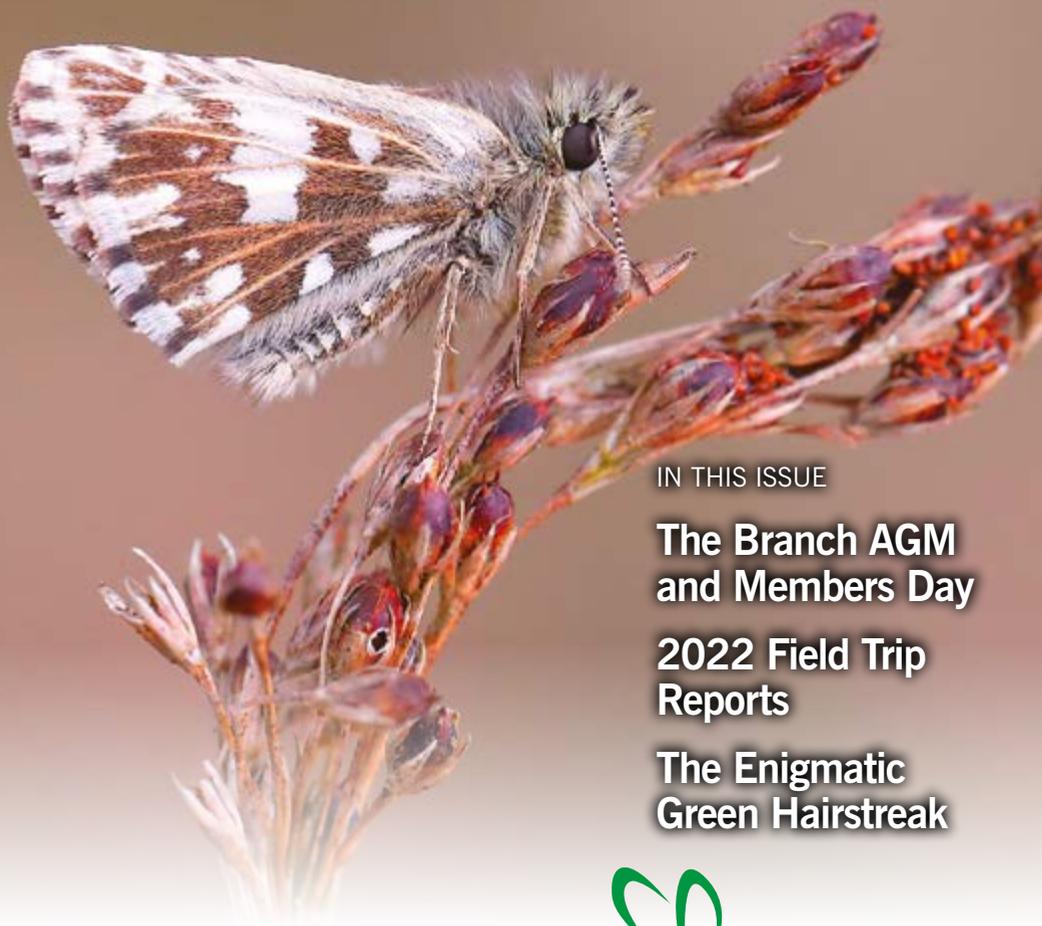


EAST MIDLANDS Butterfly

ISSUE 71 - AUTUMN 2022



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and Members Day**

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Reports**

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Green Hairstreak**



**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:
Grizzled Skipper.
Photo:
Mark Searle

Below:
Peacock butterflies have fared badly in 2022, perhaps due to the intense heat in July and August
Photo:
Eliot Taylor



To the Autumn 2022 issue of the East Midland Branch of Butterfly Conservation's Newsletter. Thanks to all those who have contributed articles for this issue.

Shortly after our Spring newsletter went to press we received the sad news that our former branch chairman and moth recorder for Leicestershire and Rutland, Adrian Russell had passed away. Adrian will be greatly missed, he was a inspiration to many and so knowledgeable, particularly about moths.

In this issue we'll be looking back at the hot summer of 2022 with our Field Trip reports, although the weather wasn't always perfect! It will certainly be interesting to see what effect the record breaking temperatures and prolonged dry weather has on our butterfly populations next year. There appears to be few nymphalid butterflies around now, especially Peacocks, perhaps due to the intense heat of mid July and mid August that had an effect on their food plants

Also featured in this issue is an article by Steve Mathers on the enigmatic Green Hairstreak. Plus we have details of our Branch AGM and Members Day.

Eliot Taylor

Branch Organiser's Notes

It was so lovely to be back at the Bird Fair again, although this was with a new name and site, the event is such a friendly event.

Tim Appleton revived this event as the Global Bird Fair because that is what it is, a meeting of people from all over the world. On the instructions and support of Head Office the Branch was entrusted to manage our large stand at the event. We managed with the help of several East Midlands members, I especially want to mention, Christine, our membership secretary who got out of bed all three days at 4am to check the moth trap in her garden and provide some really interesting specimens for the stand. We were busy all three days until the middle of Sunday afternoon when we all able to relax with a local ice cream. Although it was fairly short notice that the Bird Fair was going ahead we managed to pot up plants and sold £85.50 worth, thank you to Max who was kept very busy looking after this part of the stand.

It was very heartening to hear that the event raised €100,000.00 for the support of the Birdlife International project, Revive La Janda, Andalucia, Spain, a vital site for migrating birds from Africa to Europe. We hope that the event takes place in 2023 and if you would like to help please contact me in the spring of 2023.

