

EAST MIDLANDS

Butterfly

ISSUE 69 - AUTUMN 2021

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Reports**

**The Return of
The Emperor**

Open Gardens



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



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

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To the Autumn 2021 issue of the East Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation's Newsletter. Thanks to all those who have contributed articles for this issue.

The "stay-cation" has become the new normal this year, with more people getting out in the British countryside and enjoying our wonderful wildlife, including of course butterflies and moths. In fact many species from abroad are now coming to us in increasing numbers in our region. One such moth turned up in my moth trap in early June this year, the *Toadflax Brocade*. I was quite excited that this Red Data Book species should turn up in my Leicestershire garden because, according to my field guide, it was first confirmed as breeding in the UK in the 1950s and is found on shingle beaches along the south coast. However, after posting it on the Butterflies and Moths of Leicestershire & Rutland Facebook page I discovered that there had in fact been many sightings of the moth in the 2 counties this year. That is just one example of how the status of insect populations is constantly changing and shows the importance of recording.

Another species that is making big inroads into our region is of course the spectacular Purple Emperor. You can read about the welcome return of this majestic butterfly to many parts of the East Midlands in this issue.

Eliot Taylor



Right:
Toadflax Brocade
Photo:
Eliot Taylor

Branch Organiser's Notes

As another year comes to an end and we are still not back to normality the Branch Committee have decided to postpone the AGM and Members Day until March 2022. This will now be held on Sunday 20th March at Ravenshead Village Hall on Vernon Avenue, Ravenshead, Nottinghamshire. This is a large airy venue where we can still be sat apart should the need arise. There will be a buffet lunch and hot drinks throughout the day. We are hoping to have a much shorter AGM so that a series of very interesting talks can be arranged. Please see our web site www.eastmidland-butterflies.org.uk nearer the time.

The summer has been a very busy time for showing Rhona Goddard our Regional Officer round various sites in the East Midlands. I have really enjoyed visiting so many marvellous nature reserves and meeting some really dedicated transect walkers, many of whom undertake conservation work on their own site. We have been so long without the means to actually make a difference for butterflies and moths here in the East Midlands it is only now we are starting to realise how much work is required. Rhona in her own words has been 'amazed' by such wonderful sites and I feel like we are going from one of the mundane Butterfly areas, to the place to be. Where else can you see Wall Brown, Purple Emperor and Clearwing moths in good numbers, to name but a few. Work will begin by volunteers and contractors on some of these sites this winter with small scrapes and cutting back and then after the sites have been monitored further work can be authorised.

Chris Jackson (Notts CC) and his hard working work parties are doing more conservation work for the Grizzled Skipper over the winter. Anyone can help with these you don't have to belong to Notts BAG or even be in Notts. Please see our web site for further details.

We hope that in 2022 we can return to a full programme of Field Trips and Events, with new projects on the horizon it promises to be an exciting year.

Jane Broomhead
Branch Organiser

AGM & Members Day

Vernon Crescent, Ravenshead,
Nottinghamshire NG15 9BN.
Sunday 20th March 2022.

The hall will be open from 10am with the AGM at 10.30am.

Stalls, tombola and Informative Speakers.

Further details will be on the web site nearer the time.

Field Trip Reports 2021

Thanks to all the leaders who volunteered to run trips. If you fancy leading a trip to a butterfly area that you know please contact Max the field trip organiser.

Due to Covid problems it was decided to only run field trips in July and August.

Six trips were organised. Unfortunately, the trip to Aston Rowant was cancelled due to bad weather.

We would welcome anyone who would be prepared to lead a trip in 2022. Please contact Max Maughan (details page 19).

Bagworth Heath Woods Country Park

(Leicestershire)

Wednesday 7 July

Only one of the 2 people who booked for the walk turned up, and she had phoned me earlier worried about the heavy rain where she lived. However, it wasn't raining where I was, so I decided to go ahead anyway.

I so please that I did and the lady was delighted to see so many Marbled Whites, well over the 50 that I'd seen the previous Saturday (I gave up counting!). The cloudy conditions enable some good photo opportunities because the butterflies weren't so active. We also saw Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell and Cinnabar Moth. The rain came down when we reached the plateau but there was a fine display of orchids there, where I hadn't seen them previously.

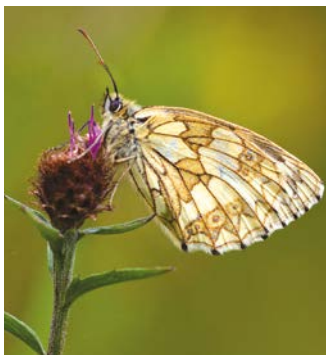
Eliot Taylor

Cloud Wood LRWT

(Leicestershire)

Tuesday 13 July

I had spent the previous few days frantically watching the weather forecast as it varied from potentially being cloudy with intermittent sunny spells to heavy rain for the whole of the afternoon. Fortunately, the former turned out to be correct. A temperature of 20 degrees accompanied by a gentle northerly breeze turned out to be ideal conditions.



