 years since the first trees were planted, and parts of the Forest are beginning to reach a level of maturity that would support many species of fauna. Discussions with experts in all things relating to Purple Emperor revealed that the general consensus was that the butterfly was probably already resident, and that we simply had to go out there and find it. The reality of the situation turned out that the butterfly would find us.

On the 1st of July this year Claire Wilsher paid a visit to New Lount Nature Reserve near Coleorton. Along the boardwalk close to the larger of the two ponds she saw and photographed a male Purple Emperor. New Lount itself has many larger, mature trees, Oak and Ash, that would provide suitable lofty perches for males to set up territory, and there is ample Sallow and Willow to provide suitable nursery sites for any resident females. There is a downside to this story, though. A couple of days after this sighting the area was somewhat battered by gale force winds and heavy rains. Subsequent visits proved fruitless. Either H.I.M. had moved on to a more sheltered spot or he had perished in the storm. They are most vulnerable in stormy weather as they tend to be tree top dwellers.

Not actually in the National Forest, but very much in the same area is Cloud Wood LRWT Nature Reserve. This site already hosts a good population of Silver-washed Fritillary, and with abundant Oak, Ash and Sallow it also seemed the perfect place



Purple Emperor at Bardon Hill, July 2019
(Photo Richard Jeffery)

for Purple Emperor to take up residence. On the 17th of July Philip Lee saw and photographed a solitary female Purple Emperor (or Empress). What we really needed was a follow up sighting. We did get one. Eventually. In fact, we had to wait until the very end of the butterfly's recognised flight period for another female to be seen by Tim and Min Bell on the 18th of August. Cloud Wood certainly demands more investigation in 2021.

Sightings of single Emperors, or Empresses, were made high up at Bardon Hill Quarry on the 23rd and 24th of July by five individuals (four separate sightings) and not to be outdone, I made my way over on a warm but windy Sunday morning. I did not have to wait long before a lone Emperor took flight up and around the very same Oak tree that I recorded my first one here in 2019. Son (or daughter) of H.I.M. had kept our date. I am reasonably confident that Purple Emperor will become resident here for the foreseeable future. How long that will last, I do not know. Site management, Climate change and even the butterfly's natural tendency to wander off to find pastures new may all play a role in answering that question.

Perhaps the most bizarre sighting of all was reported by Alexandra Henton. Her sister was staying with her at her farm house near

Gaddesby, to the west of Melton Mowbray. She went upstairs to the bedroom where she saw a very large butterfly on the bed. Alexandra had recently written a review of Matthew Oates' book 'His Imperial Majesty' and knew instantly what it was. Her photograph was duly confirmed as one of a Purple Emperor. Sadly, it is believed that the same butterfly was found dead in the garden the following day.

In total, 15 separate sightings were made in VC55 this summer, with the butterfly also being seen at Rutland Water, Launde Big Wood, Pickworth Great Wood and at Stockerston near Uppingham. All of the sites mentioned above are worth a follow up visit in 2021, but, perhaps more importantly we should be seeking new sites where H.I.M. may already be settled. Any of the larger woods in the National Forest seem fair game. Sence Valley is definitely worth another look. Maybe Hicks Lodge, Conkers, and Willesley Wood could be suitable candidates? Just over the border in South Derbyshire, Ticknall Limeyards near Calke Abbey looks highly promising. I am already looking forward to next summer, but in the meantime I can be content in knowing that Leicestershire and Rutland have well and truly declared themselves Purple.

Richard Jeffery



Above
Viv Russell
(second left)
discussing the
development of
Hoe Grange with
Tony Walker,
flanked by
EMBC's Ken Orpe
(left) and 'Badger'
Walker (right)
(photo Gary Atkins)

The High Sheriff's visit to Hoe Grange Quarry

The brilliant Hoe Grange Quarry reserve acquired another fan in August, when Derbyshire's current High Sheriff, Tony Walker CBE, visited the site as part of a tour of Longcliffe Group, the independent quarry operator that owns Hoe Grange.

Accompanied by Viv Russell, Longcliffe's Group Managing Director, Tony Walker was hosted by Ken Orpe, Derbyshire's Butterfly Recorder, and Ray 'Badger' Walker who keeps a close eye on the reserve's impressive development as resident Warden on behalf of East Midlands Butterfly Conservation (EMBC).

