

EAST MIDLANDS

Butterfly

ISSUE 77 – SUMMER 2025

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Climate Change

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2025

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What to do in
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**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



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Welcome to the Summer 2025 EMBC Newsletter. This is the first of what will hopefully become a regular summer edition of our newsletter, meaning that you will all, from now on, receive three editions per year.

The idea to introduce an extra newsletter came about because I felt that we needed to bridge the long gap between the spring and autumn newsletters, and to keep you updated on butterfly news and key events that will take place throughout the summer.

As we enter the summer season, I urge you all to get out and enjoy our Lepidoptera. Best regards. **Richard Jeffery**

Spring 2025 – I didn't expect that

The start to the butterfly year is invariably a hit and miss affair with unpredictable weather patterns and prolonged spells of alternating rain and sunshine. County recorders are used to receiving zero returns on spring transect forms, or even weeks where it has been impossible to walk a butterfly transect. ***But not this year.***

As I write, the spring of 2025 has just been declared one of the warmest and driest on record. As a gardener, I cannot remember having to water my containers or new plantings as much as I have done this year. Never has the concept of resilient gardening been so apt. Plants have flowered much earlier this year, and our butterflies are emerging earlier too. I was excited to see a good start to the season for the Small Tortoiseshell although that brood fizzled out fairly quickly. Brimstones also had a very good early spring, but the real star performer this spring would have to be the Peacock, being recorded consistently for weeks on end. I must say that we have been treated to a pretty good display so far this year, and I, for one, didn't expect that. I do wonder whether the remaining summer months will continue in the same manner. ***Richard M. Jeffery***

Branch Organiser's Notes

The arrival of summer heralds the emergence of the true stalwarts of the season, notably the Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Gatekeeper. These three species tend to dominate the summer statistics, generally being the three most numerous species each year. They are all widespread throughout the region and you are pretty much guaranteed to encounter them on your regular walks, and even in your gardens. Look further afield and species such as Dark-green and Silver-washed Fritillary await, as do His and Her Imperial Majesties, the Purple Emperor.

On the subject of the Purple Emperor, we mentioned in the Spring 2025 edition of the newsletter (*issue 76*) that East Midlands Butterfly Conservation in a joint venture with South Derbyshire District Council were both awarded the Green Apple Silver Award for the Environment for their Sallow planting project to help encourage the spread of the species into south Derbyshire and beyond.



Ken Orpe and the Green Apple Silver Award

Recently, Ken Orpe, butterfly recorder for Derbyshire and the main instigator of the project, was honoured to receive

the award on behalf of both organisations, and he is pictured above with the award (and a green apple, of course).

July heralds the arrival of the annual Big Butterfly Count, and after Butterfly Conservation declared a 'Butterfly Emergency' due to the poor results of last year's count, we await with baited breath to see if our butterflies, and day-flying moths, will recover this year. I would encourage as many of you as possible to take part. More details are given on the following page.

It is all too easy to feel that ravages of Climate Change are having an overpowering effect on our Lepidoptera, and wildlife in general. We all too often hear about species under threat. Yes there are losers as a result of Climate Change, but there are winners too, and the Marbled White is one such winner. Please see the article on page 5 to see just how the butterfly has not just survived, but thrived in the region over the last 10 to 15 years.

Finally, summer marks the peak period of our promotional activities. You will find detail in this newsletter of both Sales Events and Field Trips where you can come along and meet us and support us. We look forward to meeting you. Thank you all once again for your continued support. Without you, we cannot continue to do the work we need to help our butterflies, moths and their environment.

Richard M. Jeffery
Acting Branch Organiser

The Big Butterfly Count 2025

The Big Butterfly Count this year will take place between the **18th of July** and the **10th of August**. After the disappointing results of the 2024 count it is hoped that this year will show a significant improvement.

You may remember that Butterfly Conservation was so concerned with the results of the count last year that it declared a Butterfly Emergency. Over 80% of the UK species showed a decline in numbers compared to 2023, and, nationally, it was the worst season ever in the history of the count for Common Blue, Holly Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Green-veined White and Small White.