Marbled White
(Photo Derek Martin)

There were 11 attendees on the field trip, and during my introductory speech just inside Cloud Wood we were greeted by a low flying Silver-washed Fritillary. That was one of the target species ticked off the list within the first five minutes. If only all butterfly recording was this easy. We took a leisurely wander around this interesting site. It is managed in the traditional way by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, and is coppiced on a regular basis, resulting in a mixed habitat composed of old and new woodland, open rides and an impressively varied range of flora.

We spent a lot of time alternating between looking low down to avoid trampling precious flora and looking up to the tops of lofty Oaks and Ash in search of hairstreaks (we coined the name 'hairstreak neck' as we spent more time looking up than down, and had a stiff neck by the end of

the visit). We spotted several hairstreaks flying on and around some mature Ash trees. Many of us had identical small, close focus binoculars (must have been standard issue) and we determined that these were White-letter Hairstreak. We had ticked off the second of our target species. On our previous visit in 2019 we were lucky enough to record Purple Hairstreak, and whilst there were one or two flying around some of the Oaks on this occasion, no one managed to get a positive identification. On the plus side, more Silver-washed Fritillaries and White-letter Hairstreak graced us with their presence.

I was really hoping that His/Her Imperial Majesty, the Purple Emperor, would put in an appearance as he had done in July 2020, but alas, it was not to be. He did emerge less than a week later. Fingers crossed we see Him or Her next year. Nevertheless, we all had a thoroughly enjoyable and fruitful visit to this gem of a Nature Reserve. Many attendees had never been to this site before, but I am pretty sure that they will return.

The total butterfly count was as follows:

Ringlet 39, Silver-washed Fritillary 9, White-letter Hairstreak, Speckled Wood 2, Meadow Brown 5, Comma 1, Green-veined White 1

Richard M. Jeffery

Butterfly Recorder for
Leicestershire & Rutland



Silver-washed Fritillary at Cloud Wood

(Photo Derek Martin)

Aston Brickyards

(Derbyshire)

Sunday 18 July

This meeting coincided with one of the rare hot and sunny days of the summer of 2021 – the temperature reached a high of 30c which meant that 3 individuals of the target species – the Silver Washed Fritillary were seen in one of the glades that have been created in the woodland by members of FAB (Friends of Aston Brickyards)

The 12 B C Members and Friends who attended the event also saw the other work that has been carried out on site by FAB – a butterfly bank, a wild life pond, the planting of Disease Resistant Elms (for the White Letter Hairstreak), the

creation of a hedgerow of Alder Buckthorns (for the Brimstone) and the planting of Dog Violets (for the Silver Washed Fritillary)

Other species seen on the day were:-

Large White (2): Small White (3): Green Veined White (1); Brimstone (1): Speckled Wood (2): Comma (2);: Red Admiral (1): Small Skipper (2): Large Skipper (2): Gatekeeper (3);: Meadow Brown (33); : and Ringlet (30), together with a Six Spot Burnet Moth.

So, a grand total of 85 butterflies in 13 species were seen on the day which was a great result enjoyed by visitors from Leicestershire, Sheffield and local B C members.

Ken Orpe

Poulter Park - Langwith

(Derbyshire)

Sunday 1 August

On the journey to Poulter Park I had to use my windscreen wipers which did not bode well for a Butterfly walk however on arrival the rain had blown over but the sky was still dark and ominous looking.

Eleven people had booked onto the walk, three had cancelled previous to the day so the question was how many stoic souls would turn up to brave the elements, and the answer was three.

To my amazement one of the group decided to combine a litter pick with the walk, another one of the group produced a litter picker from his car boot and so off we set to discover what Lepidoptera inhabited the site whilst hopefully leaving Langwith a cleaner place.

The route for the walk was from the main car park at Whaley Road to the far side of the park to an area called the Nature Reserve.

Almost immediately we saw Butterflies, mostly the species that seem to tolerate damp conditions, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Gatekeeper. As the walk progressed and the temperature rose it was rewarding to see so many Whites, the Large Whites in particular were in pristine condition.

At the half way point one of the group spotted a Marble White which was sat opened wing optimistically awaiting some sunshine, its pose was ideal for cracking photographs.

On reaching the Nature Reserve

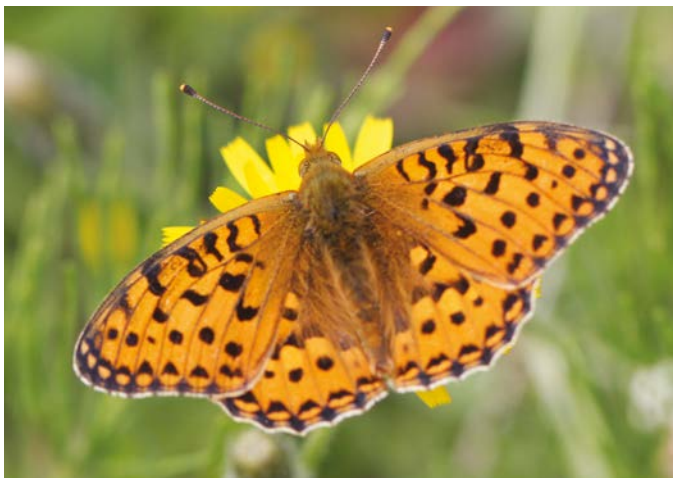
the temperature had climbed to a dizzy height of 17°C which thankfully encourage the Butterflies to take to the wing, at one stage the air was filled with Whites which was a beautiful sight.

