

EAST MIDLANDS

Butterfly

ISSUE 74 - SPRING 2024

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2024 Field Trip Programme

Sallows for the Purple Emperor in Derbyshire



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



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

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Cover Picture:
Red Admiral. Photo: Rachel Kirkley

Welcome

To the Spring 2024 issue of the East Midland Branch of Butterfly Conservation's Newsletter. Thanks to all those who have contributed articles for this issue.

After a very wet winter it's great to be able to look forward to another butterfly season. To whet your appetite we've got an exciting programme of field trips in our region featured in this newsletter.

The Purple Emperor butterfly has been increasing its range northwards in recent years, it is now found to be breeding in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. Ken Orpe has implemented a scheme to encourage this iconic butterfly to breed in South Derbyshire, by planting Sallows, the butterfly's foodplant. You can read more about this on pages 4-5.

Have a great summer!

Eliot Taylor Purple Emperor. Photo: Eliot Taylor



Branch Organiser's Notes

Welcome to the Spring 2024 Newsletter for the East Midlands Branch. The Branch has been very busy over the winter months with site visits, conservation work, Transect Training and planning events for the year. All volunteers should now be registered on Assemble, just go to the Butterfly Conservation main web site and search for Assemble. On this new site volunteers will be able to contact each other, skills can be shared, volunteer hours collected and insurance is covered for any BC related work parties, recording and field trips.

Butterfly Conservation also has a new working relationship with Forestry England. This will cover any Forestry England land which is owned by them or leased, the majority of FE is in Nottinghamshire with smaller areas in Derbyshire and Leicestershire. If you already record on FE land then continue as normal but please let your County Recorders know and they will make sure that your records are passed on to FE. If you would like to record on any FE land, especially where special access is required, such as, leased private woodland or car access needed, then please contact myself with your details so that I can get the necessary permission. There are still many FE sites under recorded such as Stapleford Wood (Newark area), Calverton Pit site (Notts), Sherwood Pines (Notts), Oxclose Wood (Mansfield Woodhouse) and others.

We are all hoping for better weather now that the new Transect/Recording season has started so please enjoy getting back out in the countryside again. You never know what new butterflies you may find.

Jane Broomhead, Branch Organiser

DERBYSHIRE MOTH RECORDING UPDATE

During the past year, Tony Davison and Steve Thorpe have been working closely with DaNES (Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Entomological Society) and DWT (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust) to get Derbyshire Moth Recording back on the map.

The sad loss of Dave Budworth had left the county without a formal moth recorder. DaNES approached Tony and Steve, who are part of the Derbyshire Moths Facebook Group, to try to engage their members and find a simple methodology to recording moths in the county. After a number of meetings, Derbyshire now has an official "Joint Verification and Moth Recording Team" after it was recognised that the job was too big for just one person.

The team comprises of nine volunteers with access to Derbyshire's moth records on the iRecord Gateway. iRecord is now being encouraged as the preferred method of recording Derbyshire's moths. For those recorders who would prefer other methods of submission, the recording team are happy to accept records in spreadsheet format or via email. With your approval, we can upload them on your behalf. Since December 2023 the Verification team has checked over 40,000 outstanding Derbyshire Moth Records on the iRecord system and there are now over 77,000 records in total.

For more information please contact
Tony Davison - email Tony.davison@btinternet.com
Steve Thorpe - email Ornithom@hotmail.com

ANNOUNCEMENT TO DERBYSHIRE MOTH RECORDERS

As you may have read in recent announcements, and from the latest Moth Bulletin on the Derbyshire Moth Facebook Group, I am putting together the consolidated Derbyshire Macro Moth Report for 2019-2023, as one hasn't been published since the last consolidated report which covered 2013-2018.

You can imagine that this is a big task, done entirely on a voluntary basis, however, I am pleased to say that the document is progressing along nicely. All parties concerned want this to be as accurate and up to date as possible, and we need you, the recorders, to help achieve this.

In order to get this published within time frames, I need to put a cap on outstanding Macro moth records for the period 2019-2023. So if you have not yet sent in your Derbyshire Macro Moth Records for this period, either into iRecord, iNaturalist or via DaNES, then would you please get in touch with either me or Steve Thorpe and we will advise you what to do. So if you want to see your records in print, please act quickly, you have until 31st May 2024.

Tony Davison
On behalf of the Derbyshire Moth Recording Team.

Congratulations to Mark Searle, winner of the 2023 UK Butterflies Annual Photography Competition for this fabulous photo of a Nottinghamshire Grizzled Skipper.





Rosliston Primary Schoolchildren show off their Majestic craftwork
(Photo Gary Atkins)

An Imperial Invasion – Bringing the Purple Emperor to Derbyshire

Butterfly Conservation's East Midlands branch (EMBC) has teamed up with South Derbyshire County Council (SDDC) to buy Willow trees that will help create the habitat preferred by the Purple Emperor butterfly and promote this spectacular species' steady march northwards through our region into Derbyshire.

This large and magnificent butterfly (dubbed His Imperial Majesty!) has been getting ever closer by colonising woodland in adjoining counties, and on 30 November a batch of Willow plants (two-year old Sallow 'whips') were planted at the National Forest's Rosliston headquarters. This jointly funded project, which was the brainchild of Derbyshire Butterfly Recorder Ken Orpe,

has involved the purchase of 575 of the Sallow whips.

Over the autumn, a number of local organisations and companies signed up to the project by each taking a quantity of the Sallow whips and pledging to plant them at specific sites thought likely to attract the Purple Emperor. These include the National Trust, Forestry England, the National Forest Co, Severn Trent Water, the Woodland Trust, Derby College, Lubrizol, Toyota, St Modwen Homes and several regional councils in Derbyshire as well as a few private site owners.

The event at Rosliston saw representatives of some of these organisations get together, complete with spades, to plant some of the whips ahead of a broader mass planting by their

own organisations in the coming weeks. Councillor Sean Bambrick, Chair of South Derbyshire District Council, was the first to break turf on the day.

Other guests of honour at the planting included a group of young children from Rosliston Primary School, who had developed their own nature project and turned up with various attractively crafted items reflecting the beauty of the Purple Emperor.

