



# North East England Branch



President Sir David Attenborough CH. FRS

DEDICATED TO SAVING WILD BUTTERFLIES AND THEIR HABITATS

**Newsletter No 25.**

**April 2012**



**Butterfly Conservation**

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468)

Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP  
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Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition of our Newsletter. Our new members might like to know that there are two Newsletters each year and we are always delighted to include any articles, letters, photos or drawings that any member cares to submit.

If you have a question or observation on a butterfly or moth related subject, how about writing to our LETTERS PAGE; or if you are electronic, send an e-mail.

Copy dates are unquestionably:

1<sup>st</sup> March .....April Edition

1<sup>st</sup> September.....November Edition

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The Committee of North East England Branch would be very interested to hear from any Members who have ideas and suggestions for site visits, conservation opportunities or anything of interest within the Branch area.

Any Member of the Branch who has a particular skill to offer, and feels able to give their services, would also be welcomed.

A list of Committee members can be found on the back page of this Newsletter.

The Cover photograph is of a female Marbled White taken by Steve Austin.

## Cliff Evans and Brian Denham

**Cliff Evans and Brian Denham step down from the Committee.**

At the Annual General Meeting at Rainton Meadows in February, our long-serving Chairman Cliff Evans announced he was standing down to pursue his other interests in natural history. Cliff joined the committee ten years ago and has been chairman for the last seven, a period in which the Branch has flourished and grown considerably under his stewardship.

Brian also joined the committee ten years ago and has been a valuable member in guiding the progress on the Branch. As Transect Co-ordinator, the number of Transects carried out in the North-east has grown steadily from a handful to the mid-thirties and continues to increase. He will continue as Transect Co-ordinator and also to organise the recently launched Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey – for which he needs more volunteers!

The committee would like to place on record their thanks to both Cliff and Brian for their time and effort on the committee in guiding the Branch over the last decade.

**Chairman's Notes**

**Ken Dawson**

Those of you who made it to the annual general meeting will know that Cliff Evans has retired as Chairman. He is involved with other organisations, and has decided to devote more of his time to them.

As my position on the committee is currently 'without portfolio', it has been agreed that I'll take over the 'chair' again, for the time being. Last time around, I took over from Sam Ellis when he was appointed to Head Office. His act was a hard one to follow, and I have to admit that I found it a struggle whilst working full time. I am now a 'free agent',

and can therefore devote more time to Branch matters. However, I do hope that the Chairman's role will eventually be passed on to other capable hands.

## Notes from Recent Meetings

Annual General Meeting, 18 February at Rainton Meadows

This year's AGM was attended by around twenty people, and was followed by an excellent talk on *Butterfly Conservation in Scotland*, by the Director, Paul Kirkland. (The full minutes can be viewed on the website. However, if you wish to have a paper copy, please contact a member of the committee.)

Here are a few highlights:

- Financial Report, prepared by Steve Kirtley.  
The balance of Branch funds currently stands at £2,200. The Branch proposes to donate £500 towards B.C.'s *Match Pot* scheme.
- The transect programme continues to make good progress. Brian Denham had already had thirty-seven returns out of forty-one. Brian has stood down from the Committee, but will continue to manage the scheme.  
The Recorders noted significant changes in butterfly numbers and dates seen during 2011. The extraordinary weather was a significant factor. Notable highlights include:  
*Record numbers* of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary seen at the N.W. Durham sites, indicating that the proactive management scheme is working well;  
*Brimstone* is claimed to have bred for the first time at Low Newton, Durham;  
*Northern Brown Argus* (nominate race) was confirmed By Dave Stebbings at a site in the Northumberland National Park;
- Keith Dover is currently updating and digitising Durham's moth records. He also noted that more recorders are needed, particularly in the Durham vice-county area;

- Conservation work is progressing well on a number of fronts, and includes liaison with the Wildlife Trusts in *The Heart of Durham Partnership Project* and the *Coal and Coast Project* at Druridge Bay;
- Outings and events were fairly low-key in 2011. More innovation and ideas are needed, and partnership with other organisations is being considered.
- The website continues to be moderately accessed, particularly the records section. More contributions and ideas would be welcomed.