Dark Green Fritillaries began to show along with Small and Essex Skippers, also present were Red Admiral, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Speckled Wood.

On the way back to the car park one of the group photographed a Silver-washed Fritillary which had not been expected albeit there are colonies in the area.

Moths seen included, Yellow Shell, Latticed Heath and Shaded Broad-bar.

The ideal time of year for the Marbled White and Dark Green Fritillary is probably the month of July. In total 15 Butterfly species were seen, which made the walk well worthwhile. The flora and fauna of Poulter Park is worth exploring.

Willy Lane.

Dark Green Fritillary
(Photo Elliot Taylor)

Coombs Dale

(Derbyshire)

Thursday 29 July

The annual visit to Coombs Dale was disappointing as the skies were grey, it was quite cool and windy and no sun was seen at all. The friendly interested group of twelve were not downhearted as there was the chance to renew old acquaintanceship and to look at the flora of the Dale. The opportunity was taken to photograph small teasel, woolly thistle and other plants. Only 11 butterflies of six species were seen including one Dark Green Fritillary.

John and Al Roberts.**Aston Rowant**

(Oxfordshire)

Sunday 8 August

Unfortunately, due to the very poor weather forecast the trip was cancelled.

Max Maughan.

Open Garden Reports

Ann and Andrew Brown's garden, Silver Birches

(Leicestershire)

Open Garden 11th July 2021

Approximately 120 people, with about half these being Butterfly Conservation members, including Win and myself, spent a pleasurable afternoon in the company of Ann and Andrew Brown in their delightful garden in the Charnwood district of Leicestershire.

We were given a warm welcome by Andrew at the entrance to the garden at the end of the gravel drive. The ample lawn was flanked by a flower border on each side, each one guarded by a neatly clipped box cone. Stately spires of Delphinium, fiery Alstroemeria and floriferous Roses provided bold splashes of colour to whet the appetite of any gardener and drew visitors into the heart of the garden where Ann had set up a display table showing the results of the previous night's moth trapping session. Both Elephant and Poplar Hawkmoths were the stand out highlights.

Venturing further into the garden, through a splendid arch clothed in pink and white roses, we came across an extensive meadow that was home not only to butterflies and moths, but many other forms of insect and avian life too. A close mown path through and around acted as a guide to allow the meadow to be seen from all angles. The meadow terminated in a wildlife pond where tall vegetation emerged from crystal clear water providing perches for active dragonflies to take a breather. A large fallen branch from a storm damaged tree provided a similar perch for human visitors to rest and to enjoy the view of the river and jetty at the bottom of the garden.

The Brown's garden is clearly a mini nature reserve in its own right, and would support myriad forms of flora and fauna at any time of the year, and is testament to the hard work that the owners have put in over the years. I would highly recommend a visit if the opportunity arises in the future..

Richard Jeffery**Chris and Sheila Ragg's Garden**

(Derbyshire)

Open Garden 17th July 2021

We visited Chris and Sheila Ragg's Derbyshire garden which was open under the Butterfly Conservation Open Gardens scheme on 17 July 2021. It is situated in Northwood on a steeply sloping, west-facing site with incredible views across the Derwent valley.

It was a very hot and sunny afternoon, so conditions were good for watching the butterflies it has been created to attract. Everything in the garden has been designed with wildlife, particularly butterflies, in mind, and it includes nectar sources for the adults as well as many food plants for their larvae. The owners were keen to explain how it had been created over only a couple of years, stripping back the original garden to a blank canvas and incorporating materials to reduce soil fertility to provide suitable growing conditions for wild flowers. There was a very wide range of native plants, set out in blocks to create specific mini habitats, and there was also a small wildlife pond. The intention was to form a link to nearby meadows and allow movement of species between areas.

We finished our visit with refreshments and the opportunity to look through photograph albums recording the building process and the astonishing numbers of butterflies recorded in the garden. Finally we were shown the bee hotel with observation sections enabling the individual nesting cells to be viewed.

It had been a fascinating visit, and the garden was a testimony to the hard work and effort put in by Chris and Sheila.

Max & Christine Maughan

Waxwings & Goldcrest

(Nottingham)

Open Garden 27th July 2021

What an amazing job the owners, Rob and Jill Carlyle along with their in-laws, have done to this wonderful wildlife garden.

If you didn't see it you missed a treat with so many different areas in a large and interesting garden. The six acre garden developed on the site of a former mushroom farm has everything for wildlife with ponds, meadows, woodland, Bee hives, bird boxes and lush borders. There were also three separate vegetable gardens to explore.