Painted Lady

Photo by Richard Jeffery

Here in the East Midlands we saw results that reflected the national picture. The Red Admiral fared worst of all with a massive decline of 88% compared to 2023. Small Tortoiseshell (-82%), Painted Lady (-76%), Holly Blue (-74%), Common Blue (-68%) and Comma (-63%) complete the top six worst performers.

The Marbled White, on the other hand, had a bumper year with a massive increase 447% year on year. The 2024 count conveniently coincided with the peak flight period of this species. Ringlet (+92%), Six-spot Burnet (+74%) and Speckled Wood (+36%) also showed an increase on 2023 numbers.

It really is difficult to predict year on year how our butterflies will fare so how this year's Big Butterfly Count will pan out is anyone's guess, but after a good spring and an encouraging start to the summer, all appears to bode well, as long as the weather holds out.

Please could I ask as many of you as possible to take part in this year's survey? The only way we will find out whether our butterflies have recovered is with as many records as possible. So, what do you need to do?

Firstly, I would suggest you visit the Big Butterfly Count page on the Butterfly Conservation website where you can download a useful ID guide or a free app for iOS and Android devices to help you identify and record the key butterfly and day-flying moth species.

Once you done that, just pick a 15 minute slot on a calm, sunny day during the count period and record what you see and submit your data. You can do as many surveys as you wish in several different locations.

Good luck.

The Marbled White vs Climate Change

There has been a lot of publicity about the effects of Climate Change on our regional and national butterflies, and most of it has made for distressing reading. Nearly 70% of our butterfly species are in a dramatic decline in both distribution and abundance. Climate Change in conjunction with habitat loss and overuse of pesticides and herbicides are known to be key factors.

Some species are bucking this trend, with the Marbled White being the most notable.



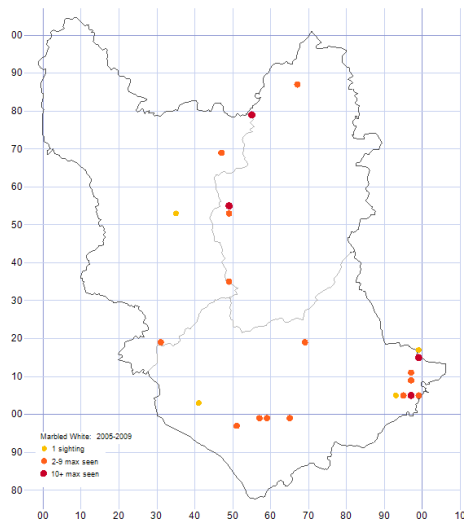
Marbled White - male

Photo by Richard Jeffery

The Marbled White is one of our most distinct butterflies with its characteristic black and white checkerboard pattern sported by the males. Females are a similar pattern but in shades of brown and cream (*I've always described them in photographic terms with the male being classed as black and white, and the female as sepia – Richard*)

This species had been recorded predominately at Ketton Quarry in Rutland throughout the 1980's and 1990's, but hardly anywhere else. This could have been down to a localised but established population in the area that was reluctant to move, or maybe, and more likely, an element of lack of recording in other areas.

It has become apparent, however, that the species has expanded its range over the last 15-20 years. The first distribution map below shows the range of the Marbled White between the years of 2005-9.

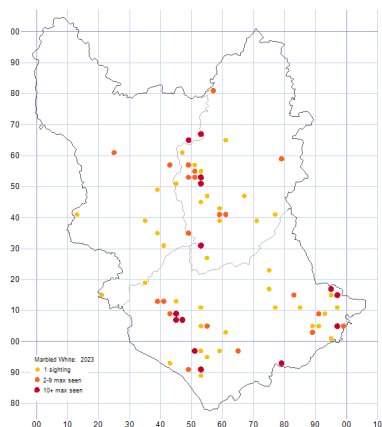


Marbled White distribution 2005-9

The map shows the established population in Rutland with a reasonable population in central Leicestershire. The northward progression into Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire is also evident.

The effects of a warming climate have encouraged the species to extend its range in all three counties. Other factors that may have contributed to this expansion over the last 5-10 years could be down to habitat management. The butterfly is a creature of flowery grassland where grasses like Red Fescue and Yorkshire Fog are abundant for the larvae to feed on. The adults show a preference for purple flowers, using Scabious, Wild Marjoram, Knapweed and Thistles as a source of nectar. Many landowners are cutting flowery meadows less frequently and later, probably as a cost cutting exercise, and this allows the butterfly to complete its life cycle. Wetter springs and warmer summers are resulting in more abundant vegetative growth creating ideal egg laying conditions.