Please don't forget the 2022 AGM which the Branch has returned to its normal month of November in Derby. This is a very friendly event, just like a pre-Christmas party with a FREE buffet and drinks. Looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

Jane Broomhead
Branch Organiser

Below:
The Butterfly Conservation stand at the Global Bird Fair
(Photo Jane Broomhead)

Grizzled Skipper Practical Conservation Tasks, Winter 2022-23

We will be undertaking a series of practical workdays at some key sites on the following dates:

Tuesday 1st November 2022

Grange Farm, Normanton on Soar
Scrub clearance/ bare earth creation

Sunday 13th November 2022

GCRN, Rushcliffe Halt & Cutting
Scrub clearance / bare earth creation

Tuesday 22nd November 2022

Saxondale Disused Railway Spur
Scrub clearance / bare earth creation

Sunday 4th December 2022

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

Sunday 15th January 2023

Flawborough Triangle
Scrub regrowth clearance & treatment / bare earth creation

Tuesday 24th January 2023

Granby Disused Railway
Egg laying site maintenance and targeted scrub clearance

Thursday 9th February 2023

Staunton Quarry
Scrub clearance & treatment

Sunday 19th February 2023

Flawborough Footpath
Scrub clearance and scallop creation/ bare earth creation

Tuesday 7th March 2023

Site & Task to be Confirmed

All work parties are from 10am to 3pm, please contact Chris Jackson for further details at the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group on 0115 993 2588 or email chris.jackson@nottscc.gov.uk



Butterfly Conservation East Midlands Branch Members' Day and AGM 2022



Wall Brown
(Photo Derek Martin)

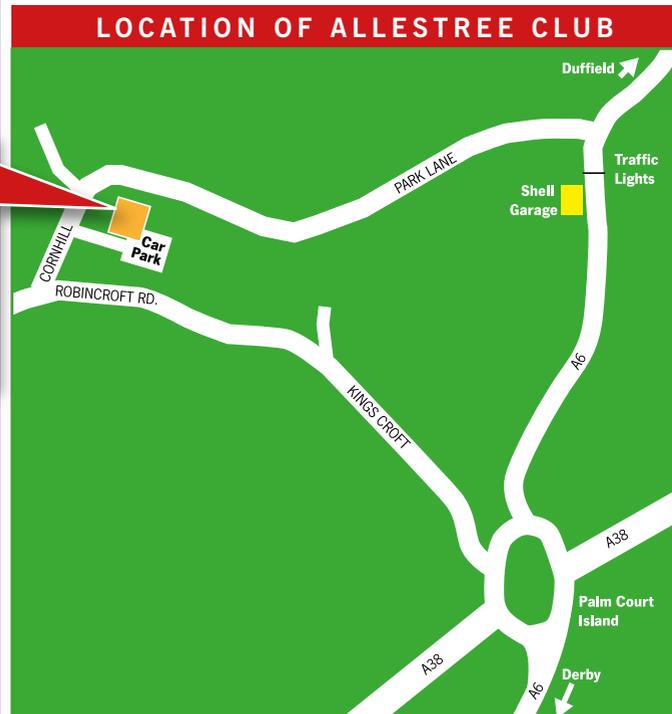
This year our branch AGM and Members' Day will be held on Sunday 20th November 2022 in the Allestree Club, at 39 Cornhill, Allestree, Derby. All members are welcome.

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

ALLESTREE CLUB
39 Cornhill,
Allestree,
Derby
DE22 2FS
(Tel: 01332 550753)

There will be stalls, tombola, members pictures and informative speakers, including a half hour update on Hoe Grange Quarry from Ken Orpe

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



Field Trip Reports 2022

Browns Hill Quarry LRWT (Leicestershire) Sunday 22 May

The weather forecast prior to the visit varied from potentially being overcast to sunny spells, and even to clear skies. Fortunately, the sun shone and there was very little breeze. A balmy temperature of 24 degrees promised well for a good morning.

There were seven attendees on the field trip, with one or two keen to see a few new (to them) species. The target species for this visit were Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak. This former quarry is owned and managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and usually boasts good numbers of both species. On entering the main gate there is a sloping path that leads down into the quarry, and instantly a difference in temperature could be felt, being sheltered on all sides.

The first of the target species, Dingy Skipper, was most obliging with a couple of individuals being spotted by the main entrance within the first few minutes. A 'tick' on the list for a couple of attendees. We went on to record 15 in total. The warm spring weather, especially with the southerly winds from the days before, had encouraged Painted Ladies to migrate northwards. We spotted three enjoying the warmth of the stony ground. Further into the quarry we found the first of



Green Hairstreak
(Photo Elliot Taylor)

There were 13 scheduled day trips this year. Plus the Open Day at Hoe Grange Quarry, Derbyshire.

Thanks to all the leaders who volunteered to run trips.

We would welcome anyone who would be prepared to lead a trip in 2023. Please contact Max Maughan (details on page 19)

four Green Hairstreaks (another 'tick' on the list for some). The green iridescence of the wings giving tantalising glints in the sunshine. Common Blue are clearly thriving on this site and we counted 12 in total. Day-flying moths were well represented with 8 different species being recorded. Most notable were 3 Mother Shipton, 2 Latticed Heath and a Yellow Shell.