We visit many NGS Open Gardens and this has to be one of the best for biodiversity. The large patio which over overlooks part of the garden was laid out with tables and chairs where you could enjoy some of delicious homemade cake on offer. The owners are involved with The Friends of Bestwood Park and their cakes can also be sampled at the small café near the old working in Bestwood Village which opens on a Saturday morning. If the owners are considering opening next year, which I sincerely hope they do, this garden is highly recommended and definitely not to be missed.

Jane Broomhead



Female Common Blue
(Photo Christine Maughan)

Trevor Road, West Bridgford

(Nottinghamshire)

Open Garden 28th August 2021

I must admit to having another agenda in visiting this garden! I had heard that several gardens along this road have ancient apple trees with large populations of mistletoe and I wanted to record them for my update Nottinghamshire Mistletoe Survey. The rumours were true, there were two very large and very old apple trees at the end of the garden and I homed in on them straight away. There were a few rot holes and areas of canker on the trunk and major limbs and I soon found the extruded pupal case of a red-belted clearwing moth. This is a rare moth in Nottinghamshire and may also be the most northerly record in the UK to date. Sadly, it was impossible to photograph inside the hollow branch.

The marjoram and mint beds proved irresistible to holly blues and several whites plus a mint moth or two. A female common blue butterfly and a straw-dot moth were rather less expected visitors and this garden had also recorded a wayward green hairstreak previously. Such is the power of marjoram! This garden has a wide variety of flowering plants and shrubs that cover the entire butterfly flight season. There were several bumble bees, solitary bees and hoverflies too plus a few dragonflies.

There must be some amazing moths associated with this garden and I hope to run my moth trap there next year.

Melanie Penson

Wall Brown still fuels Ken's 40-year recording career

When Ken Orpe first visited Friargate in May 1981 – an old railway site in the centre of Derby that had been allowed to 'rewild' (in today's vernacular) after Beeching's axe in the 1960s – the first butterfly he logged was a Wall Brown, basking on brickwork surrounded by an array of wild flowers.

That was the start of a self-confessed obsession with this particular species, but also the beginning of a voluntary career (almost full-time these days) that led Ken to become Derbyshire's highly-respected butterfly recorder – and surely one of the country's most dedicated recorders overseeing bands of volunteers annually carrying out 133 transects and 12 WCBS kilometre squares. In 2020 Ken and wife Pat inputted no fewer than 42,000 records.

"I began a transect at Friargate late in 1981 due to poor weather in April and May and the year's total for Wall Brown that year was 70, with a maximum count of 18 on one day," recalls Ken. "Two years later the season's total count was 191 with a maximum of 41 on one day, though in nearby Breadsall Cutting that same year I counted 189 individuals, which I had no idea would prove to be my highest ever Wall Brown count.

"Though the species hung on there until 1999 (the site is now being redeveloped), it was already clear that Wall Brown was in decline. By 2000, the absence of this once-common species in lowland Derbyshire demonstrated this worrying trend, with records only coming from the Peak District.

"Around this time I started my Updates (which are sent to around 1,270 butterfly fans; if you

want to be added, e-mail Ken at ken@malaga.plus.com) in a bid to find out what was going on. By studying their flight periods and alerting our volunteers to the Wall Brown's changing habitat – rocky outcrops around the 1,000-foot contour line – sightings continued in the Peak District, and the creation of Hoe Grange Quarry, with the help of Longcliffe Quarries and the county wildlife trust, has provided us with a good location for the species."

Wall Brown hit its nadir in 2008 when just 37 butterflies were recorded from 19 Derbyshire sites, while even in central southern England large gaps were appearing on the distribution maps. By now Climate Change was being factored in, and certainly we don't recognise seasons as we did in the 20th century – so Ken wonders if the Wall Brown simply decided enough was enough and that grasses on the ledges on rocky outcrops would produce the ideal micro climate for the eggs to be laid, with the pupae more readily protected by hanging from the roof of a mini cave.

Whatever the case, Ken admits he still has a lot to learn about this iconic Derbyshire butterfly. More generally, Ken is greatly encouraged by the growing interest in butterfly recording.

"Today it's a far cry from the days when we were met by 'Keep Out' notices and barbed wire to prevent site access," adds Ken. "Indeed, we are now actually asked to visit sites by companies whose management is keen to increase biodiversity. Now that is a big step forward."

Ken and his wife, Pat, as well as being responsible for the records, still like to get out with the butterflies and are personally involved in several transect rotas.

Gary Atkins

The Return of the Emperor

The nymphalid Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) is our second largest British butterfly, named for the iridescent purple sheen seen on the male's wings when they refract light at a certain angle (Figures 1-2). It is widespread at mid-temperate latitudes across Eurasia, as far east as China. In Western Europe it is absent from the warm Mediterranean and cool Scandinavian regions occupying the broad belt in between.