It is well known that the adult Purple Emperors like to lay their eggs on Willow plants as the first step on the long life cycle of the next generation. There are dozens of varieties of Willow, but the Purple Emperor seems to prefer the broad-leaved Goat Willow type, though eggs and larvae have been discovered

on other varieties, notably Grey Willow. Both types are being supplied as two-year whips, though it's likely it will be another three years before the trees are mature enough to serve as a foundation for the hungry caterpillars.

The Purple Emperor is primarily a woodland species, and it likes mature trees on and around which to display, although it has been seen in a wider range of habitats in recent years. As the male butterfly gravitates to 'observation posts' high up in woods, planting the Sallows in these elevated areas close to mature territorial trees is advisable.

Adults are on the wing from mid-June to early August. Eggs are laid late July/early August, and the early larval stages are eating until early November; during this period growth is quite slow, reaching only around 10mm before hibernation, when they could



Three of spades - from left to right - Cllr Sean Bambrick, Chair of South Derbyshire County Council, Ken Orpe and the National Forest's Thibaut Lambrey de Souza
(Photo Gary Atkins)

fall prey to predators so they usually take up position by a bud, a twig junction or a cleft in the Sallow's branch where they remain camouflaged.

But as soon as the Sallow buds open in the spring, the larvae begin eating voraciously and quickly grow during April and May, often quadrupling in size. Pupae form over three weeks from late May to

mid-June, with emergence of the adult butterflies taking a similar time – males usually before females.

Ken adds: "As a result of Climate Change, the Purple Emperor, one of the most iconic British butterflies, has moved north from southern England during the last few years and it is now established at some woodland sites in North-west Leicestershire.

"In order to help the butterfly to get established in South Derbyshire, EMBC formed the joint venture with SDDC, together with a number of other organisations and landowners to plant Willows – the larval food plant for their caterpillars – along woodland sites in South Derbyshire. By carrying out this conservation work we are extremely hopeful that 'His imperial Majesty' will grace our woodlands for the first time very soon!"



Team effort - the first sallows are planted
(Photo Gary Atkins)

Field Trip Programme 2024



Grizzled Skipper
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

These field trips are a great way to learn about butterflies and their habitat, there will be help with identification available and there will also be photographic opportunities. Walks are open to anyone to attend. Please check weather conditions and come suitably prepared.

THE FOLLOWING IS VERY IMPORTANT. All walks must be pre-booked (with the exception of the Hoe Grange Quarry Event) with the leader of the walk. This is essential so the leader can inform you if the walk is cancelled for any reason. Also, all walks will be limited to a maximum of 12 participants. If you arrive at a venue without booking, you could be turned away if the number of participants has reached its maximum.

Bingham Linear Park

(Nottinghamshire)
Sunday 19 May

Meet at 10.00am at the bridge on Tithby Road in Bingham
Grid Ref: SK 701393.
Approx NG13 8GP.

Target Species: Spring butterflies - hopefully Grizzled Skipper.

Wear stout walking boots or shoes as the ground is rough. No toilets or facilities so bring your own drink or snack.

The walk is about 6 km and takes approx 2 hours.

Contact: Jenny Craig
07979 355413

Longstone Edge

(Derbyshire)
Sunday 26 May

Meet at 10.30am at the big layby Grid Ref: SK 199 730 on the single-track road that leaves

Great Longstone on the left, just at the RHS bend in the village coming from Monsal Head. The St Crispin pub is just beyond this. If you see this you have gone too far!

This is a meet suitable for those who have difficulty getting around as the walking is very short and easy.

There are no conveniences

Last year was very good for all our target species so we can only hope for a repeat performance!

Target Species: - We hope to see Green Hairstreak and Wall

Brown if they are out, but also other spring butterflies.

Contact: John & Sylvia Green
07760 136369

Ketton Quarry

(Rutland)
Saturday 1 June

Meet at 10.00am in the small car park off Pit Lane in Ketton (SK 978 054).

There are some steep slopes so stout footwear recommended.

There are no facilities at this site.



Liquorice Piercer moth
(Photo Christine Maughan)



Green Hairstreak
(Photo Derek Martin)

Target Species: Dingy & Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreak, Liquorice-piercer and Orange-tailed Clearwing moths.

Contact: Melanie Penson
via email:
harfangneige2018@gmail.com

Chee Dale and Mosely Bank

(Derbyshire)
Saturday 15 June

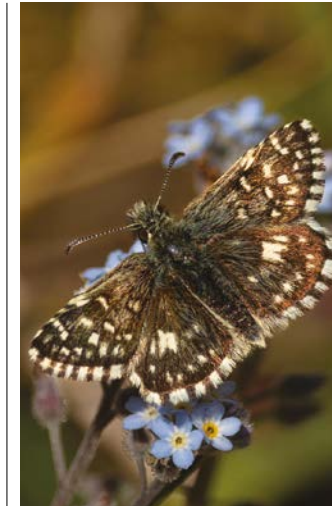
Meet at 10.30am in the large lay-by off the A6 at Topley Head, SK 112 725, where there is ample free parking.

Although this walk is relatively short (about 1.5km), there are several steep slopes and rocky terrain so supportive footwear is strongly recommended.

There are no facilities at this site.

Target Species: Cistus Forester and Six-belted Clearwing Moths and Peak District Race Brown Argus. There is a possibility of Dark-green Fritillary. There are also some rare and scarce plants to see, including one endemic to Derbyshire.

Contact: Melanie Penson
via email:
harfangneige2018@gmail.com



Grizzled Skipper
(Photo Christine Maughan)

Bagworth Heath Woods Country Park

(Leicestershire)
Tuesday 2 July

Meet at 11.00am in the Car Park, Grid Ref: SK 457068

Target Species: Marbled White and other summer butterflies.

Bagworth Heath Woods is located off Heath Road, approximately 0.6 miles south of Bagworth towards Merry Lees and Desford, in West Leicestershire.