The total count for butterflies was as follows:

- Small White 2
- Green-veined White 1
- Green Hairstreak 4
- Dingy Skipper 15
- Small Tortoiseshell 1
- Painted Lady 3
- Small Copper 1
- Brimstone 3
- Brown Argus 1

Speckled Wood 1

Orange Tip 2

With the 8 species of day-flying moth, this brought the species total up to 19.

I was really pleased that we had an 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.

Richard M. Jeffery

Butterfly Recorder for
Leicestershire & Rutland

Stonesby Quarry LRWT

(Leicestershire)

Sunday 22 May

The weather promptly changed for the afternoon part of our visit to being overcast with occasional sunny spells to completely overcast, with a keen southerly breeze. The temperature dropped to 22 degrees too.

There were 11 attendees on this part of the field trip, with four additional visitors. The target species for this visit were Dingy Skipper and Grizzled Skipper. This former quarry is also owned and managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and had revealed a couple of Grizzled Skippers a few days prior to our visit. I was quietly confident we would see one or two today. This quarry is slightly more exposed than the one from this morning, being an open quarry with a slight depression flanked by an access road on one side and a high hedge on the other. Dingy Skipper was indeed

present, but they were not keen on flying too high above the ground. In total, 8 individuals were counted, which, under the circumstances, was quite satisfactory. One species that was once considered high priority nationally, and in our region, is the Small Heath. Whilst this may still be so in certain parts of the country, there are little pockets in our county where the butterfly is doing reasonably well. It was encouraging therefore to record 10 in total this afternoon.

Overall, there were 15 species of butterfly and 5 species of day-flying moth. Sadly, Grizzled Skipper failed to put in an appearance, much to the disappointment of the attendees and myself.

The total count for butterflies was as follows:



Dingy Skippers
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

Small Heath 10
Dingy Skipper 8
Common Blue 5
Brimstone 3
Small Tortoiseshell 1
Speckled Wood 1
Small White 1
Orange Tip 3
Painted Lady 1
Peacock 3
Red Admiral 1
Holly Blue 1
Brown Argus 2
Small Copper 1
Large White 1

Although weather conditions were not ideal that afternoon, I was more than happy with the overall species count, and the feedback from the attendees was similar, so a good day was had by all.

Richard M. Jeffery

Butterfly Recorder for
Leicestershire & Rutland

Ketton & Bloody Oaks Quarries

(Rutland)

Wednesday 25 May

Both quarries are Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust Reserves.

Ketton Quarry is an active limestone quarry, but the reserve is a long worked-out part of the site. It consists of hills, holes and a few rocky outcrops. A group of eleven people met at the reserve on a grey, blustery morning. Consequently, butterflies were in short supply to begin with apart from one Speckled Wood, so it was mostly moths which were recorded as we explored various areas of the quarry: Latticed Heath, Mother Shipton, Burnet Companion, Small Yellow Underwing, Purple and Gold, Silver-ground Carpet, Hebrew Character, Angle Shades, Yellow Shell and Common Carpet.

As the morning progressed, there were brief periods of sunshine which brought out a few butterflies including Dingy Skipper, Common Blue and Small Heath. A Four-spotted Chaser dragonfly was recorded.



Latticed Heath
(Photo Eliot Taylor)



Dingy Skipper
(Photo Mark Searte)

We also came across a Dark Green Fritillary caterpillar making its way across the track as we walked back to the cars.

After lunch, with the weather continuing to improve, we decided to explore an area known as the Valley, and this proved quite successful with the first butterfly being a fresh male Large Skipper. More Dingy Skippers were seen, Small White, Orange Tip and Peacock. Three Vapourer moth larvae were found on a small birch sapling, and there were several damselflies, including Azure and Blue-tailed. A female Adder was also seen in the area just inside the entrance to the reserve.

We had one last search of the first section of the reserve and were rewarded with good views of a Grizzled Skipper.

By now it was mid-afternoon, but a few of the group still opted to visit Bloody Oaks Quarry, a short distance away. Most of this tiny reserve is species-rich limestone grassland which is rare in Rutland and Leicestershire. Here we found

more Dingy Skippers and a single Grizzled Skipper, as well as Common Blue butterfly, and Burnet Companion and Mother Shipton moths.

It turned out to be a rewarding day with a final total of 9 butterfly species, and 10 moth species

Max Maughan

Bingham Linear Park

(Nottinghamshire)

Sunday 29 May

We had about 20 people turn up for the walk which had been advertised by Butterfly Conservation and Notts Wildlife Trust.

The conditions were not great - lots of cloud, a blustery north wind and air temperature of 12 Centigrade.

However, the great thing about the Linear is the range of habitats along the abandoned railway. When the sun came out and there was any shelter by bank, trees or scrub then there was potential for the temperature to rise significantly and a few butterflies appeared.

We saw a number of Small Heaths, Large Skipper, Small Whites, Green-veined Whites, Orange-tips scattered along the length of the walk. In the ash grove we found Speckled Wood and a group of moths, Yellow-barred long-horn (*Nemophora degeerella*) displaying their long antennae.

Here and there in the sunshine, we found Painted Ladies - keeping close to the warm ground.

On a granite pile colonised by creeping cinquefoil one of the group spotted a Grizzled Skipper - it sat on the warm rock long enough for us to photograph it.

As we passed the south-facing slope of the grassy cutting near Bingham we saw more small heath and Common Blues.