Figure 1. Male Purple Emperor
(Image courtesy Mark Searle)



Figure 2. With wings folded
(Image courtesy Mark Searle)

It is a butterfly of deciduous woodlands with clearings and rides, the males in particular are very active: they seek out territories which are often on clumps of trees at high points in woods. There they seek to claim a tree or trees from which to look out for fresh females flying by at a lower trajectory; if another male encroaches on their territory, a fight ensues, involving the two of them spiralling high into the air circling each other, until one gives up and leaves. This is a magnificent sight! The males in particular often come down to the ground, where they feed on minerals and excrement.

Broad-leaved *Salix* species are the favoured host plants, particularly the Goat, White and Grey Willow. The Purple Emperor has a single generation each year (termed univoltine) flying in Britain from mid-June to early August. Each year after mating the females lay their eggs on the upper leaf surfaces of the host species in shaded locations bordering rides or clearings. On hatching the small caterpillars sit facing inwards on the leaf tips and undergo successive moults in autumn developing their characteristic horns (Figure 3). After being dormant over winter the caterpillars start to feed again on the leaves until in June, then they move and form a chrysalis on the underside of a suitable leaf, followed shortly by emergence of the imago (adult) to complete the lifecycle.



Figure 3.
Larva, L5 Instar
(Image courtesy
Nick and Sam Brownley)

In terms of the natural history of the Purple Emperor, Matthew Oates in his recent publication *His Imperial Majesty* brings us up to date with current knowledge and thinking [see recommended reading].

As long ago as 1857, Stainton, in his classic book on British butterflies stated:

'The Purple Emperor selects for his residence the topmost spray of a lofty oak, disdainning the humble sallow in its neighbourhood, on which, when in the larva state, he had fed, though sometimes he will condescend to alight on a muddy spot to quench his thirst'

and later adds...

'and a French Entomologist (M. Pierret) says Il se repose sur materies excrementielles; and however we may regret such coarse taste in so lordly an insect, yet, if the fact be so, we do well to profit by the knowledge of it to enrich our collections.'

This quote suggests that baiting with materies excrementielles was used to trap specimens of Purple Emperor that were highly prized in the collections of museums and Victorian entomologists.

In the East Midlands the record of Purple Emperor is rather patchy.

We know the species was present in the mid-late 19th Century in Notts (Carr, 1916) with Wellow Wood, Sherwood Forest and Newark being the main areas. It had become rare by 1900 probably due to heavy collecting. In Leicestershire, Stainton, (1857) reports the species as present in the 1850's, this appears to be the only historic record.

There is little evidence of occupation then until the 1970's. Then in the 1970-80s local residents relate stories of Purple Emperor in Clumber Park often attracted to car diesel fumes especially *in the vicinity of Clumber Bridge, and also sightings farther north on the adjacent Osberton Estate.*

An exert from our own branch Newsletter (Winter 1989) states:

'At the turn of the century this magnificent insect was known from several woods in the Sherwood Forest complex. No records then seem

to exist until recently when a few apparently genuine sightings were made in the same area. Both adults and larvae have been seen, and an adult was seen in consecutive years taking sap from freshly cut wood in a woodyard' (believed to be on the Thoresby Estate). The late Martin White from Worksop was also rearing them for release by the mid to late 1980's.

But, until recently, the species had not been formally recorded, with the 'accepted' national distribution being confined to South-eastern England, with the East Midlands lying just beyond the north-western limit.

Since 2014 there have been sporadic records from Leics, and in particular Rutland, and in Notts, following releases at Cotgrave Forest (records since 2015) and Wellow Wood (records from 2016), but there are no reports from Derbyshire. Some believe that the Purple Emperor has been naturally present in these two woods all along and merely been supplemented with these recent additions. This is unlikely at Cotgrave Forest as it was felled during the second world war destroying the habitat. it was subsequently replanted a decade later. However, these two populations seem to now be self-sustaining, with an estimated population at Cotgrave in 2021 of at least 50 individuals.

In the last couple of seasons, we have seen a remarkable expansion across both Leics and Notts. (Figure 4). This includes the sightings at Buddy Heath-Sherwood Forest where Samantha and Nick Brownley have done sterling work in confirming the presence of the species having found an adult in July 2020, followed by larvae shortly after, and this year, larvae, pupae, and adults.

The expansion in 2020 was documented for Leics and Rutland by Richard Jeffery in Issue 67 of this Newsletter. The 2021 season saw consolidation by Purple Emperor on Bardon Hill and gave many recorders the opportunity to witness duelling males and courted females over several days. One recorder, Ian Surman, used his annual leave to observe, report and document their frenzied activities on and around the summit. Ian also visited Beacon Hill where iris was first recorded in 2019. No records were submitted from this site in 2020, most likely due to the

limitations imposed by the Covid 19 restrictions, but in 2021 four individuals were seen on the 25th of July and the following day the number increased to an impressive 12 (although there may have been more). This probably indicates that Purple Emperor was present on Beacon Hill in the 2020 season but went totally unobserved.

It remains possible some of this expansion over the last 2-3 years could have been engineered. But the number of locations where Purple Emperor has now been sighted (Figure 4), coupled with the speed of the spread over this wide area, argue strongly that most of this is a natural effect. It is also likely that the existing centres at Cotgrave and Wellow may well have facilitated some of this expansion in Notts (Figure 5). Let us hope this expansion is now consolidated into a sustainable presence across the whole region for the enjoyment of all our butterfly enthusiasts!