The latest distribution map (*below*) shows just how much the species has expanded its range in the region. I must add here that I know of many recorders, myself included, who eagerly look forward to the start of the Marbled White season, and we now have more data than ever on this summer stalwart.



Marbled White distribution - 2023

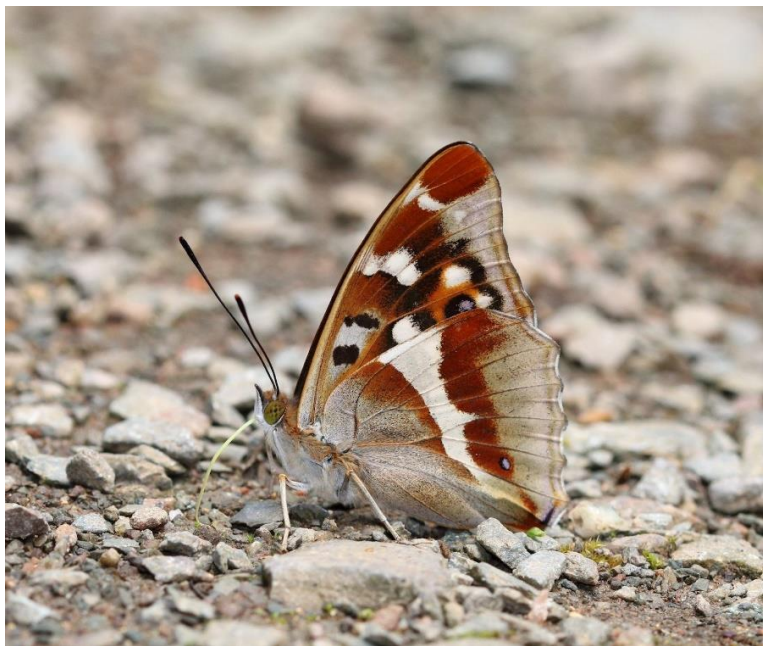
The range has now expanded nationally as far north as Yorkshire and is continuing toward the north-east.

Other species that appear to be benefitting from a warmer climate are the Silver-washed Fritillary, the Purple Emperor and, to an extent, the White Admiral. All three of these species are arboreal butterflies, but each one is showing signs of moving northwards from neighbouring counties and through our region. The White Admiral is lagging slightly behind but is amassing on the Northamptonshire border so I guess it won't be long before we see more of them too.

I've always maintained that there are winners as well as losers as a result of Climate Change. I wonder what the next 10 years will bring. Maybe the re-appearance of the Large Tortoiseshell?

Richard M. Jeffery

What to do in Derbyshire this summer



Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) butterfly showing underside

Photo by Mark Searle

Who will record the first Purple Emperor on a butterfly transect in Derbyshire?

With over 140 butterfly transects being walked by approximately 350 volunteers in Derbyshire, it is hoped that ***Iris* (aka the Purple Emperor)** will be noted for the first time on a **transect** here in the County.

The flight period is mainly in July so transect sites in Lowland Derbyshire are the likely locations for this species to be recorded – high on the possible lists are Calke Park, Ticknall Limeyards, Aston Brickyards, Allestree Park, Kedleston Park, Broomfield College, Morley,

Woodside NR, Shipley, Clover Close, Elvaston, Gresley Wood, Hartshorne Wood, Hilton Gravel Pit NR, Linton Heath Woods, Rosliston Forestry Park, Seale Wood, Overseal, Swadlincote Woodlands and Toyota Woodlands, Burnaston.

As previously reported, ***Iris*** was seen at both Bretby and Aston in 2024 so hopefully the chances of seeing this spectacular butterfly are high during this July – ideally any sighting should be accompanied by a photograph and emailed to me at the following address:- ken@malaga.plus.com

Best of Luck.

Ethels in Derbyshire require Wall Brown sightings.