This 75 hectare (185 acre) Country Park has been transformed from the scarred industrial landscape of Desford Colliery into a valuable recreational resource. Owned and managed by Leicestershire County Council, Bagworth Heath Woods is made up of woodland, grassland heathland, lakes and ponds. There is a network of grass and surfaced paths through varied habitats.

There is a free car park at Heath Road Bagworth, LE67 1DL, but no toilet facilities.

Contact: Eliot Taylor
0116 2871677



Marbled White
(Photo Eliot Taylor)



Hoe Grange Quarry
(Photo Gary Atkins)

Hoe Grange Quarry Nature Reserve

(Longcliffe, Derbyshire – SK222560)

Sunday 7 July

This event does not require advance booking

The 6th Open Day for Derbyshire's first Butterfly Reserve

From 11.00am to 4.00pm.

Members of Butterfly Conservation East Midlands, including Ray Walker (Hon Warden) together with Pat and Ken Orpe (Derbyshire Butterfly Recorder) and other volunteers, will be able to show visitors around this restored limestone quarry where already 32 species of butterflies have been recorded including Dark Green Fritillary and the Peak District

version of the Brown Argus. It will also be possible to see the work that many volunteers have done to enhance the habitat so as to increase the biodiversity at the site. The Information Centre will be open containing charts showing what has been recorded on the site.

Longcliffe Quarries will be offering refreshments and providing toilet facilities.

No Dogs please

Car Parking This will be at Curzon Lodge (DE4 4HN) which is situated down the hill towards Grangemill from the crossroads in Longcliffe village. Mini buses will then take visitors direct into Hoe Grange Quarry.

Contact: Ken Orpe:
ken@malaga.plus.com



Dark Green Fritillary
(Photo Christine Maughan)



Silver-washed Fritillary
(Photo Derek Martin)

Cloud Wood (LRWT) Nature Reserve

(Leicestershire)
Tuesday 9 July

Meet at 2.00pm in the lay-by opposite the reserve.

Location: SK419214. (Postcode for Sat Nav DE73 8BG). Cloud Wood lies in the N.W. of Leicestershire, 1.5km S.E. of Breedon-on-the-Hill on the road between Tonge and Griffydham. It is part of the site of an ancient woodland that was originally coppiced in the traditional way. Parts of the wood are still coppiced by the Wildlife Trust in rotation, and other areas are left to grow naturally. There is a diverse range of flora and fauna present.

Nearest toilets and facilities (lovely cafe) are in Staunton Harold Garden Centre (LE65 1RU).

Target Species: Silver-washed Fritillary, White-letter Hairstreak and hopefully Purple Emperor.

Contact: Richard Jeffery:
07803 599247

Coombs Dale

(Derbyshire)

Wednesday 24 July

Meet at 10.00am at the bottom of the Dale by the playing field where there is a parking area - SK 236751. It is on the A623 towards Stoney Middleton. There is also parking around Calver Crossroads.

Target species: Dark-Green Fritillary, Brown Argus and other summer butterflies

Morning walk finishes around 12.30pm. Facilities available in nearby pub and cafe.

Contact: Al Roberts:
07752 675363

Belper Private Butterfly NR

(Derbyshire)

Sunday 28 July

Meet at 11.00am Parking will be signposted at Grid Ref: SK 36554 49188

Target species: Wall Brown, Skippers, Small Copper, Small Tortoiseshell, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and other summer butterflies



Gatekeeper
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

Please wear sensible footwear as there is some uneven ground.

The walk is on mown paths through interesting meadow and hedgerow habitat.

The reserve has been developed since the owners took over the site in 2009 and consists of two paddocks extending over a couple of acres. These have been developed / rewilded to suit various butterfly species of which 25 have been recorded so far. The last 6 years have seen the arrival of Common Blue, Wall Brown, Essex Skipper, Ringlet, Brown Argus and Dingy Skipper.

Toilets will be available if required in the owners' home.

The walking will be mindful rather than strenuous although the land is on a slight gradient. There will be plenty of opportunity to reduce the distance walked if required. It should take around an hour and a half to 2 hours in total.

Afterwards you are welcome to join us for tea and cake

Contact: Nigel Davidson:
07799 656439

Pleasley Pit

Country Park

(Derbyshire / Nottinghamshire)

Sunday 4 August

Meet at the Pit Head Cafe (NG19 7PH) at **10:45am**. Walk to start at 11am.

Top car park (at the pit) shuts at 2.00pm. Bottom car park (SK499642) at the entrance to Local Nature Reserve is open 24/7.

From the M1 Junction 29 follow the signs for Mansfield A617. Go through Bramley Vale, then Glapwell and continue towards Mansfield on the A617. At the first large roundabout take the 4th exit into Pleasley village and after 120 yards take a right turn into Pit Lane and drive up the hill into the car park. If people want to park at the bottom car park (two-minute walk to the pit) they would then have plenty of time to visit other parts of the LNR which is excellent for orchids, other wildflowers and birds.

Walk to last roughly hour and a half to two hours.

Café and toilets open from 10.00am to 2.00pm.

Target Species: countryside butterflies, and early dragonflies.

Contact: Willy Lane:
07790 000770



Common Blue
(Photo Eliot Taylor)

Transect Recording in the East Midlands Branch

The National Scheme for monitoring Butterflies was started by Ernie Pollard of The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Monk's Wood, Cambridgeshire back in 1976. Since then, the popularity of carrying out these butterfly surveys has been very intense with over 2500 sites being monitored across the UK in 2020.

Here in the East Midlands we have in excess of 500 volunteers carrying out butterfly transects which involves visiting a site once a week between 1st April and 30th September and following a set route.

Sometimes the collection of data is carried out by just one individual volunteer per site, but usually there is a rota of about four volunteers who share the responsibility.

If you would like to participate in this excellent way of both getting exercise whilst doing important survey work on the distribution and numbers of the local butterflies, then please send me an email to: ken@malaga.plus.com

2023 total number of transects by branch

East Midlands Branch	
Derbyshire	135
Notts	31
Leicester & Rutland	29
Total	195
Hampshire & I.O.W.	191
Surrey	161

Ken Orpe –
Transect Co-Ordinator – East Midland Branch

Volunteers Needed

At the moment we are looking for additional volunteers at a number of transect site in the region including: Hoe Grange Quarry Nature Reserve, Horseshoe Quarry, Deep Dale Sheldon, Hartington Meadows and along the Cromford Canal – all in Derbyshire.