**Steve Mathers,
Dennis Dell and
Richard Jeffery**

Sources

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Stainton, H.T. 1857. A Manual of British Butterflies and Moths. Vol 1. Van Voorst, London 338pp. Available as a free pdf at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A_Manual_of_British_Butterflies_and_Moth/UaiUpDFZpQC?hl=en&gbpv=0 Accessed 19/08/21.

Recommended Reading

Oates, M. 2021. *His Imperial Majesty. A natural history of the Purple Emperor.* Bloomsbury Publishing, London. 416 pp. (paperback edition). Also available as an ebook.

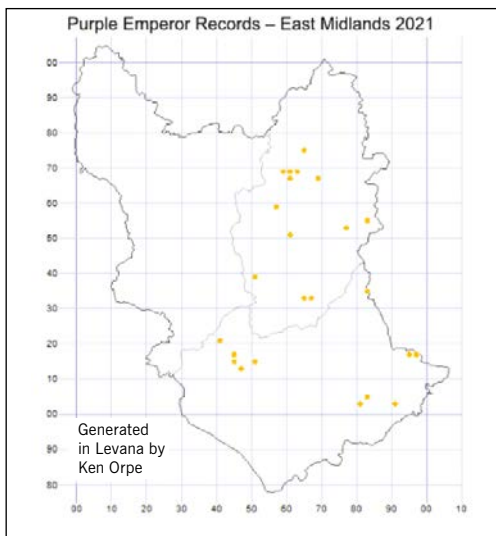


Figure 4 Regional distribution of Purple Emperor 2021.



Figure 5. iRecord plot of Purple Emperor in Notts for 2021 with a raster topographic backdrop making the location of the sightings easy to ascertain.

Friends of Little Eaton Canal

Friends of Little Eaton Canal formed in 2017 to look after and improve the site for people and wildlife as well as to promote the heritage of the long-defunct Little Eaton Canal. The canal basin is still intact and sits out of sight beneath an old, narrow neglected woodland. It has transient water in the southern end and permanent water to the north where trees have their “feet” in the water, which flows in from field and road run-off. The canal’s demise in 1908 was due to the advent of the railway and was owned by Highways England who, in recent years, passed ownership to Derbyshire County Council. It has been neglected for decades and has been intersected and somewhat hemmed in by business development.

An area we affectionately call the mound, made up of road scree, tarmac and wires, was cleared and made into our butterfly bank. Thanks to grants from EMBC, we purchased many British native plug plants which started off tiny but are now huge! In summer this is covered with bird’s foot trefoil, viper’s bugloss and lady’s bedstraw to name but a few.

We have underplanted the main woodland area with early flowering bulbs – snowdrops, native daffodils and English bluebells. EMBC kindly donated some disease-resistant elms, and with the remainder of the grant we have planted alder buckthorn, native honeysuckle and dogtooth violets. We have work planned with Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust this autumn to do some tree thinning to create a healthier woodland and sunny glades. We also manage a meadow area on a grass verge that runs parallel to the site as we want to provide a variety of habitats. This is full of perennial wild British native plants.

One of our key objectives is to record the site’s flora and fauna, partly out of curiosity but also

as a means to show the impact of our work parties in – hopefully – increasing diversity and abundance. So inevitably we turned to Ken Orpe to help us set up a butterfly monitoring transect around the canal. After training and advice from Ken, we commenced our weekly monitoring in 2018, so are now in our fourth year.

Often our observations track those seen more widely across the county – so for example 2020 was our best year in terms of abundance, with total observations increasing from 377 (2018) to 778 (2020) across 22 species. Our observations are dominated by the various whites, Ringlets and Meadow Browns. But over the years we’ve also seen good increases in Skipper numbers – including Essex Skippers – and Gatekeepers, Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks.



A large part of our transect is unmanaged grassland. We don’t think it has been cut for many years, and it is this area that supports by far the highest proportion of butterflies.

Our small wildflower meadow produces plenty of flowers and is much-loved by bees, but butterfly numbers are low – possibly because it is rather isolated. The same applies to our “butterfly bank” which – whilst being covered in butterfly-friendly plants – only provides a small proportion of our observations.

We do have sightings of various dragonflies and damselflies, a few moths including the gorgeous puss moth, small fish, frogs and nocturnal creatures – fox, badger and rabbit. Although we have recorded the Silver Washed Fritillary once, this site will probably never have the numbers of butterflies recorded elsewhere, nor will we observe the more elusive butterflies, but we will do what we can to make this area a better environment in the hope that someday just maybe we will.

**Brenda Shore,
Chair, Friends of Little Eaton Canal (FLEC)**

East Midlands Clearwing and Forester Moth Project 2021-23

As part of the Severn Trent Biodiversity Funding, our Branch has been busy visiting the sites with Priority Butterflies and Moths over the 2021 season. Clearwing and forester moths are all Priority Species in each of our four Counties and what records there are, show that they are under-recorded even with the recent rise in use of pheromone lures for clearwings.