### Branch Liaison Meeting, 10 March 2012, London

I represented the Branch at this meeting, which proved to be both stimulating and productive. I made contact with a number of people who offered some great advice and ideas for things to do. I've also been put in touch with our new area *Trustee*, Michael Johnston, who is based in Edinburgh.

The meeting was followed by an excellent presentation: *Conserving Butterflies and Wildlife on Farmland*, by Peter Thompson of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust.



### **Help needed to expand the Wider Countryside Butterfly**

The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) is the main scheme for monitoring population changes of the UK's common and widespread butterflies. The survey is a partnership project run jointly by Butterfly Conservation, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Centre

for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH). Last year, around seven hundred squares were surveyed by Butterfly Conservation and BTO volunteers. We are pleased to announce that funding has been secured to run the WCBS for at least another two years. This is a major boost to the project that has been run on minimal resources since launching in 2009. We really need your help to substantially increase coverage. The scheme is vital to help us assess whether nationwide conservation measures including agri-environment and woodland grant schemes are having a measurable impact in helping to conserve and restore butterflies across the countryside as a whole. The recently published State of the UK's Butterflies 2011 report shows that as a group the wider countryside butterfly species have declined by 24% over the past ten years. However, all is not doom and gloom, a small number of none specialist, mobile butterflies have continued to thrive. These include Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood and Ringlet that have also continued to spread northwards.

All that is required is two core visits per year to an allocated 1km square (one in July and one in August) with an optional spring visit to count Orange-tips and other early flying species. Most Butterfly Conservation Branches have a WCBS Champion who can allocate you a square and provide help and support to get you started. For more information please contact Brian Denham, [brian.denham@ntlworld.com](mailto:brian.denham@ntlworld.com) – 01325 263449 – the Branch Champion for the North of England Branch, or look on Butterfly Conservation's web site ( [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)) for details of the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey.

If you would like to assist Butterfly Conservation by monitoring one or more of the 1km squares please select from the following and let Brian Denham know which one(s) you have chosen. NU9222, NT9935, NY6662, NY6859, NY6869, NY7189, NY7482, NY9085, NY9796, NY9971, NZ0825, NZ4234 & NZ2159 and he will let you know if it is still available.

In 2011 we only recorded three of the twenty squares allocated to the North East Group. This is poor compared with the good numbers we have for Transects – Please try and help. It is considerably less time consuming than recording a Transect.

### North of England Group in 2012

I/D No.	Grid. Ref.	O.S Landranger Map No.	Approx. location
1	NT9222	74 & 75	8.5km. SW of Wooler
2	NT9935	75	7.0km. N of Wooler
3	NU0436	75	Nr. Holburn
4	NY6662	86	4.2km. SW of Haltwhistle
5	NY6859	86 & 87	5.5km. SSW of Haltwhistle
6	NY6869	86 & 87	6km. NNW of Haltwhistle
7	NY7189	80	Nr. Hawkope nr. Kielder Water
8	NY7482	80	5.8km. SW of Lanehead nr. Kielder Water
9	NY8583	80	Nr. Bellingham
10	NY8974	87	Nr. Chipchase Castle
11	NY9085	80	Nr. Ridsdale on A68
12	NY9796	81	4.5km NW of Elsdon on B6341
13	NY9971	87	Nr. Great Whittington off A68
14	NZ0825	92	Nr. Copley
15	NZ0953	88	Nr. Shottley Bridge
16	NZ2024	93	Nr. Bildershaw on A68 off A1
17	NZ2075	88	Nr. Dinnington off A1
18	NZ2159	88	Nr. Sunnyside on A692
19	NZ3934	93	Nr. Hurworth Burn
20	NZ4234	93	Nr. Hurworth Burn