In addition there are vacancies in both Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) – the commitment being to walk a set route once a month between May and August (inclusive).

If you would like to help with any of these surveys then please send an email to:-

Ken Orpe, Derbyshire Recorder :- email ken@malaga.plus.com



Ken in the field

East Midlands Branch Members Day & AGM 2023

Branch Organiser's Address – Jane Broomhead

JB thanked everyone for coming to the East Midlands Branch AGM and Members' Day, intended also as an event to thank all branch supporters, from those who just enjoy reading the excellent newsletters, produced by Eliot, to those who had made our Derbyshire Butterfly Recorder very happy by making the EM top of the Transect Leader Board.

She went on to acknowledge Ken's competitive, dedicated and passionate work for butterflies which had recently earned him a Highly Commended Marsh Award. He was nominated by Rachael Conway from BC's recording and monitoring team for a very impressive list of duties including:

- his work as Butterfly Recorder for Derbyshire, UKBMS Transect Co-ordinator and WCBS Champion for the EM,
- his tireless enthusiasm to inspire and engage the local community and partner organisations to share his passion for butterflies,
- his pivotal role in establishing Hoe Grange Quarry as Derbyshire's first Butterfly Reserve and his continuing work to protect the site,
- his efforts to increase the number of EM UKBMS sites from 7 in 2008 to over 180 in 2022 - more than any other Branch for that year,
- maintaining his surveyor network through his comprehensive weekly updates, and
- other contributions to BC activities such as delivering presentations.

The audience was invited to applaud Ken on this great award.

JB then gave a brief overview of activities which had taken place during the year, including events at Hoe Grange Quarry and the Global Bird Fair. She highlighted conservation work for Grizzled Skipper on the Sustrans Cycle Route south of Newark (and encouraged anyone to get involved in the work parties led by Chris Jackson during the winter).

The state of the Purple Emperor in our region was discussed, with numbers in Nottinghamshire down this year, probably due to the hot summer in 2022, whilst in Leicestershire they have increased. KO had begun a new project to plant sallows in the south of Derbyshire to encourage Purple Emperor into the county. She commented on a recent very entertaining article on the branch website from Nick & Samantha Brownley about searching for the PE in Sherwood Forest.

There had again been a varied programme of field trips and it was hoped that these would continue in 2024, although there was now a BC requirement for first aid training which could affect how many would be able to run.

Lastly JB thanked all of the EM committee, whose work enabled the Branch to function. A plea was made for anyone who would like to help on the committee.

Treasurer – Jane Broomhead

JB reported that she was now receiving regular monthly bank statements from the finance team at Head Office after initial problems at the beginning of the year. The most up to date statement, October 2023, was circulated for information.

She gave a breakdown of income which included £8,022.00 from HO for subscriptions (a figure which fluctuated according to branch membership), £4364.50 from event sales and £253.03 from donations and talks.

Under expenditure, work carried out for the branch by Melanie Penson, agreed by the committee, as well as committee members' mileage to events accounted for £1398.15. £428.75 was for the purchase of sallows for South Derbyshire. The Branch Newsletter cost £2,451.00 and £1,701.00 was the payment for the stand and associated costs at the Global Bird Fair. (Although the cost of this event had not been covered by sales the committee felt that we should continue to attend the event as it was important for the promotion of Butterfly Conservation.) £1,003.25 was for the purchase of stock for resale and £101.63 was for the mailing of Branch information to new members. Other expenditure included £105

for the branch membership of two local Wildlife Trusts, £25.00 for the hire of a hall for committee meetings, £15.36 for the branch contribution for BC insurance and £57.00 for the purchase of card readers to enable contactless card payments.

The overall surplus in the account was £22,432.05, and the committee would be looking to use some of this for conservation work locally and nationally before the end of the financial year.

Membership Secretary – Christine Maughan

The following information was based on statistics provided by Butterfly Conservation.

CM reported that, after the fall in membership during 2022, membership for the organisation as a whole had increased by 2% since last November. The national total was almost 41,500 individual members from over 30,000 households.

Membership within the East Midlands Branch had risen significantly by a rate of 8.5%, with a net gain of 109 households. The total branch membership at 1 November 2023 was 1394 households, representing 1932 individual members.

The branch is ranked 10th biggest within Butterfly Conservation by household membership.

At a local level, a breakdown of branch membership by county showed that numbers were fairly evenly split with 33% of our total membership from Derbyshire, 33% from Nottinghamshire, 31% from Leicestershire and Rutland, and the remaining 3% from other areas.

Regular e-newsletters had been sent out during the season through Head Office to publicise our events.

BUTTERFLY RECORDERS

Derbyshire Recorders – Ken and Pat Orpe

KO reported that weather conditions in 2023 had resulted in a disappointing year for butterflies. The early part of the year had been wet and cold up to the third week of May, followed by a warm June, but cloudy conditions persisted during July and August, and October had been the wettest on record. Only two heatwaves had been recorded in 2023.

It had been a poor year for Dingy Skipper, Peacock and Common Blue, but some species had fared better with Red Admiral numbers boosted by autumn immigrants from Scandinavia, and Holly Blue succeeding in rearing three broods. Silver-

washed Fritillary numbers again exceeded Dark Green Fritillary numbers for the second year running in Lathkill Dale, and Wall was holding its own, but showing movement out of its established areas of higher ground eastwards into north-east Derbyshire. Both White-letter Hairstreak (thanks to the planting of disease-resistant elms) and Wall were doing better than the national trend.

Early indications were that records from transects were down on 2022, with an average of 15% reduction half way through the recording season. All Peak District sites had a poor year, but numbers were higher further south in the county, with Aston Brickyards showing a 53% increase in numbers, thanks largely to the habitat management which had been undertaken there.