Of the fifteen clearwing species recorded nationally, we have ten in the East Midlands, of which only Lunar-hornet clearwing is at all widespread, across all four counties but even this is still regarded as of conservation concern. Nottinghamshire has a Nationally Important population of Welsh clearwing in Sherwood Forest, with two other English locations; in Cannock Chase in Staffordshire and a site in Cumbria. Welsh clearwing and all of the other eight clearwing species are also classified as

Nationally Scarce B, i.e. found in between 31 and 100 of the Nation's 10km squares. They are all restricted to very specific habitats, some of which are threatened with development. Red-belted clearwing and orange-tailed clearwing are found here at the northern edge of their ranges. There is a possibility that we may have an eleventh species: Raspberry clearwing, which has been found on fruit farms and in gardens in Cambridgeshire and is spreading northwards (or more people are looking for it).

We have two of the three forester moths in our region too; the Forester is thinly spread across all four Counties and is found in herb-rich calcareous and neutral grassland. It has been added to the Conservation Priority List due to significant declines nationally but is easy to overlook. We also have the Cistus Forester in a restricted area of the Western Derbyshire Dales and across the River Dove into Staffordshire.

Whilst habitat management work is being carried out on our Priority Sites over the next few years, we have an excellent opportunity to improve habitats for clearwing and forester moths, funded by Severn Trent Water at little or no extra cost to the work being done for dingy skippers and other Priority butterflies. But first we need to know a lot more about clearwing and forester moth distribution and population sizes across our region. We will start by visiting all the known sites for clearwing and forester moths across our region, assessing habitats and conducting surveys. We will then move on to searching for new sites.

This project aims to increase our knowledge of these fascinating insects, including larval habitat requirements, with a view to improving habitats

and connectivity, allowing their populations to increase over time. It also aims to raise awareness amongst seasoned moth-ers and the general public with a view to improved recording effort. The Branch will purchase two sets of the clearwing pheromone lures covering all ten of our resident species, which will be used throughout the clearwing season (mid-May to early August) over the next two years in a series of training days and public events across our four Counties, networking with landowners, local authorities, all three Wildlife Trusts, other conservation groups, the Miner2Major Project on former coalfield areas in Nottinghamshire and moth enthusiasts generally. It is not feasible to survey for clearwing moths without using pheromone lures although transects for forester moths will be encouraged on sites where there are existing populations.

A pilot study was carried out during 2021, searching for six-belted and lunar hornet clearwings using lures and searching for larval evidence too. Lunar hornet was found in Cotgrave Forest (3 individuals) and a single in Cloud Wood in North-West Leicestershire.

Six-belted clearwing was found in three sites in Derbyshire (including Hoe Grange Quarry), six sites in Nottinghamshire and one in Leicestershire. There are a great many other potentially suitable sites which did not get sampled due to time constraints and weather conditions. Larval evidence of Welsh clearwing was found



Cistus Forester (Photo Melanie Penson)

again at known sites in Sherwood Forest and new records of Red-belted clearwing and Currant clearwing were found in private gardens in West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire. It is possible that the former, found during an Open Garden visit, is the most northerly record to date in the UK.

Further information on how to get involved with this exciting new project will be provided on the website prior to the clearwing and forester moth season in 2022. Although the Severn Trent funding comes to an end in early 2024, it is hoped that these surveys will continue in future years to monitor the success (or otherwise) of habitat management works. It is also hoped to publish the results online and in book form sometime in the future.

Melanie Penson



Six Belted Clearwing at West Hallam Tip
(Photo Melanie Penson)



Above:
Currant Clearwing
(Photo Melanie Penson)

Left:
A pheromone lure in action
(Photo Melanie Penson)



Butterfly Mosaics Midlands wide project

In June, Butterfly Conservation and Severn Trent announced a new three year conservation project in the Midlands.

The project aims to restore and enhance areas of habitat to help reverse the declines of specific species of butterfly and moth found in the Midlands area. The project, titled Butterfly Mosaics, will form part of Severn Trent's Great Big Nature Boost – a scheme that aims to look after water by looking after nature too

This partnership with Severn Trent will focus on developing habitats that support eight rare butterfly species at over 60 sites across the Midlands. Over 30 sites are found in the East Midlands, meaning a number of our priority butterfly species will benefit from the project, including Grizzled Skipper and Dingy Skipper. Our aim to create positive effects for local communities and biodiversity as a whole, will only be achieved by working in partnership with landowners, organisations and of course our very dedicated and knowledgeable branch volunteers.



Targeted habitat management work will include; woodland-ride management, creation of scrapes and scallops, scrub/tree removal as well as planting of larval food-plants. I've started visiting key sites across the Midlands, talking to landowners, managers and key volunteers, with the plan to get targeted habitat management work completed at a number of sites this winter, to benefit our rare butterfly and moth species.

I'm especially looking forward to measuring how populations respond next year, once the works are well underway. If anyone wishes to help monitor key butterfly sites, please do get in touch.