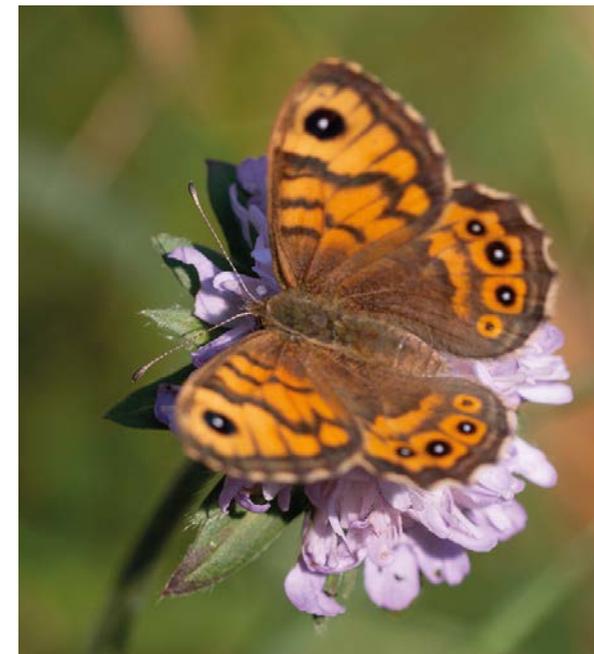
The former Deputy Managing Director of Toyota Manufacturing UK was treated to a comprehensive tour of Hoe Grange, where he saw a number of butterfly species. He was, though, particularly keen to see one of the county's rarest species, the Wall Brown ... and, as usual, Hoe Grange came up with the goods, as one of the sprightly Walls came down from the rocks and settled on vegetation long enough for a decent view.

Hoe Grange has in the past decade developed into one of the top sites in the East Midlands for butterflies. A lot of effort has gone into creating a range

of good habitats, with food plants and other vegetation to attract key species and it has paid dividends as 29 species have so far been recorded at the site.

Viv Russell is very proud of how the former working quarry now supports a wide range flora and fauna. And Tony Walker's evident interest on the day is far from incidental, as he was instrumental in developing a nature reserve at the Toyota site at Burnaston, where members of EMBC – including Ken and his wife Pat – undertake two transects throughout the summer months.

By coincidence, the two Mr Walkers met up in Parwich a few days after the official Longcliffe visit and Tony expressed his delight at what he had witnessed at Hoe Grange and said that he intends to take his grandchildren there as soon as possible.



Above:
Wall Brown
(photo Derek Martin)



Left
Ken (sorry about your back, Ken!) explaining to Tony Walker which species of butterflies are to be found at Hoe Grange – which, in fact, is most of the species on the display board
(photo Gary Atkins)

Butterflies in Members' Gardens and on their Land

There are several, different aspects of the role of Conservation Officer for Derbyshire, but one of the most enjoyable and satisfying must be the offering of advice and support for members who wish to create or improve butterfly habitat in their gardens or land holdings. A number of individuals and organisations have approached me for advice, for which I'm grateful, and in return I do my best to offer good advice and encouragement. I pay tribute to all of you and hopefully there will be an opportunity to cover

some other such initiatives in future Newsletters. Anyone wishing to take the initiative, no matter the size of your garden, please contact me.

One such enterprise is at the home of Chris and Sheila Ragg, who live in Darley Dale, near Matlock. Chris and Sheila have dedicated many, many hours of labour in improving and converting their south-facing garden for butterflies, with considerable and on-going success. Areas of their garden have been sown with various grasses to form mini-meadows for the 'browns' and 'golden skippers', whilst several garden patches have

been planted up with Bird's Foot Trefoil, the caterpillar food plant of the Common Blue and Dingy Skipper. Extensive planting of nectar plants such as Lavender, Marjoram, Hemp Agrimony and Devil's Bit Scabious complement the plants primarily intended to attract the key species to breed. There's even Dog Violet in there for the Dark Green and hopefully, one day, the Silver-washed Fritillary!



Wall Brown (Photo Eliot Taylor)

Chris says 'Our plan all along has been to attract as many species of butterfly to breed and visit our garden, and we have just recorded our twenty-second species, of which fourteen have now bred with us. Dingy Skipper has been seen but it has still to breed – we are determined that it will!'. Twenty-two species is no mean achievement, and is a testament not only to Chris and Sheila's hard work and determination, but also to their obvious love of butterflies. 'We hope that our efforts here will inspire others locally and further afield to do what they can to improve their gardens and land for the benefit of our beautiful butterflies'. I couldn't agree more.

Jim Steele,
Derbyshire Conservation Officer
(email: jim_steele@btinternet.com).