East Midlands transects totalled 193 in 2023 (Derbyshire 133, Nottinghamshire 31, Leicestershire 29) again leading the country, ahead of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. 500 volunteers were involved, walking a distance of 1.5 times round the world, with 350 of those carrying out transects in Derbyshire.

Online entry on the UKBMS site had been completed for more than 100 sites during 2023 by volunteers, and KO was looking for another 12 people to undertake direct entry next year.

Under the Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme, involving four surveys a year from May to August over a set route, all 13 sites had been walked with 45 of the 52 surveys completed in 2023.

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

KO summarised sightings at Hoe Grange Quarry NR where some species had seen a good year, and others had done badly. Three new species of butterfly (Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Blue and Purple Hairstreak) had been recorded, taking the total to 32 for the site. Also new to the site were Slow Worm, Barn Owl and Emerald Damselfly and Golden-ringed Dragonfly.

KO concluded by confirming dates for transect training and butterfly ID on 17 March 2024 in Allestree, and Hoe Grange Quarry Open Day on Sunday 7 July 2024. A work party was also planned for Spring 2024 in conjunction with DWT to pull Rosebay Willowherb at Hoe Grange Quarry. KO also invited subscribers to his email newsletters for latest sightings and photographs, which currently had 1600 subscribers.

Nottinghamshire Recorder – Steve Mathers

A review of 2023 'The New Normal'

SM commented that it had been a record year for records.

20,000 records had already been entered, with only records from 2023 Big Butterfly Count to be added. These represented quality data from regular observers, but unfortunately 1,500 records had been rejected because the data had come from apps not fully integrated with the BC recording systems, and grid references were too general.

The same 32 species had again been recorded in 2023 for the third year running.

The weather in 2023 had been changeable, extreme and unpredictable, which in turn could have had an impact on the lifecycles of insects.

- SM examined the possible carry-over effects of the 2022 heatwaves which had resulted in very low late summer broods of certain species which would overwinter to breed the following year. In 2023 Small Tortoiseshell numbers were down from 1,020 in 2022 to 458 and although this species is known to be in decline in southern England it seemed likely that it was attributable to low numbers hibernating over winter. Similarly, the Purple Emperor saw a reduction in records from 51 in 2022 to only 17 in 2023. It was known that the early stages (eggs and larvae) suffered badly in August/September 2022 and few survived to overwinter.

- Another possible effect of heat stress could be the number of aberrations and variants which had been recorded in 2023. SM showed examples of Essex Skipper, Small Copper and the Valezina form of Silver-washed Fritillary.

2023 Top performers:

- Red Admiral had rocketed from 641 records in 2022 to 1,800 in 2023. There had been a massive migration influx in May/July, and reverse migration was very evident in late August/September. A second major influx occurred in October with huge numbers coming from northern Europe across the east coast, maybe on migration south or to overwinter in Britain.

- Brown Argus had also shown a significant increase from 136 records in 2022 to 241 in 2023 with a strong spring brood.

- Speckled Wood was the most recorded butterfly.

- Brimstone emerged strongly.
- Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper did well (but Ringlet had done poorly, and the reason wasn't understood).

Large Tortoiseshell:

This was a former resident of Nottinghamshire until 1916, particularly in the Sherwood area, but in 2023 there were 3 records from reputable observers, supported by photographs. SM discussed whether these were illegal introductions, but because the last decade has seen an expansion of Large Tortoiseshell across the North Sea and S & E England, it was sensible to keep an open mind and remain vigilant next year when visiting suitable habitat with elms.

Corfu Butterfly Conservation

SM outlined an interest in this island's butterflies and offered to provide more information to anyone interested in visiting in the future.

Star moths recorded in Notts in 2023 were:

- Dewick's Plusia – significant numbers had been recorded
- Rannock Looper – a species found in the highlands of Scotland had been recorded in Notts
- Vestal – a migrant, recorded in large numbers in 2023
- Clifden Nonpareil (Blue Underwing) – first recorded in Notts in 2019, and this year had turned up in lots of moth traps throughout the county

Hornet Moth – SM had undertaken a personal project to look for this rare moth with only nine previously recorded colonies in the East Midlands. He had discovered 2 or 3 new colonies in S Notts, and had written an article for the EMBC website about one site at the British Geological Survey.

Box Tree Moth – this was spreading rapidly through the region with sometimes in excess of 100 individuals recorded in a single moth trap in a night. There was evidence that it could move to Cotoneaster as a host plant if all Box was destroyed, and it was one to watch with interest.

Leicestershire and Rutland Recorder – Richard Jeffery

RJ reported that total butterfly records in VC55 for 2023 to date were 14664 (from i-Record, UKBMS, Garden Butterfly Survey & i-Naturalist).

Big Butterfly Count, butterfly spreadsheets and paper records were to follow later in the year.

Butterfly Transects 2023:

29 Transects in total were carried out in VC55, of which 21 were in the National Forest and 7 in conjunction with LRWT. These accounted for 8769 records of 27284 butterflies in total. The top butterflies recorded were Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Speckled Wood and Small Skipper.

New for 2023 were:

- Beacon Hill Heathland
- Morley Quarry (plans to make it SSSI)
- Stonebow Washlands (Loughborough)

It was hoped that these transects would be repeated next year, and subsequently year on year.

Proposed new transects for 2024:

- Bardon Hill Quarry – Northern Landform (LRWT)
- Market Bosworth Country Park

It was hoped that suitable sites for transects would be found in the North East and East of the county where there was currently low coverage.

Priority Species for Surveying in VC55:

- Dingy Skipper
- Grizzled Skipper
- Wall (Charnwood – 2-3km radius of Bardon Hill)
- Small Heath (Charnwood & Rutland)
- Green Hairstreak
- White-letter Hairstreak
- Black Hairstreak (Luffenham Heath Golf Course & Ketton Quarry)
- White Admiral (Rutland)

Planned activities for 2024:

- Seek and monitor potential butterfly recording sites in the Soar and Wreake Valleys, and the Melton Mowbray area. Possible sites at Wymondham Rough and Coombs Meadow (both LRWT)?
- Monitor key parks in Leicester city centre for White-letter Hairstreak butterflies where established and new Elm trees are present, with the assistance of L.C.C.