‘Ethels’ in the Peak District are named after Ethel Haythornthwaite.(1894–1986) who was an environmental campaigner and pioneer of the countryside movement. In 1924, she founded the group that would become the Friends of the Peak District (FoPD), aimed at protecting the Peak District countryside from development. In total there are 95 hills, tors edges and trigs which are over 400m in the Peak District of which 71 are in Derbyshire and to date 38 of these high points have had Wall Browns recorded at or near the summit.



Wall Brown – male (lower) and female (upper)

Photo by Derek Brownlee

This endangered butterfly species is mainly restricted to the high ground of the Peak District in Derbyshire so I thought that if some of you hill walkers would like a challenge in August and September this year perhaps you might like to try and record the Wall Brown at a new site in the County – a list of the

33 Ethels which require sightings of the species is shown together with their grid references. Please send your sightings and, if possible, with accompanying photographs to me at:

ken@malaga.plus.com

Ken Orpe

Butterfly Recorder for Derbyshire

Ethel's for Walls list:

SITE NAME	GRID REF
Aleck Low	SK173595
Alport Moor	SK120946
Axe Edge Moor	SK035706
Black Hill	SE078046
Bleaklow	SK094960
Britland Edge Hill	SE106026
Brown Knoll	SK083851
Burbage Edge (Goyt's Moss)	SK029732
Carder Low	SK130626
Cats Tor	SJ995759
Cheeks Hill	SK026699
Combs Head	SK041757
Crook Hill	SK183872
Dead Edge End	SE124017
Featherbed Moss	SE046011
Featherbed Top	SK090920
Foxlow Edge	SK004756
Gautries Hill	SK099810
Grindslow Knoll	SK110868
Harthill Moor	SK210627
High Edge	SK063688
Higher Shelf Stones	SK089948
Hollins Hill	SK060679

Lees Moor	SK249674
Lost Lad	SK193912
Mill Hill	SK061904
Shining Tor	SJ994737
Slitherstone Hill	SK123819
South Head	SK060845
Stanedged Pole	SK247844
Tissington Hill	SK151526
White Low	SE086021
White Path Moss	SK251830

Some Spring and Summer Moths: A look back and a look forward

By the time you read this, it will be mid-summer, half way through the 2025 season; a time to look back at the spring and to look forward with anticipation to the summer species.

A Look Back:

Spring 2025 will be remembered as the season of the Small Eggar moth; heretofore restricted to two small areas of our region, in East Nottinghamshire and South-East Rutland. Prior to this year, it was considered rare, so much so that it is a Nature Recovery Strategy Priority Species. It is a relative of the more familiar Oak Eggar but has a very early flight season, in February and March and is only weakly attracted to light traps. It would be a very hard moth to monitor were it not for the white larval webs spun by the caterpillars on Blackthorn and Hawthorn bushes in hedgerows and edges of scrub in April

and May. These are opaque, unlike the more see-through webs spun by ermine moths. It is not fussy about hedgerow age, being equally present in ancient and enclosure act hedgerows, as long as there is a wide undisturbed verge as it can be a pupa for up to seven years (though up to three is more usual).



Small Eggar larva – *Photo by Melanie Penson*

A typical season would see only a handful of such webs in the Trent Valley north of Newark and around Ryhall / Ketton in Rutland. This year, there must have been some weather phenomenon that has triggered a mass

hatch as over fifty webs have been found in Nottinghamshire, quadrupling its known range. A similar thing has occurred over the rest of its patchy range in Britain; time will tell whether this increase is sustained or not and given the pupal period, there will be a time-lag whatever the case may turn out to be. It will remain a Priority Species for now, until we have more data on population dynamics.

The larvae bask communally on and within the white webbing; one colony watched by the author made a solemn procession out one side of the web to the feeding twigs whilst others returned to the web via a different route, having fed, and re-entered the web to warm up and digest their meal. After the final moult, they disperse into the hedge bottom to pupate.