We also enjoyed the wild roses and the meadows of ox-eye daisies, foxgloves and buttercups.

The warblers were well represented starting with blackcap, then willow warbler, whitethroat (at regular intervals along the open embankment) and chiffchaff.

In the River Smite we saw heron, egret and mallard.

Jenny Craig
Secretary
Friends of Bingham Linear Park

Longstone Edge
(Derbyshire)
Sunday 5 June

Unfortunately cancelled due to bad weather



Brimstone
(Photo Derek Martin)

**The Forge,
Codnor Park**
(Derbyshire)
Friday 10 June

The weather had been quite wet and windy previously, but on the day, 12 of us were treated to a much better day with a good variety of butterflies in reasonable numbers.

Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Small Heath, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Brimstone, Small White, Green-veined White, Common Blue, Dingy Skipper, Large Skipper.

Not to be outdone, moths included Burnet Companion, Lattice Heath, Cinnabar, Silver Y and Brimstone Moth.

Dragonflies were scarce but notable and the following were noted: Four-spotted Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer, Common Blue Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly and Banded Demoiselle.

Our thanks to Sally and Deb for hosting the event. The Forge continues to be a special site for nature in general, and butterflies in particular.

Jim Steele

Southrey Wood
(Lincolnshire)
Tuesday 21 June

Our enforced change of venue due to ongoing road works at Chambers Farm Wood turned out to be a blessing. It was a virtually cloudless summer day and our visit coincided with a mass emergence of White Admirals; one of our most delightful woodland butterflies. We saw an amazing 23 of them, gliding over the brambles, pausing to imbibe the nectar, then off again. We were even lucky enough to watch a female egg-laying on a honeysuckle drape at the far end of the wood where the sunlight pierced the

canopy. There were a few red admirals about too plus Small Tortoiseshell and Comma.

A Green Oak Tortrix moth was seen down on the track; this is a common woodland moth, the caterpillars sometimes defoliating oak trees of their first set of leaves in May. As it spends its entire life up in the canopy, it is rarely seen.

Meadow Browns were much in evidence and the first Ringlets looked mint fresh with their velvety wings still having a narrow white border.

We were hopeful of Silver-washed Fritillaries but it wasn't until we began our return walk

that first one, then another were spotted. Like the Ringlets, they were very fresh and glowed bright orange. Both were males but they didn't pause for long.

The site gave us one last treat, an all too brief Hummingbird Hawkmoth which fed from the large bramble patch near the wood entrance.

After lunch, some of us visited Goslings Corner, a nearby area of ancient woodland where we added Brimstone and Small Skipper to our tally of 11 butterflies and 3 day-flying moths.

Melanie Penson



White Admiral
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

Bevercotes (Nottinghamshire) Saturday 2 July

I first visited this site after clearwing moths in July 2021 with a colleague from the Miner2Major project but due to time constraints didn't get chance to evaluate the entire site. As there are forestry operations planned, this field trip was designed to complete the clearwing moth assessment of this large site.

As expected, Six-belted Clearwings were numerous and rapidly responded to my lure wherever we deployed it and very enthusiastically too. At one point we had 27 buzzing around us. We also witnessed behaviour that does not seem to have been documented before: pairing and mating on the lure bag of individuals that arrived separately. Virgin females are attracted to the lure too, not just the males, although outnumbered by about 8 to 1. I estimated 43 six-belted on the day.



Six-belted Clearwing
(Photo Melanie Penson)

We deployed the Lunar Hornet moth lure at two locations, on willow trees surrounding the lakes. Both were successful but only the second moth hung around long enough to be enjoyed. It is a far bigger moth than six-belted and even behaves like an actual hornet, making a buzzing noise and dangling its legs in flight.

We also found a Blackneck Moth here, a scarce species in our region but it seems to be having a good year in 2022, the second in a row.

We didn't neglect the butterflies, finding our first Gatekeepers of the year, plus Large and Small Skippers, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Green-veined White and Small Tortoiseshell.

I am now in a much better position to advise on habitat management and minimising impacts of forestry operations but there is so much more to discover at this fantastic site.

Melanie Penson



Hoe Grange Quarry
(Photo Gary Atkins)

Hoe Grange Quarry Nature Reserve

(Derbyshire)
**4th Open Day
Sunday 3 July**

After a break of 3 years, it was great to be able to meet friends old and new at our first Butterfly NR here in Derbyshire. Despite a dismal start to the day it did not prevent around 300 visitors making the effort to attend the 4th Open Day at Hoe Grange Quarry - yet again Longcliffe Quarries and their staff put on a great effort with free food, drinks and ice cream available - this was ably supported by Committee members of Butterfly Conservation East Midlands and the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. The sun soon emerged after lunch and there were queues outside the ice cream van which is always a good sign! The butterflies then appeared and we had sightings of 13 species including the **Painted Lady, Common Blue, Small Heath, the Peak District version of the Brown Argus, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Comma, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small White, Large White** together with some day flying moths which included a **Humming Bird Hawk**

moth seen on valerian. Steve Orridge and others did a moth watch the night before and new species included the **Marbled Coronet** and the **Small Elephant Hawk** moth. A number of dragonflies were seen around the pond in the big hole including a female Emperor which was ovipositing.

Most visitors were amazed at the show of wild flowers which included many of the 200 species recorded on site such as moonwort and cudweed as well as a massive display of ox eye daisies which carpeted the quarry floor.