Indicates squares already allocated

**Butterfly Conservation North East England Branch  
Financial Report for twelve months 1.1.2011 to 1.1.2012**

Opening Balance @ 1.1.11	£2228.68
Receipts	£1334.31
Sub Total	£3562.99
Payments	£1285.55
Closing Balance	£2277.44

**Breakdowns of Receipts and Payments****Receipts**

Subscriptions	£1104.77
Interest	£1.54
Gross Income	
Re Reports	£108.00
Donations	£120.00
Total	£1334.31

**Payments**

Newsletter	£758.00
Annual Report	£527.55
Total	£1285.55

**Transect Walker Report 2011****Brian Denham**

We have had a good year so far as recorded Transects are concerned with data being returned in time to be included in the North East Area summary report from thirty-seven out of a possible forty-one sets of data have been received.

Except for four transects, butterfly numbers recorded were down on both 2009 and 2010. Of the thirty-seven transects recorded, – 14300 butterflies were recorded in 2011, – 17000 were recorded in 2010 – 19700 were recorded in 2009.

Recorders walk a total of approx. 1600 km whilst recording North East transects during 2011. 2011 ranked as the 14<sup>th</sup> best year for abundance in the UK when compared with other years since 1976.

If you would like to record a Transect please contact Brian Denham.

Details of how to record a transect are given in our web site at [www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk)

### **Some hints on recording.**

#### **Calculating the percentage sun.**

This is a figure that causes some confusion.

The best way of calculating percentage sun is to note whether a section is sunny or not sunny as you walk through your transect.

Note a section as “sunny” if at any time you are walking through a section your body casts a shadow even if it is only briefly.

Note a section as “not sunny” if no shadow is cast whilst you are walking through a section.

At the end of recording your transect. Divide the number of “ Sunny “ sections by the total number of sections and multiply 100. Note the result to the nearest 10% above, as the percentage sun for the whole transect for that weeks results.

#### **Week numbers.**

Week number one of each year starts in the first of April. Subsequent weeks start on the same day of the week that week one started on.

Week number one for 2012 starts on Sunday 1 April. Throughout 2012 weeks start on a Sunday.

If the correct week start dates are not kept too, then this can result in two sets of data for one week and none for the subsequent or previous week.

## **Recording.**

You should endeavour to record your transect once per week when weather conditions are suitable between the hours of 10am and 4pm. If there two or more of you recording the transect either record it together or if you wish to split the transect into two or more parts to record individually, the recording must be done at the same time. You cannot do the different parts at different times of the same day. Nor can you do the different parts on different days of the week.

## **Continuity**

For your results to have maximum value you should endeavour to have a set of data for each week between 1<sup>st</sup> April and last week in September (twenty–six weeks). Weeks where there are no butterflies should also be recorded. If for any reason you cannot record your transect, please ask a colleague or friend to do it for you.

## **Sending in your results.**

The ideal way of sending in your results is to use Butterfly Conservation's purpose made Transect Walker programme. This programme can be downloaded from the Butterfly Conservations web site and once you have created a file for your transect your weekly results can be entered into it. At the end of the twenty–six weeks there is a facility that allows you to package your years results and send copies to Butterfly Conservation and myself. Results sent to me are used, together with casual records to create North East England Branch Annual Summary booklet.

The not so ideal way is to send me a copy of your weekly record sheets which I will enter into your transect file and send to Butterfly Conservation as above. I am just being lazy but I would rather enter the results from your record sheets than not get the data at all. Please keep a copy of your results as I have known of data getting lost in the post.

In either case will you please send me your data as soon as possible, preferably before the end of October.

If you do send me your record sheets, will you indicate the number of butterflies seen in a section by putting either a number or a small vertical line for each butterfly seen. Every fifth butterfly should be indicated by a horizontal line through the four previous lines (five bar gates). I have received sheets with just rows of vertical lines which have to be counted and can lead to errors.