Thanks to Severn Trent, this exciting and new partnership creates a great opportunity for Butterfly Conservation to really help reverse the declines of many important butterfly and moth species in the region.

Rhona Goddard
BC's Regional Conservation Manager
(Midlands)

Grizzled Skipper Practical Conservation Tasks, Winter 2021 -22

Dear Grizzled Skipper volunteer,

After last winter, without any volunteer work parties, I am very pleased to tell you all that we are back up and running and hoping to get the counties Grizzled Skipper sites back into tip top condition in time for the 2022 flight season.

Below are the dates that have been arranged and the sites on which we will be undertaking the work.

Chris Jackson

Sunday 31st October 2021

GCRN, Lime Sidings to Barnstone Tunnel - hay raking & removal

Wednesday 17th November 2021

Grange Farm, Normanton on Soar - scrub clearance

Sunday 21st November 2021

GCRN, East Leake Station Cutting - scrub clearance and egg laying site maintenance

Wednesday 1st December 2021

Granby Disused Railway - scrub clearance and egg laying site maintenance

Sunday 12th December 2021

GCRN, Lime Sidings to Barnstone Tunnel - scrub clearance and egg laying site maintenance

Sunday 23rd January 2022

Flawborough Triangle - scrub clearance

Wednesday 2nd February 2022

Saxondale Disused Railway Spur - scrub clearance

Sunday 13th February 2022

Flawborough Footpath - scrub clearance

Wednesday 23rd February 2022

Staunton Quarry - scrub clearance

Wednesday 2nd March 2022

Newstead Old Coal Stocking Yard - scrub clearance.

(all work parties will start at 10am and will finish between 3pm and 3.30pm)

The Grizzled Skipper project is supported with funding from Butterfly Conservation East Midlands

Come along and join a group of like-minded people who are enthusiastic about the conservation of the Grizzled Skipper butterfly - a nationally important species which occurs at a number of sites in south Nottinghamshire. Many of the sites where the Grizzled Skipper occurs require regular management to keep them in a suitable condition for the butterfly, so we will be undertaking a series of practical workdays at some key sites, which will involve:

- Scrub clearance work to maintain open habitats required by the Grizzled Skipper and to help create corridors to link existing open habitats
- Creation of bare earth patches to increase the availability of suitable egg-laying habitat

What to bring:

- Lunch
- Warm clothing and stout footwear
- Work gloves (gloves will be provided if you don't have any)
- Tools (if you have any - bow saws/loppers/spades. Tools will be provided, along with instruction on their use)

For more information please contact Chris Jackson at the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group on 0115 993 2588 or email chris.jackson@nottscc.gov.uk

Grizzled Skipper Re-introduction Project at Ticknall Lime Yards - Update

This is the fourth year of the joint project with the National Trust at Ticknall to try and re-establish the Grizzled Skipper at one of its former sites in Derbyshire, so here is a quick update on progress to date. A small Core Team has been created to help administer the project, composed of key personnel from both Butterfly Conservation and the National Trust.



Ten Grizzled Skipper adults were released in Spring 2018 into the area known as 'Blackwater' in the lime yards complex, and a further ten into 'Portabello' the following Spring. Butterfly Conservation has continued to work closely with the staff of the National Trust in an effort to maintain and optimise the habitat for the Skipper, with the Trust clearing certain trees to allow the two, adjacent sites to be inter-connected for the insects to easily move between them, and the ground level habitat has been carefully managed to retain and increase the Wild Strawberry food plant of the butterfly, whilst maintaining plenty of

wild flower plants to provide nectar for the feeding adults.

This year, a more formal, small team of volunteers was created to visit the two sites on a weekly basis from late April to mid-June (the flight period) and to search for and record any adult Grizzled Skippers and note their behaviour. The weather was very dry in April and cold and wet for much of May, but in late May the first adults were noted flying, all within Portabello, and at least three individuals were identified – this area was usefully sectioned off as a 'sanctuary area' to restrict access. It is interesting to note that the emergence is relatively late at Ticknall compared to the Nottinghamshire sites – perhaps this is due to the micro-climate within the old quarried areas.

No further release of adults was carried out this year, mainly because a suitable donor site with sufficient adults could not be found, and there were complications because of Coronavirus, but we will consider the release of more next year to help the project along. We will monitor progress carefully!

Jim Steele, Derbyshire Conservation Officer and Ken Orpe, Derbyshire Recorder

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 16 September 2021 the Branch has 1295 Household members representing a figure of 1829 Individual members.



East Midlands Butterfly Conservation Committee Members

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

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Gatekeeper, Attenborough Nature Reserve (Photo Derek Martin)



Silver Y moth (Photo Rachel Kirkley)



Miller moth, Glenfield (Photo Eliot Taylor)



White-letter Hairstreak at Cloud Wood (Photo Derek Martin)



Grayling, on The Great Orme, North Wales (Photo Eliot Taylor)



Brown Hairstreak, at Chambers Farm Wood, (Photo Eliot Taylor)