I send out regular e-newsletters to branch members (approximately once a month, particularly during the butterfly season) to keep our members informed of forthcoming walks and events, and importantly about any changes or additions to the programme.

However, our e-newsletters are sent via the national Butterfly Conservation database so you will only receive East Midlands Branch e-newsletters if you have given permission for Head Office to contact you electronically with their newsletters such as All Aflutter. As a result of the changes to data protection legislation which were introduced in 2018 all members were asked to update their email preferences in order to continue receiving this information.

If you don't already receive them and would like to keep up to date with our news you can subscribe by using this website address: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/about-us/email-newsletter/email-preferences>

You can of course unsubscribe to this means of circulation at any time in the future.

Christine Maughan
Membership Secretary

photo Chris Ragg



Dingy and Grizzled Skipper Project

For twenty years the Dingy and Grizzled Skipper Project has been the region's flagship conservation project. During the twenty years up to the turn of the century many species of butterfly were in decline. Here in the East Midlands the Dingy and Grizzled Skippers were seen as most at risk with decreases in excess of 40%. From this background, at the turn of the century, the East Midlands Dingy and Grizzled Skipper Project began. It has been and is a remarkable success.



Dingy Skipper on Birds-foot Trefoil at Ketton Quarry
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

Survey Work in 2020

The COVID19 pandemic led to a nationwide lock-down that was eased on 30th March. A limited number of surveys were made beginning about 23rd April where recorders were able to visit sites close to home. A further relaxation of the lock-down rules from Wednesday 13th May permitted unlimited amounts of exercise outdoors. This coincided with the approaching peak in numbers of both Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and provided the freedom for surveys to be made much on a par with recent years. Few records were made after the first week in June. A partial second generation of Dingy Skippers emerged during August. Weather overall was very kind during the flight season; during the second half of April there was plenty of sunshine with daytime temperatures well above normal. May proved to be the sunniest on record beating the previous record of June 1957. It also turned out to be the driest May on record with just 17% of the average rainfall for the month. The good weather brought frustration to those who felt it wise or had to stay at home.

Dingy Skipper

Most of the Dingy Skipper sites in our region are to be found in Derbyshire. Generally counts were rather lower than last year but there were several notable exceptions. Intake Quarry, a large, dormant sandstone quarry, which can be relied on to provide a modest single or low double figure count, produced numbers well above any previously seen with one recorder counting in excess of 200 on a single day. The spread of the butterfly continues. In spring seven previously unreported sites were discovered at most of which just a singleton was reported. Historically single-brooded other than in the south of England, each year during the last few years a number of second brood Dingy Skippers have been encountered in Derbyshire. A record high of ten locations produced sightings in August. These were usually of individuals, but four were seen close together on a single day at Tansley Dale in the Peak District.

In Nottinghamshire most of the records come from old coal mining sites, many of which are

now country parks. Maximum counts tend to be low with single figures or low double figures being the norm. A well established colony at Newstead and Annesley Country Park (NACP) with the adjacent Freckland Wood produced a count in excess of 60, far above any previous figure. Identified traditionally as two individual sites, here, and at several other places in our region, it has become difficult to justify the separate identity of adjacent populations.

In Leicestershire sites are widespread but comparatively few. However there has been a limited expansion. For the first time the Dingy Skipper has appeared Cloud Wood Nature Reserve and in Charnwood it has also colonised a wood at Bagworth, the latter perhaps from the strong colony at nearby Bagworth Heath. As with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, this year provided one site with numbers that were well above all other locations. At Asfordby Hill close to Melton Mowbray a total of 72 Dingy Skippers were recorded. Few visits were made to locations in Rutland this year with several records coming Leicester and Rutland Wildlife Trust reserves.

Grizzled Skipper

The Grizzled Skipper disappeared from its last known location in Derbyshire almost 20 years ago. A local project aimed at reintroducing the butterfly into the county, at Ticknall Lime Yards, is going well. Adult butterflies were seen there on several occasions during May. It was a pleasant surprise when, for the first time, a Dingy Skipper was also recorded there.

In Nottinghamshire the Grizzled Skipper is confined to the southern half of the county. Here it was recorded in each of its four main population complexes. Each of three locations that produced double figure counts was in a complex of sites to be found to the south of Newark. Unprecedented numbers were seen at the linked populations of Kilvington Lakes and Flawborough where, in recent years, the Dingy Skipper has also become firmly established. Elsewhere in the county numbers were generally below average with the population on the Great Central Railway (GCR) near to East Leake almost entirely concentrated to the south of the A6006. Encouragingly, an



Grizzled Skipper Ketton Quarry (Photo Eliot Taylor)

individual was noted nectaring in a garden near to the village of Orston an indication that a small isolated population is surviving on the adjacent but inaccessible active railway. Our greatest current concern is at Langar airfield where some habitat destruction has occurred continuing the trend of the last ten years. The butterfly is still found at a reduced number of spots around the disused airfield and is holding its own on the adjacent disused railway.