Looking Forward:

Two spectacular moths to look out for in high summer are The Forester and the Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth (both also being Priority Species in the East Midlands). Both are day-flying and are characteristic of good quality habitats; unimproved grassland in the case of Forester and broadleaved woodland for the Hawk-moth. The Forester is a lowland moth, being replaced in the Derbyshire Dales by the very similar *Cistus* Forester (whose larvae live on rock-rose). Foresters have been re-found already in a few places, notably Markham Vale and near Loscoe in Derbyshire and Budby Common in

Nottinghamshire. Other sites include Clumber South Lawns, Brownhill Quarry and Muston Meadows (the latter two in Leicestershire). Their larvae live on common sorrel on neutral grassland and sheep's-sorrel on more acidic sites. Early instars mine the chlorophyll and leave "windows" at right angles to the central leaf stalk in late July and early August, but feed more conventionally as they get older. The adult moths nectar from purple flowers and are especially attracted to knapweeds, scabious, betony and Viper's-bugloss, where they really "get their money's worth" and can be very approachable. They fly into August.



Forester Moth - *Photo by Iain Leach*

Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moths fly through June and July and have been attracted to one of the clearwing lures, albeit briefly. Their mastery of flight can be appreciated by watching one feeding, they love red valerian but are attracted to a wide range of summer flowers. Their larvae feed on honeysuckle but unlike White Admirals, prefer to lay on plants in full

sunshine and growing over the ground. Their caterpillars leave a series of pin-prick holes parallel to the central leaf vein and can sometimes be found hiding underneath; they are much smaller than other hawk-moth larvae. After the second moult, they eat the edges of the leaves and can be more elusive, though cast larval skins remain attached to the leaf long after it has pupated, in the leaf litter.

Sherwood Forest is a regional stronghold for this delightful bee-mimic and it has even been attracted to nearby gardens by red valerian. There must be other woodlands with the requisite honeysuckle elsewhere in the East

Midlands, including Central Rutland (Leighfield Forest including Launde Big Wood and Park Wood); Sellar's Wood and Ploughman's Wood in Nottinghamshire might also be worthy of exploration. The main threats facing this species include abandonment of old woodland management practices leading to dark shady high-forest and browsing of the larval food plant by deer. As ever, our respective County Moth Recorders would love to hear of any sightings, even from long-established sites.

Melanie Penson

Gardening for Butterflies Summer 2025



Gatekeeper on Aster - *Photo by Richard M. Jeffery*

Summer is a busy time for butterflies and moths. Escaping monastic life as a

caterpillar to go about in expensive winged finery. Sampling jugs of nectar and flirting with the opposite sex. Inspecting our feeble attempts at window box conservation and then hiding from any lepidopterists. Coping with climate changed seasons.

For myself, I aim to achieve as little as possible in summer and so leave time for idle observation, though I did put some early sightings of Brown Argus, Common Blue and Dingy Skipper hiding in a dry drainage ditch by the A46 onto iRecord.

The long summer evenings are the best time to enjoy sitting in your 'moon meadow' in natural darkness if possible.

Night scented honeysuckle grows well in a window box or patio and attracts moths. Recently I found a rather battered celestial globe in a skip and am still wrestling with its use. The problem is that by star and moon light one can't read it and if you wear a head torch then you can't see the stars. Moths of course, solved such problems millions of years ago.

As I look out into my garden from a comfy chair in summer, I know I am peering into 'deep time'. Dragonflies circling are unchanged in 350 million years and so older than the geology my house sits on. Moths and flowering plants go back 100 million years into the age of the dinosaurs. However you and I, members of BC, are a mere 0.5 million years old (although I am likely a bit older than you are). And that is why nature is always so ASTONISHING, even in a small garden.

Also, a window box is a stepping stone or 'B-Line' for wandering and lost individuals. I have had Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Common Blue and large skipper that must have come from at least a mile away. Marjoram especially is a magnet for wanderers.

All is not lost. Recently two young gardeners at Shardlow thought to hire the village hall for an event to encourage neighbours switching to more wildlife friendly gardening. I went along, but thankfully wasn't needed to speak much.

Your job this summer, is to have a nice chat with your neighbours and feign surprise when they say they have done nothing yet for nature.

Nick Sparrow

Day-flying Moths

A welcome summer visitor.



Hummingbird Hawkmoth.

Photo by Richard M. Jeffery

Day-flying moths are regular visitors to our gardens, but it is their nocturnal cousins that tend to dominate the headlines. Many moths will use the same sources of nectar as butterflies (Buddleia for example) so do keep an eye open for them on calm, sunny days. No light traps are required.