The new Information Centre was well received and as well as I D charts that Pat and I put up, there were some photos of the site including the one showing the wild animal bones that were found back in 1902 - these amazingly included elephant bones as well as lions and hyenas going back to the time that the UK was attached to the west coast of Africa - a bit before our time!

As well as visitors from across the East Midlands, others came from Sheffield, Cheshire, Shropshire, Somerset, Surrey, Essex and even from the Netherlands!

Ken & Pat Orpe

Aston Brickyards LNR (Derbyshire) Sunday 10 July

This meeting coincided with the start of the July heatwave of 2022 with the temperature reaching 29c on a really hot and sunny day - in fact temperatures this high are too hot for our UK butterflies which prefer heat up to about 23c before they disappear around lunch time only to re-appear in the late afternoon and the early evening.

Fortunately for the 16 B C Members and Friends who attended the event, it started at 11 am so we were able to see a good number of butterflies before the heat really started to get uncomfortable for everyone. We saw the conservation work that has been carried out on site by FAB (Friends of Aston Brickyards) - including 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)

Butterfly species seen on the day were:-

Large White (10); Small White (6); Green Veined White (2); Brimstone (4); Speckled Wood (2); Comma (2); Red Admiral (2); Small Skipper (2); Large Skipper (1); Essex Skipper (1); Gatekeeper (4); Meadow Brown (24); and Ringlet (15); Holly Blue (2); Silver-washed Fritillary (1); and a new butterfly species for the site :- Purple Hairstreak (2).

Also seen were numerous dragonflies including the Emperor and the 6 belted clearwing moth, again a new species for the site.

So, a grand total of 80 butterflies in 16 species were seen on the day which was a great result enjoyed by visitors from Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and local B C members.

Ken Orpe

Coombs Dale

(Derbyshire)
Wednesday 20 July

Unfortunately cancelled due to COVID problems.

Cloud Wood LRWT

(Leicestershire)
Tuesday 26 July

Cloud Wood has been one of our most popular Field Trip destinations over the last few years, and has never disappointed. One species that did elude us last year was His Imperial Majesty, the Purple Emperor. He did put in an appearance the week after the field trip, so, trying to pre-empt a repetition this year, I planned the field trip a week later than usual. What I, or no-one else to that matter, could have anticipated was that the whole butterfly 'season' would be three weeks earlier than usual. A temperature of 19 degrees accompanied by a gentle westerly breeze turned out to be ideal conditions on the day so we were all hopeful.

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



There were 11 attendees on the field trip, and during our walk we were joined by a visitor who had seen several key species just minutes earlier. I invited him to walk with us. Our target species for the day were Silver-washed Fritillary, White-letter Hairstreak and hopefully Purple Emperor. The former was the first to be seen, with a single male SWF resting on low vegetation. Ultimately just 3 SWF were seen on the day. The lowest count on any of the field trips held here. Purple Hairstreak proved to be even more elusive, and it was right at the very end of our walk that we managed to get a positive ID on a single specimen as it flew high up and around Ash and Oak trees. This was our only encounter that day with the species. A White-letter Hairstreak, on the other hand, announced itself in much greater style by landing on an attendee's hat and rested awhile to allow photographs to be taken. The lady in question was not deprived of a sighting of the WLH as it flew and landed on a patch of nearby Brambles.

My hunch to put back the date of the field trip to coincide with

the flight period of the Purple Emperor failed completely as seems to have ended in the excessive heat in the previous few days. We will try again next year,

The total butterfly count was as follows:

Gatekeeper 17
Speckled Wood 4
Green-veined White 17
Comma 8
Red Admiral 9
Ringlet 2
Meadow Brown 9
Silver-washed Fritillary 3
Large White 1
White-letter Hairstreak 1
Purple Hairstreak 1

Apart from the disappointment of not being able to meet up with His Imperial Majesty, Cloud Wood once again proved to be a successful and enjoyable Field Trip. What 2023 will bring we do not know, but I am sure that, all being well, we will visit this important nature reserve at some point in July and, hopefully, the Purple Emperor will join us.

Richard M. Jeffery
Butterfly Recorder for
Leicestershire & Rutland

Pleasley Pit Country Park

(Derbyshire)
Saturday 6 August

Our group met at the Pit Head Café based within Pleasley Pit Visitors Centre. The site encompasses the old headstocks and winding houses which sits alongside Pleasley Pit Country Park. The on-site facilities were excellent with ample parking albeit paying the parking fees was complicated.

Twelve people attended and at this stage I would like to thank Christine Booth and Ian Hurst, both of whom are members of the transect team at Pleasley Pit for their help in guiding the group and answering questions regarding the local fauna and flora.

Pleasley Pit Country Park has seen over a number of year's unofficial releases of Butterfly species that would not normally be expected to be seen on site. Two of these species, the Small Blue and the Brown Hairstreak appear to date to have bred



Small Blue
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

successfully and colonised the areas of the site that contain their food plants.

The walk took a circular route around what is a sizable nature reserve. After a visit to what was the Pit's Wood Yard the group then entered the Orchard Patch, in spring this area is a sea of pink with thousands of Orchids on show. It was here that we saw our first Small Blues, the group split into three with the serious photographers spending time getting their first shots of this beautiful insect. The same area produced a Small Copper aberration which obligingly sat in the same spot whilst everyone had the opportunity to get a close look.