Relatively few records were made in Leicestershire and Rutland this year. There was a welcome surprise at Stonesby Quarry where, for the first time in nine years, several Grizzled Skippers were seen. Whether the butterfly has been present all along or has recently recolonised cannot be determined. The reports this year were from almost the same spot as in 2011 and although the larval food plant occurs quite widely in other parts of the quarry the butterfly was not seen anywhere else. The Grizzled Skipper is holding on at Bloody Oaks Quarry and there was an above average count at Asfordby Hill where, as noted above, Dingy Skippers were also seen in large numbers. Although Grizzled Skipper records in Rutland have been few there is no reason to believe that situation is significantly different from that of recent years.

Conservation

Bucking the trend of the continuing decline of most of our butterflies in the East Midlands, the Dingy Skipper continues to thrive and sometimes expand its range. There are dangers. Unmanaged sites are always at risk and even where there is a management plan the emphasis may be on amenity rather than wildlife conservation. In 2007, the then East Midlands branch organiser, Barry Prater, wrote of the Dingy Skipper at Swadlincote Woodlands, "This is probably the strongest Dingy Skipper colony in lowland Derbyshire. The local authority manages the site mostly for amenity". However in 2020 just two adult butterflies were recorded. In many other places populations have remained strong or increased in numbers with double figure counts being not unusual and this year, as we have



Dingy Skippers at Bagworth Heath Woods Country Park
(Photo Elliot Taylor)

seen above, Intake Quarry produced a triple figure count. There, back in 2006, the owners, Hansons, were reported as saying that they were keen to turn this site and others nearby (some still active) into nature conservation areas. The contrast in fortunes between Swadlincote Woods and Intake Quarry is stark. There can be a big difference between an urban site meeting the perceived amenity needs of the local population where the natural environment plays second fiddle and a remote rural spot where wildlife for its own sake is everything.

While we have concerns that some populations of the Dingy Skipper may be under threat from development it is worth bearing in mind that these are mainly populations that did not exist when the Dingy and Grizzled Skipper project was envisaged over twenty years ago. Even with the worst case scenario it is likely the Dingy Skipper will continue to survive and thrive at a much stronger level than when this project began.

The expansion and strength of the Dingy Skipper, particularly in Derbyshire, has allowed conservation action to be concentrated on the Grizzled Skipper. Despite extremely wet weather from September to March, the Nottinghamshire



Grizzled Skipper on Birds-foot Trefoil
(Photo Elliot Taylor)

Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG) volunteer work parties were able to complete a full programme of activity. One of the locations where work was undertaken is the disused railway near to Granby where, in May, for the first time in six years, an individual Grizzled Skipper was seen. It cannot be claimed that this was as a consequence of work party activity, however it can be seen there that the habitat has improved. NottsBAG work parties, arranged by Chris Jackson, the Biodiversity Officer at Notts. County Council, (Christopher.



NottsBAG work party

Jackson@nottscc.gov.uk), were able to go ahead. However the inclement weather of last winter left ground continuously waterlogged. As a result all of the work planned for last winter that entailed contractors using heavy equipment had to be postponed. The intention is to complete this work before Christmas. At East Leake and Bingham, thanks to funding by Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC), in the autumn of 1919 a remote controlled flailer was used

successfully to access steep railway banks. RBC is supporting a similar programme this year.

Chris Jackson is planning to run a series of volunteer work parties as part of the NottsBAG Grizzled Skipper Project again this year. Chris says "We will be running things in a Covid-19 safe environment. This will mean that we will be running sessions that volunteers will need to pre-book onto and we may also be limiting the numbers of volunteers who can attend a session (to prevent the sharing of tools). I would like to run the usual five volunteer work parties and then add in others as opportunities arise as has happened in recent years." Please contact Chris if the idea of participation appeals to you.

In Derbyshire, the joint project between The National Trust and Butterfly Conservation East Midlands to re-introduce the Grizzled Skipper to Ticknall Lime Yards has shown early signs of success. This unique (for the East Midlands) initiative raises thoughts about reintroduction in some other places in our region, particularly in Leicestershire, from where the Grizzled Skipper has disappeared.