- Zonal surveying on the newly developed areas of heathland and meadow on the Bardon Hill Quarry estate (target species: Wall, Green Hairstreak & Dingy Skipper).

- Investigate known and historical sites for Wall butterflies in L&R.

The Purple Emperor in VC55 2023:

- The Purple Emperor continued to consolidate its presence in the Charnwood area, expanding its range outwards from Beacon Hill, Bardon Hill Quarry and Charnwood Lodge.

- It was recorded in just 4 new sites in Leicestershire & Rutland; Newbold, Coleorton Hall, Old Hayes Wood & Browns Wood, all in NW Leics.

- Sadly no records were received from NE Leics or Rutland this year.

- Extensive surveying and monitoring was being carried out by volunteers led by Ian Surman to assess suitable habitat and to seek out the larval, pupal and adult stages of the butterfly.

- Continued monitoring would be undertaken over the coming years.

The Dingy Skipper in VC55 2023:

- The Dingy Skipper was recorded on 16 distinct sites in L&R (up from 11 in 2022). Asfordby Hill, Brown's Hill Quarry, Bagworth Heath, Ketton Quarry & Stonesby Quarry were still the key sites.

- Dingy Skipper was once again recorded on the Butterfly Transects at Bardon Hill, Bagworth Heath, New Lount NR and Donisthorpe Woodland Park. Sadly none were seen on the transect at Hicks Lodge this year (this site needs more investigation in 2024).

- Dingy Skipper was recorded at new sites in Bradgate Park and Ratby

- The Grizzled Skipper was recorded on 12 distinct sites (6 in 2022), with Asfordby Hill, Bloody Oaks Quarry and Ketton Quarry once again the key sites. The butterfly was also seen at Stonesby Quarry but not in any significant numbers.

- Both Dingy and Grizzled Skipper were recorded by Melanie Penson at Swainspark derelict works and Spring Cottage (nr. Albert Village), both new sites for the species.

- Both species could be present in other locations in the county and more investigation was required to find sites with suitable habitat.

- It was proposed also to ask recorders to re-visit known sites where the butterflies have been recorded in recent years.

Other notable sightings in VC55 2023:

- A Wall Brown butterfly was seen at Mount St. Bernard Abbey on the 20th August. This site is to be investigated further to assess all flora and fauna, and to put plans in place to improve biodiversity.

- A Clouded Yellow butterfly was seen at Charnwood Lodge on the 30th of August. It was also recorded at Melton Mowbray on the 9th and 10th of August.

- There were only 6 reported sightings of the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly so far this year, possibly due to the poor weather during part of the flight period.

- Sadly there were NO reported sightings of White Admiral anywhere in VC55 this year (so far).

Number of Sightings (so far) of Priority Species in VC55 for 2023:

Dingy Skipper 70

Grizzled Skipper 23

Wall Brown 23

Small Heath 164

Green Hairstreak 39

White-letter Hairstreak 6

Black Hairstreak 0

White Admiral 0

Sightings of Summer Migrants in VC55 for 2023:

Painted Lady 53

Clouded Yellow 3

EMBC Field Trips in VC55 in 2023:

Sunday 4 June: Ketton Quarry and the Valley (12 species of butterfly and 7 species of day-flying moth). Key species: Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak

Wednesday 5 July: Bagworth Heath Country Park (14 species of butterfly and 3 species of day-flying moth). Key species: Marbled White, but sadly NO Purple Emperor.

Tuesday 11 July: Cloud Wood (10 species of butterfly and 2 species of day-flying moth).

Key species: Silver-washed Fritillary, Purple & White-letter Hairstreak and Purple Emperor

RJ expressed thanks to all volunteers who had taken part in any of our transects this season and also to anyone who submitted butterfly records throughout the year.

Grizzled/Dingy Skipper Project Officer – Mark Searle

The East Midlands had one of the coolest, wettest starts to the season in recent years and overall, first sightings from most sites were several weeks late, typically in the first week of May. No data was received beyond the 10 June.

Data was collected in Notts from 14 sites with numbers of sightings generally low after the slow start, and it was difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about population trends. Peak observations occurred at Barnstone Cutting along the GCR heritage line (17 adults, 19 May) and the Kilvington Lakes area (20 adults, 27 May). Only small numbers were seen on the Bingham Linear Park (in addition to low egg counts), and a few along the Cotham disused railway line (Sustrans route) with monitoring hindered by closures for cycle track maintenance during the peak of the season. There were a few records from the site at the Elton Guide Camp, not far from Kilvington Lakes, from near the Langar Airfield, along the Flawborough Footpath and in the 'Triangle'.

A lot of effort has gone in to habitat management and monitoring at Barnstone Cutting on the GCR Heritage Line and the adjacent Grange Farm site. Careful management and monitoring of egg-laying habitat, including extensive egg counts, had shown a lot of skipper activity along this stretch of line, despite the low number of adults on the wing. Several hundred ova were found in the Cutting alone, and all stages of the life cycle, and timings, had been recorded in detail, informing future habitat management strategies. Further north along the line at Rushcliffe Halt, no adults had been seen on the wing in this area for three years, but 20+ ova were recorded. Egg monitoring had proved to be a useful primary tool, but required skilled manpower.

The Leicestershire and Rutland data showed an increase in recorder activity in 2023 with sightings received from 11 sites. Ketton Quarry remained the hot spot, with a first sighting on 3 May and a peak of 6 adults on 8 June. Small numbers from single visits came in from Asfordby Hill and Sidings, from Big Pits and Bloody Oaks, Stonesby

Quarry, Essendine, Swainspark and Woolfox Lodge Quarry, showing that small populations were hanging on at these sites. More monitoring of these sites would help interpretation.

Finally, no records had been received from the re-introduction site at Ticknall Lime Yards at Calke Park in 2023, but a concerted effort should be made to look for egg-laying activity in the Limeyards during the 2024 season.

CONSERVATION

Nottingham/Leicestershire Conservation Officer – Melanie Penson

MP outlined work carried out for Grizzled and Dingy Skipper in the National Forest where work was taking place to create an open mosaic habitat as well as woodland, and at Albert Village Lake.