Look out for Cinnabar, Six-spot Burnet, Silver Y, Shaded Broad-bar, Burnet Companion, Currant Clearwing and the stunning Hummingbird Hawkmoth. Please report any sightings via i-Record or directly to your county moth recorder.

Come and see us this Summer

We shall be at the following events this July. If you are in the area then please do come along and join us, and help us as we aim to raise funds to help us with our conservation projects in the East Midlands.

Sunday 6th July
HOE GRANGE QUARRY Open Day
Longcliffe, Brassington, Derbyshire
DE4 4HX
11am – 4pm
Free Entry

Friday 11th, Saturday 12th &
Sunday 13th July
GLOBAL BIRD FAIR
Lyndon Visitor Centre, Oakham,
Rutland. LE15 8RN
9am – 5pm.
Admission Charged.
Tickets available on line or at the gate.



Global Bird Fair 2024

Sunday 20th July
WELEDA Garden Open Day
The Field, Hasslock Lane, Heanor,
Derbyshire DE75 7JH

10am – 4pm
Admission £10

Saturday 26th, Sunday 27th July
WOODLAND FESTIVAL
SHERWOOD FOREST TRUST
Thoresby Hall, Ollerton, Notts.
NG24 0EP
10am - 4pm
Admission Free. £5 Car Park

We will also be at the following locations hosting our summer field trips. Please check with the leader for availability as places are limited and booked on a first come, first served basis.

Cloud Wood (LRWT) Nature Reserve

(Leicestershire)

Date Tuesday 15 July

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

Location: SK419214. (Postcode for SatNav 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 Griffydam. 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 23 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

Want to do more to help our butterflies and moths?

East Midlands Butterfly Conservation always welcomes help from our members and their families and friends. No matter where you live in the region, how much or little time you may have or how far you can travel, there is a way that you can help.

Membership: Please encourage family, friends and colleagues to become a member. By joining they will immediately begin to help our butterflies and moths.

Donate: If you are able to, please make a donation to Butterfly Conservation. If you want to help projects specifically in the East Midlands, then do stipulate that when you make your donation. You can donate for yourself or in memory of someone. You could also consider leaving a small legacy in your will.

Become a Wildlife Gardener:

Consider turning some, or all, of your garden over to attracting pollinators. Not only will butterflies and moths benefit, but bees, ladybirds, hoverflies and a whole host of other insects will too. You will also attract more birds and bats to your garden.

Volunteer: We are always looking out for volunteers to help us with our projects. Maybe you would like to help out with butterfly recording. Maybe you are more of a hands-on person and could help out with conservation projects. You may have IT skills that we could use. You may be a 'people person' who likes to interact with others and could help out at one of our events.

Please contact me (*details on page 15*) if you can help out in any way.

Richard Jeffery

EAST MIDLANDS MAIN COMMITTEE:

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Butterfly Recorder for Derbyshire & Regional Transect Co-ordinator:

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Amy Ross email: amyeross@hotmail.co.uk

Butterfly Recorder for Leicestershire and Rutland & National Forest Representative:

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Vacancy:

Branch Organiser and Chairperson.

We are still actively seeking a replacement for this role as Jane Broomhead stepped down at the November AGM to give herself more time to concentrate on Events and Fund Raising, and also her role as Treasurer.

The position involves chairing two committee meetings per year, one in January and one in September, and also the branch AGM, usually held in November. As Branch Organiser the role entails being the main link between the branch and BC head office, and will include regular Zoom meetings with BC and other county branch organisers. For more details please see the link below, and please feel free to contact Jane Broomhead to discuss the role further. (*See contact details on page 15*)

[BC Branch Organiser Role Description.pdf](#)

Articles required for the next Newsletter

We would like to invite you, the members of East Midlands Butterfly Conservation, to participate in future editions of this newsletter. If anyone has an interesting story or item of news about butterflies and moths in your local area, in your garden or on your regular butterfly transect and would like to share it, then please feel free to send details to me, Richard Jeffery (*See contact details on page 15*). Please attach a high resolution photograph in JPEG format if you have one, and we will include your article in subsequent editions. The content can be either in the form of an email or as a Word document attached to your email.

The deadline to submit articles for the next issue is the 1st of September.

Front Cover Photo: Common Blue feeding on Verbena bonariensis.

Photo by Richard Jeffery

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

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