There is great excitement about the development of a large conservation project. For the last two years work has been progressing on a Midlands Butterfly Conservation Mosaic Project covering an area that includes all of the East Midlands Region. Work towards securing a substantial grant to fund the project is at an advanced stage and

it is hoped work on the ground will start in 2021. Almost a decade ago a substantial grant from SITAtrust made it possible to initiate the successful NottsBAG Grizzled Skipper project. Now the Mosaic Project brings the prospect of more and wider support for Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, as well as other butterflies and moths, here in the East Midlands.

Bill Bacon

Peter Gamble

It is sadness that we report the death of Peter Gamble on 21st September 2020, aged 93.

Peter was one of Butterfly Conservation's longest standing members and Chair of the East Midlands Branch from 1991-2002. He was born and lived all of his life in Quorn and throughout his life demonstrated an outstanding passion for natural history, especially in relation to the Charnwood Forest area. He became an expert ornithologist and botanist and was a member of the Leicestershire Flora Committee that did so much towards the publication of "The Flora of Leicestershire" in 1988. His passion for butterflies and moths stayed with him for all of his life and he started moth trapping at key sites in Charnwood Forest in 1960's, discovering many noteworthy species, some of which would soon become extinct in the County. The Argent and Sable that he recorded flying in sunshine in Buddon Wood in 1962 was the last sighting of this moth in the county. Peter's local expertise and knowledge was unrivalled and he was a passionate defender of the Charnwood Forest countryside that he loved so much. Despite his wealth of knowledge, he was a very modest man and a good friend to so many local naturalists. He will be sadly missed. Our condolences go to all of his family and friends.

Adrian Russell



Argent and Sable
(Nature Photographers Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo)

Welcome To Our New Branch Members

The Committee extends a warm welcome to new members who have joined the branch since the last newsletter. We look forward to meeting as many as possible at future Branch Events and Field Trips. At 26 October 2020 the Branch has 1347 Household members representing a figure of 1781 Individual members.



East Midlands Butterfly Conservation Committee Members

Branch Organiser: Mrs Jane Broomhead	Tel: 01623 862854	e-mail: malcsmonkeys@hotmail.com
Chairman & Moth Officer for Leicestershire & Rutland: Adrian Russell	Tel: 0116 241 5101	e-mail: adrianpaulrussell@btinternet.com
Grizzled Skipper Projects Officer: Mark Searle		e-mail: marksearle1959@outlook.com.
Web Master: Neil Pinder		e-mail: neil.pinder@ntlworld.com
Sales & Display Organiser: Mrs Jane Broomhead	Tel: 01623 862854	e-mail: malcsmonkeys@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor: Eliot Taylor	Tel: 0116 287 1677	e-mail: eliottaylor@btinternet.com
Publicity Officer: Gary Atkins	Tel: 01335 370773	e-mail: garysatkins@aol.com
Nottinghamshire Conservation Officer: Melanie J. Penson		e-mail: harfangneige2018@gmail.com
Derbyshire Conservation Officer: Jim Steele	Tel: 07850 194502	e-mail: jim_steele@btinternet.com
Field Trip Organiser: Max Maughan	Tel: 01332 511825	e-mail: cm.maughan@gmail.com
Membership Secretary & Butterfly Reports Co-ordinator: Christine Maughan	Tel: 01332 511825	e-mail: cm.maughan@gmail.com
Recorder for Derbyshire & Transect Co-ordinator for the East Midlands: Ken Orpe		e-mail: ken@malaga.plus.com
Recorder for Leicestershire & National Forest Representative: Richard M. Jeffery	Tel: 01455 845112	e-mail: winrich168@btinternet.com
Recorder for Nottinghamshire: Suzanne Halfacre	Tel: 0788 4403 903	e-mail: tinytreasures56@gmail.com
Moth Officer for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire: Mick Ball	Tel: 07594 617047	e-mail: thebugman52@gmail.com
Assistant Recorder for Derbyshire: Pat Orpe		e-mail: patcooperorpe@gmail.com
Regional Conservation Manager - Midlands Rhona Goddard	Tel: 01746 762364 or 07903 038261	e-mail: rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org

The views expressed within this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Branch or of Butterfly Conservation nationally.

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White-letter Hairstreak egg laying (Photo James Playle)



Mating Marbled Whites at Toton (Photo Derek Martin)



Mating Dingy Skippers (Photo Rebecca Bradley)



Dark Green Fritillary at Ketton Quarry (Photo Eliot Taylor)