East Midlands Conservation Officer - Moths – Melanie Penson

An update on the following species, the EM's most threatened, was provided:

- Marsh Carpet – a site at Misson Carr in N Nottinghamshire had been investigated, but had been found to be currently unsuitable owing to drying out. MP was due to attend a meeting with other interested parties in January 2024 to discuss future action. Other areas along the R. Idle were possible sites for this moth.
- Argent & Sable moth – all historical sites had been visited, but MP ascertained that only two were now suitable, Shining Cliff Wood and Bottom Moor Wood.
- Clearwing moth surveying – 11 of the 12 species had been recorded during 2023. MP was to deliver training for Welsh and Large Red-belted Clearwings to Sherwood Forest rangers. She drew attention to the fact that many clearwing moths are not fully monitored because of the nature of the sites where they are located – eg sports fields, golf courses, car parks, university campuses etc.
- Liquorice Piercer moth – eight colonies had now been located.
- 4-Spotted moth – good habitat still existed in Leicestershire & E Nottinghamshire, but none had been recorded in 2023.

Conservation Advisor East Midlands – Jim Steele

(no report received owing to illness)

Field Trips Organiser's Report – Max Maughan

MM reported that seven actual field trips, plus the fifth Hoe Grange Open Day and a Big Butterfly Count event at The National Stone Centre had all taken place. Most had enjoyed good weather.

Of the seven trips, the total number of people attending was 77 and the average was 11, which was encouraging.

A good selection of butterflies and day flying moths were recorded. The average number of butterfly species seen was 13, with Coombs Dale and Aston Brickyards both having the highest total of 16.

The Big Butterfly Event at the National Stone Centre attracted a good number of visitors and the guided walks recorded 14 butterfly species.

The 5th Open Day at Hoe Grange Quarry had 275 visitors and 11 species of butterfly were recorded, a good number considering the lack of sun that day.

MM thanked all those who had led walks and invited volunteers to lead walks next year. He commented on the new requirement for a qualified first-aider on each walk which could ultimately lead to a curtailment in the field trip programme. The actual training needs were currently under investigation.

Newsletter Editor – Eliot Taylor

As usual two issues of the newsletter were produced, in Spring and Autumn.

The Spring issue ran to 24 pages and featured the minutes of the 2021 AGM as well as:

- The 2023 Field Trip Programme
- An article by Ken Orpe on Transects in the East Midlands
- The 2022 Clearwing and Forester Moth Report and news of the Argent & Sable Moth back in Derbyshire from Melanie Penson.

There were a few font problems with the Autumn issue because BC's corporate fonts were no longer supported by ET's computer software. This issue again ran to 24 pages, containing the Field Trip Reports and also:

- information on the Grizzled Skipper Winter Work Party programme

- an article by Steve Mathers on the Migrant Butterflies of the East Midlands

- a piece about Ken Orpe's initiative: Sallows for the Purple Emperor in Derbyshire.

It was always nice to get articles and photographs from members and Dave Wright had written an article about his observations of the increasing numbers of Scarlet Tiger Moths in his Leicestershire garden.

Finally, the copy deadline for the Spring 2024 edition was set as Monday 1st April.

Publicity Officer – Gary Atkins

GA commented that the AGM was timed well for one of our more significant publicity events of the year, as the following Thursday sallows for the Purple Emperor were being planted by South Derbyshire County Council's CEO at the National Forest's Rosliston base, and involving media attendance. This related to a project launched recently by Ken Orpe, and supported by dozens of organisations. It was hoped the plan to plant 550 sallow whips would eventually provide suitable habitat for Purple Emperors within Derbyshire!

Looking back, in terms of national media/publicity activity, to his knowledge there had only been two major national releases during 2023, one in February on the State of Britain's Butterflies and one in September regarding the results of the Big Butterfly Count, as well as a few mid-year promotions for the Big Butterfly Count. Due to the many personnel changes in the full-time BC Communications and PR team, he had had little direct contact with them, and was not party to any constructive planning or what the organisation's national 'PR' strategy was.

Locally, the first initiative in 2023 was a planting event at the National Stone Centre in March, when a sizeable group of infant schoolchildren planted dog violets with a view to attracting Dark-Green and Silver-washed Fritillaries. An article was written for the EMBC website, but unfortunately there was no associated media coverage because the local infant school's federation wished to uphold 'privacy' rules.

Hoe Grange Quarry Open Day was again a major focus of the year, and a press release promoting the event was produced in conjunction with Longcliffe's publicity agent. This was picked up sparsely by a small handful of local media before and after the event.

The Big Butterfly Count was promoted and publicised at both the local and national level. As ever, there was patchy interest from our regional TV and radio, but where bids were received, Ken Orpe and Richard Jefferies as ever did sterling work satisfying interview requests. A themed event was also organised – again at the National Stone Centre – but no efforts were made to get media involved as relatively few people attended due to poor weather conditions and there was reluctance from the Stone Centre to encourage publicity.

Looking forward, in addition to the 'sallows' initiative, GA felt that the Severn Trent funding activity could and maybe should have generated more local and regional publicity in 2023 (there were various reasons why it had not attracted more interest), but hopefully 2024 might see more publicity on this. Meanwhile, another recent national initiative that could generate some highlights at the local level was the Wild Spaces project.

Sales & Display Organiser – Jane Broomhead

JB reported that she had attended 11 events in 2023 from June to November throughout all 4 counties. The largest of these was the Global Bird Fair at Oakham where £1,233.20 was taken during the three days. She thanked all of the dedicated helpers, some of whom had helped on all three days, and also to the two helpers from the Lincolnshire Branch Committee. A special mention was given to Max and Christine for raising £189.50 from their popular plant sales. She confirmed that the 2024 Bird Fair will be going ahead but at a different location closer to Rutland Water.

The other big fund raiser for the Branch was Hoe Grange Quarry Open Day which took £652.22 of which £52.90 were donations. Other events ranged from wildlife days in Sherwood to Burbage Common Open Day which had had to be changed from May to September due to a waterlogged site.