In total 18 species were seen, I have listed them roughly in the order they were seen: Gatekeeper, Green-veined White, Small Skipper, Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Small Blue, Holly Blue, Brown Argus, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Copper, Peacock, Large White, Speckled Wood, Brimstone, Brown Hairstreak and Essex Skipper.

The weather was good, with a temperature of 20c and a gentle WNW breeze.

Pleasley Pit Country Park is one of many old colliery brown field sites that have become lowland Derbyshire strongholds for wildlife. They are all worth a visit and long may they be protected and conserved for future generations.

Willy Lane

Chambers Farm Wood

(Lincolnshire)
Sunday 7 August

A group of six, including Melanie and myself as leaders, met up for this walk. The weather was very good with a temperature of 20°C at the start. The first butterflies we saw were in the butterfly garden, where Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Holly Blue and many Gatekeepers were seen. In the car park Melanie pointed out a bush where exit holes had been made by Currant Clearwing moths.

We then made the longish walk towards the Brown Hairstreak target area. To start with there were not many butterflies around. It was only when we got to the junction known as Five Ways that we encountered the first of many Silver-washed Fritillaries, here we also observed a male in pursuit of a female Silver-washed

Fritillary. From this point on there were more nectar sources and Comma, Common Blue, Brimstone, Large Skipper, Small Copper and Meadow Brown were found. We walked past the area called the Minting Triangle, carrying on along the path to the right. This was the area where I had seen seven Brown Hairstreaks in 2020. We waited there a little while and one of our party managed to spot a female Brown Hairstreak in the act of egg laying. It stayed around for quite some time allowing photographers to get some good shots.

That was the only Hairstreak we saw during the day, but it was a relief as I know that sightings of Brown Hairstreak had been scarce earlier in the week. A total of 18 species were seen including 24 Silver-washed Fritillaries, plus a Latticed Heath moth.

Eliot Taylor



Brown Hairstreak egg laying
(Photo Dave Griffin)

The Enigmatic Green Hairstreak

GENERAL

Across its pan-European distribution the Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* occurs at altitudes ranging from sea-level to 2500m and utilises up to 50 different host plants so it is a very flexible species in terms of its habitat and food requirements. It is one of 3 hairstreak species that occur naturally in the East Midlands and the 5 that occur in GB. A small butterfly, with green underwings, it is almost always seen with its wings closed. The green colour of the underwings makes it unmistakable as our only green butterfly. By contrast the upper wing surfaces are a uniform dark brown that is usually only seen in pinned museum specimens. With wings closed the sexes cannot easily be separated on their appearance. But the underwings do show some variability in the expression of the white 'necklace' of dashes (Figure 1). In the East Midlands some sites show a prevalence of individuals with extensive white dashes, for example at Lathkill Dale in Derbyshire, whereas at other sites such



Figure 1 Green Hairstreak. Contrasting the variability of the white necklace of dashes on the underwings. Images left Steve Mathers, right courtesy of Mark Searle.

as Toton Sidings and Skylarks NR in Notts, specimens with few dashes predominate.

In terms of their behaviour, the males tend to use favoured perches on low shrubs such as Hawthorn from which they can intercept passing females or ambush other males. They are very territorial; the females are often seen ovipositing on bushes such as gorse and bramble or on low ground covering plants. Most of the other British hairstreaks (Purple, White-letter and Brown) spend much of their time flying high in the tree canopy around their host plants such as oak and elm and blackthorn.

Whilst you could have a lucky encounter with Green Hairstreak in any park or green space around Nottingham, to have a good chance of seeing Green Hairstreak, you will need to look hard in the known places at the right time of year. Because it is a small, and obviously well camouflaged butterfly, it is usually only detected when it moves. Many butterfly enthusiasts have never seen one.



DISTRIBUTION

The regional distribution of Green Hairstreak records held in the iRecord-Indicia database are shown in Figure 2, most of these records are since 2010.

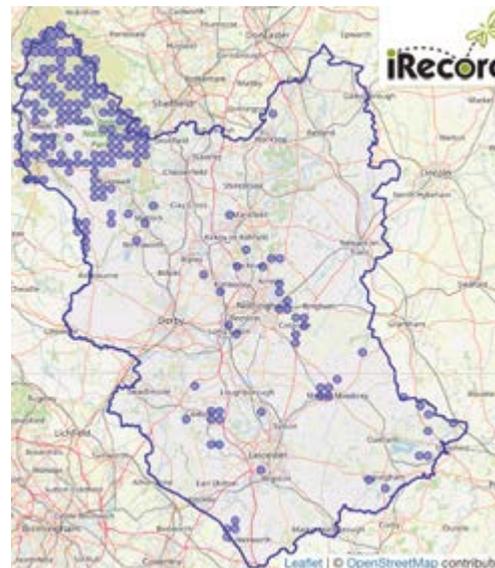


Figure 2. Green Hairstreak records in the East Midlands stored in iRecord, most records are post 2010.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Although neither rare, nor threatened, Green Hairstreak has recently been added to the Notts Biodiversity Action Group list of species of interest and a Species Action Plan has been drafted see: <https://nottsbag.org.uk/lbap/lbap-species-action-plans/green-hairstreak-sap/>.

Records from Notts go back to the mid 19th Century but the species has never been widespread or abundant. Notts is overwhelmingly lowland with the highest points in the Tibshelf – Teversal - Huthwaite area just reaching 200m OD.