Total sales for the year to date was £4364.50, with a further £400 to be banked which was taken at the recent DANES event at Brackenhurst College.

JB thanked everyone who helped at branch events, and stated how rewarding it was to meet enthusiastic members of the public and to see members of BC.

Butterfly Distribution Maps Co-ordinator – Christine Maughan

CM reported that species distribution maps had been produced up to and including 2021, the most recent dataset currently available, and these had all been published on the branch website. She thanked Neil Pinder for his work on this. Data for 2022 should be available by early 2024.

Regional Conservation Manager (Midlands) – Rhona Goddard

Written confirmation had been received from STW that the funding would continue until March 2025.

Melanie Penson had carried out a number of priority species surveys at Key Sites across the region during spring and summer 2023.

DERBYSHIRE

Glapwell Void/Doe Lea. Clearance work to be authorised during the winters of 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Markham Vale. The Branch was looking to purchase tools to aid with all the excellent site work that Sid Morris and his volunteers had done on this site.

West Hallam. The contract was with BC awaiting approval as this is a large amount. Confirmation had been received that the 6 Hectares of fencing would be completed by February 2024 by the contractor. The landowner would be funding the gates.

Ticknall Limeyards. A meeting had been held on the 31 October. The NT was keen to release more GS if a suitable donor population was available - RG to investigate donor sites for Spring 2024. NT would continue to manage the site for GS. No fence line had been completed yet due to staff changes - a new ranger had recently been recruited.

Blackwell Trail. Scrub clearance still to be arranged for winters of 2023/24 or 2024/25.

Stanton Lagoons. Nothing to report

Hoe Grange Quarry. KO was waiting for the DWT to check on the removal of Rosebay Willowherb in the meadow area. STW to pay for this if required.

Intake Quarry. Nothing to report

The following sites had been added to the list for site work to encourage WLH:

Longstone Edge

Millers Dale

Haydale

Cressbrooke Dale

Disease resistant elms or Wych Elms would be available to order from mid-December for these four additional STW sites if required.

LEICESTERSHIRE

Ketton

Bloody Oaks

Stonesby

Browns Hill

New Lount

RG had met with L&RWT staff & EMBC on 29 August, visiting Ketton Quarry & Bloody Oaks, to discuss and identify habitat management works. RG to organise scrub clearance at key sites this winter by contractors recommended through L&RWT.

New Lount. To be revisited in early 2024.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Ollerton Pit Woods. After the initial 5 scrapes, 3 of these were extended to the existing pathways by the tree removal contractors during the early summer of 2023. Tree removal work was now complete. Amy Chandler, Forestry England, and her volunteers had just completed site clearance which had been identified by RG/MP on 17 August.

Bevercotes. A corridor had been cleared between the old pit workings and the Country Park. This had now been paid.

Newstead/ Freckland. Chris Jackson was leading a work party here during winter 2023/24. Unable to find who the owners of the Newstead Country Park site are.

Vicar Water. No work carried out so far. The site had been checked and continued to be a carpet of BFT. Ongoing checks.

Bingham Linear Park. In a separate note from Bill Bacon, he confirmed that only scrub clearance was currently being undertaken because more granite was required.

Nottinghamshire GS sites

Working with key branch volunteers, Chris Jackson had identified key sites that required habitat management. Ten volunteer work parties were to be

held during 2023/2024 at sites including GCRN Lime Sidings to Barnstone Tunnel, Grange Farm, GCRN Rushcliffe Halt Cutting, Granby Disused Railway, Saxondale Disused Railway, Flawborough Footpath & Triangle & Newstead & Annesley Country Park.

RG and Bill Bacon had met on site on 9 October to look at work completed by Sustrans along the cycle route near Cotham and identify works for this winter between Newark and Bottesford. RG expressed her thanks to Bill. She had contacted Sustrans regarding this work. Sustrans volunteers would be clearing (bramble and ash regeneration) & raking the slope immediately adjacent to the ramp at Cotham on 15 December and BC volunteers would be very welcome to join them.

Nottinghamshire Added Sites:

Toton Sidings: a site visit with MP on 9 October but concluded that it was difficult to influence site management due to landowners. There were opportunities to influence site management on the Nottinghamshire side.

Manor Farm, Toton: see above.

Cotgrave Country Park: visit postponed.

Calverton: (FE and NCC land). Visit to be arranged.

Also discussed were Clumber Park and Misson, both Notts.

CLUMBER PARK. There had been numerous meetings and site visits with BC and NT. The site required years of work before SSB could be introduced. There was now a PhD student from Brackenhurst (Nottingham Trent University) working on this site and other BC sites studying the SSB. Advice was being provided by JB, MP and RG, and a meeting had now been arranged with the PhD student, NT and key BC staff and volunteers for the 8 December.

Discussion followed about funding for GS in Leicestershire. There was concern about destruction of habitat in the Vale of Belvoir due to Railway Paths Ltd selling off land.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

In accordance with branch rules, the longest serving committee members stood down and offered themselves for re-election. These were:

Jane Broomhead – Treasurer/Branch Organiser

Richard Jeffery – Leicestershire Recorder

Ken Orpe – Derbyshire Recorder

Melanie Penson – Conservation Officer (Notts/Leics) & EM Moth Officer

Eliot Taylor – Newsletter Officer

Associate Committee:

Mark Searle – Grizzled Skipper Projects Officer

These were re-elected together under a single nomination. Proposed by Suzanne Halfacre, seconded by Gary Atkins.

Steve Mathers, Butterfly Recorder for Nottinghamshire, stepped down from all East Midlands Branch Committees.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

There being no further business the formal meeting finished at 12.25pm.

After lunch Melanie Penson gave an interesting talk on Clearwing Moths entitled 'Alluring – A Season of Clearwings'

This was followed by a presentation on 'The Effects of Climate Change on the Distribution of Butterflies in the East Midlands Region' by Ken Orpe

The event concluded with an interesting selection of Members' photographs.

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 2 April 2023 the Branch has 1374 Household members representing a figure of 1906 Individual members.



East Midlands Butterfly Conservation Committee Members

EAST MIDLANDS MAIN COMMITTEE

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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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