Based on the available records there appears to have been a shift in the siting of many of the colonies around the City of Nottingham over the first two decades of this century (Figure 3). Green Hairstreak was formerly

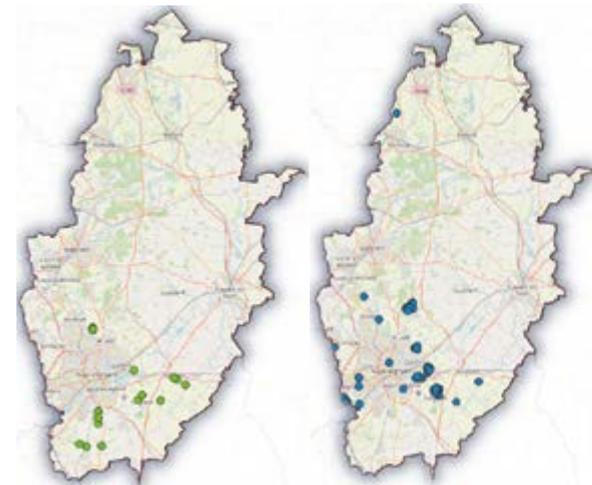


Figure 3. Comparison of Green Hairstreak record locations for Nottinghamshire, left, green dots show 1973-2010 records, whilst right, blue dots show 2011-21 records. (topo ©Open Street map contributors).

found at sites like Rushcliffe CP but there are almost no recent records. Rather, it is now found at a series of former colliery and industrial sites around Nottingham that have been designated as country parks or reserves. These include Calverton Pit, Gedling Country Park, Netherfield Lagoons, Skylarks NWT reserve at Holme Pierrepont, Cotgrave Country Park and Toton Sidings. In all these cases there is either thin, or no, soil cover due the past disturbance of the ground. The widespread ground covering Bird's-foot Trefoil is the only host plant so far recorded in Notts. It is of note that records and sites for Green Hairstreak are plentiful in and around Nottingham, whereas the urban areas of Derby and Leicester are almost totally lacking in records. Also, despite searching of the extensive sandy heaths of north Notts there are no records from there despite the similar soil types to upland Derbyshire where the species abounds! A possible explanation may lie in the distribution of the brown ant *M. sabuleti* if their association with Green Hairstreak is crucial to the success of colonies. The past records from Notts give a hint that colonies may also have a limited life span. One can never rule out the possibility that some of the newer sites might have been encouraged by butterfly breeding enthusiasts.

DERBYSHIRE

Green Hairstreak is very widespread in the Peak District of NW Derbyshire much of which lies above 300m OD (1.000 feet), They occur both on the calcareous limestone soils of the Dales where Common Rock Rose and Bird's-foot Trefoil are the host plant, and on the upland sandy acidic soils of the moors and heathlands where gorse, broom and bilberry are preferred. Elevations of the moors rise as high as 636M OD (over 2000 feet) on the summit of the majestic Kinder Scout. There seems to be an isolated colony southwest of Ripley in relatively low-lying east Derbyshire.

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND

Colonies occur in Charnwood Forest at elevations over 200m and up to Bardon Hill at 278m (912ft) Leicestershire's highest point. Hereabouts on the acid soils underlain by the ancient rocks of Charnwood, Bilberry seems to be chosen food plant. Green Hairstreak is also regularly seen at the site of the former Asfordby colliery and at Holwell ironstone quarries near Melton Mowbray. Farther southeast in lowland areas Bramble has been observed to be used near Rutland Water (Melanie Penson pers. comm) and in the limestone-rich areas of Rutland, where Common Rock Rose is favoured.



Figure 4. Green Hairstreak host plants of the East Midlands. Clockwise from top left Bird's-foot Trefoil, Gorse, Bilberry and Common Rock Rose. Images Steve Mathers.



Figure 5. Green Hairstreak Egg (ovum), Caterpillar (larva) and Chrysalis (pupa). Images courtesy Nick Brownley.



Figure 6. The brown ant *Myrmica sabuleti*. Image courtesy Gavin Gamble.

LIFE CYCLE

Green Hairstreak is single-brooded (univoltine) with a usual flight season in recent years of late April to mid-June, texts from about 50 years ago indicate May-June so in common with many species its flight season has become earlier presumably in response to a warming climate. The flight season is much earlier than all the other British hairstreaks that tend to peak in July-August.

Green Hairstreak spends a very large part of the year in the pupal stage. The adult flies mid April - mid June. The females lay the doughnut-like eggs (Figure 5) on the local host plants and then, after a few days, these hatch into caterpillars. They then grow and undergo a rapid series of moults (instars), here a late-stage final 4th instar is shown (Figure 5), before pupation takes place over the summer. The pupae then overwinter before emergence of the adult (imago) from mid April onwards to restart the cycle. It is postulated that the ant *Myrmica sabuleti* (Figure 6) plays a role through interactions with the caterpillars and/or the pupae. The brown hairy pupa (Figure 5) has long been known to emit an audible squeak that seems to mimic the sound of the adult ants. This relationship is not fully understood but similar interaction has been studied in other British Lycaenid butterflies such as Large Blue (also with *M. sabuleti*) and the Silver-studded Blue with the Small Black Ant *Lasius niger*.

RECORDING GREEN HAIRSTREAK

Green Hairstreak Records can be entered on-line from a mobile phone using the Butterfly Conservation - iRecord app, this is available for android or apple devices see: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/record-and-monitoring/irecord-butterflies>

Or those preferring to use more traditional recording techniques please either register and record your sightings on iRecord at <https://irecord.org.uk> or email them to the relevant county recorder, if possible as an Excel spreadsheet. For Notts (VC56) Steve Mathers at smbutterflies11@gmail.com, for Derbyshire (VC57) Ken Orpe at ken@malaga.plus.com and for Leics and Rutland (VC55) Richard Jeffrey at winrich168@btinternet.com.

The key data for any record should include the date, location, grid ref, species, number seen, recorder name and life stage observed (egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, adult). Could you please record the location as accurately as possible, ideally as an 8-figure grid reference, e.g. SK46792401, this gives a resolution of 10m on the ground and can help guide habitat management and conservation work. If you see a female laying eggs, please note the host plant, and include this with the record as a comment.

TOP SITES TO SEE GREEN HAIRSTREAK IN 2023

If you have never seen this wonderful butterfly, here are a few locations to check out next year, between mid April and early June. Good hunting, be patient, and don't forget to send us your records!

Ketton Quarry NR (Rutland) <https://www.naturespot.org.uk/wild-place/ketton-quarry-nr> search the sheltered parts of the old quarry.

Brown's Hill Quarry Holwell (Leicestershire) <https://www.naturespot.org.uk/wild-place/holwell-reserves> look in the deeper sheltered parts of the old quarry.

Charnwood Lodge NNR (Leicestershire) <https://www.naturespot.org.uk/wild-place/charnwood-lodge-nr> look along the footpath from Abbey Road that runs along the ridge parallel to Warren Hills Road.

Skylarks NWT Reserve (Nottinghamshire) <https://www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org/nature-reserves/skylarks>

Netherfield Lagoons (Nottinghamshire) <https://www.gedlingconservationtrust.org/netherfield-lagoons/>

Lathkill Dale NNR (Derbyshire) <https://www.peakdistrictonline.co.uk/lathkill-dale-nature-reserve/>

Longshaw Estate (Derbyshire) Moors <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/longshaw-burghage-and-the-eastern-moors/lists/walks-at-longshaw-estate-and-eastern-moors>

FURTHER READING

Eales, P. 2019. Life Cycles of British and Irish Butterflies. Pisces Publications 394pp.

Thomas, J. & Lewington, R. The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland, Bloomsbury 288pp.

An informative factsheet is produced by Butterfly Conservation at: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/green-hairstreak>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author thanks Ken Orpe and Mark Searle for helpful comments on a draft of this article.

Steve Mathers
Butterfly Recorder for Nottinghamshire



Green Hairstreak at Ketton Quarry.
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

Adrian Russell

It is with great sadness that we report the death of our former Chairman Adrian Russell on 22nd April 2022, after a short illness, aged 65.

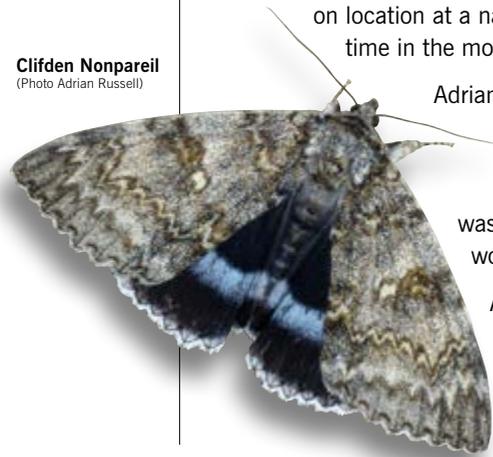


Adrian Russell
(Photo Paul Conneally)

Adrian joined Butterfly Conservation in 1994 and he subsequently became the Branch Moth Officer in 1995, he was also Secretary of the Leicester Entomological Society at this time. Later Adrian became Chairman of the Branch in 2018 and was County Moth Recorder for Leicestershire and Rutland (VC55), a role that he had fulfilled in an exemplary manner across four decades.

Before he retired Adrian had been Director of Environmental Services for Leicester City Council, and he could often be heard on the local radio station talking about things such as: nuisance fireworks, refuse collections or food hygiene. His media experience was very helpful when I was branch publicity officer and I needed a spokesperson to do radio interviews. I vaguely remember on one occasion he did an interview about the Big Butterfly Count for BBC Radio Leicester's Breakfast Show. They wanted the interview to be carried out on location at a nature reserve in the county, but of course at that time in the morning there weren't any butterflies on the wing!

Clifden Nonpareil
(Photo Adrian Russell)



Adrian was an inspirational character, his enthusiasm and helpfulness encouraged many to get involved in moth recording, he would even offer to make them moth traps at cost price. He was so knowledgeable about 'the dark side' as he would often jokingly refer to the study of moths.

Adrian will be sadly missed.
Our condolences go to all of his family and friends.

Eliot Taylor

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 27 September 2022 the Branch has 1257 Household members representing a figure of 1766 Individual members.



East Midlands Butterfly Conservation Committee Members

EAST MIDLANDS MAIN COMMITTEE

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Regional Conservation Manager - Midlands

Rhona Goddard **Tel:** 01746 762364 or 07903 038261 **e-mail:** rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org

If you would like to become a Committee Member please contact the Branch Organiser.

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

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Northern Brown Argus (Photo Derek Martin)



Holly Blue mating (Photo Dave Wright)



Orange-tip (Photo Dave Wright)



Brown Hairstreak at Chambers Farm Wood (Photo Elliot Taylor)



Green-veined White (Photo Derek Martin)