## **Volunteers Urgently Required to Record Butterfly**

**Transects**

**Brian Denham**

Due to reduction in manpower in the Countryside section by Durham County Council, two or more volunteers are urgently required to record the following Transects

1. Tanfield Lea Marsh – Located at NZ194543, near Tanfield Lea Industrial Estate. The Transect is approx. 2.5.km long.
2. Wingate Quarry – Located at NZ373374, 1.5km north of Trimdon Grange. The Transect is approx. 1.5km long.

A reasonable ability to recognise butterflies is necessary but training will be given on how to record a Transect.

The following is the basic procedure:–

Transects must be recorded where possible once per week between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April and the end of September. They must be recorded when weather conditions are suitable between the hours of 10am and 4pm. It is not possible to set aside a certain day every week or to record only at weekends. Suitable weather conditions are basically warm (above 17° C), light wind, without rain and preferably sunny.

A transect is a set route across a piece of land. The Transect is divided up into up to fifteen sections. As you walk the route through the Transect you record every butterfly you identify and note the section in which you saw it. You only record the butterflies you can identify without deviating from the specified route.

At the end of September you can either enter your records onto a purpose made computer data base and send by email to Butterfly Conservation or on paper to me, Brian Denham as Transect Co-ordinator North East.

I hope you can help, as both these transects have been recorded for a long time and it would be a pity if they were to stop. Records become more valuable for comparison purposes the more years they are recorded.

## Update on the Spetchells Project

Ken Dawson

Since the last newsletter, we have made some progress towards improving the lot of the Dingy Skipper at Tyne Riverside. We have made contact with local people and organisations, and liaison with the County Council's Countryside Service is ongoing.

In December, we made a preliminary visit, to assess the site and discuss what we might do to improve the habitat. Dave Wainwright gave us the benefit of his Dingy Skipper research project. Jonathan Wallace advised on habitats for key moth species, and Barry Wilson, the County Woodlands Officer, offered advice and practical support from the Countryside Team.

The next task was to do some practical work, and on 25<sup>th</sup> February, eight of us arrived, armed with loppers and saws, to cut down small ash trees and create clearings by removing gorse and *Cotoneaster* etc.

The work party included five people from Dave Stebbings's regular team of Branch members, plus one member of the 'Friends of Prudhoe Woods'. We were visited by two people from 'Blyth Valley Arts and Leisure', a voluntary organisation that is working with the Council to manage the Country Park Centre. They took pictures of us at work.

I have also made contact with a reporter from the Hexham Courant. She seemed keen to do a news item on the project, and suggested a more in-depth feature for an environment supplement that may be published in April.

There is a lot more still to do on the Spetchells, so, if you think you can help in a practical way, don't hesitate to contact me by phone or Email. (Details on the back cover of the Newsletter)



## Conservation Update

David Stebbings

Here is an update on two major projects our branch is involved with at the moment.

Firstly the "Heart of Durham" project. This is a joint venture with Durham County Council, Durham Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Northumbrian Water as well as Butterfly Conservation. The aim of the project is the conservation of the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary (SPBF) in central County Durham. This involves identifying possible sites where the habitat can be brought back into a suitable condition for the SPBF. Many traditional SPBF sites have been lost over the last thirty years due to changes in land management. Either over grazing by sheep or the abandonment of marginal pastures which has led to rank grass and rushes invading. The improvements to the identified sites involve replacing stock-proof fencing and rebuilding dry-stone walls to allow controlled grazing again, and clearance of scrub such as gorse. The grazing is important to keep down excessive plant growth

and allow violets to develop, and needs to be carefully managed to get it just right. Not too little, not too much! The correct regime will enable strong growing violet plants to be available when the butterflies are egg-laying in June.

Another strand to the project is a captive breeding program of Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. This involves the eggs from captured butterflies being raised under controlled conditions usually in people's gardens. The hatched caterpillars are kept in a small netted cage and supplied with violets to eat. After spending a winter in the cages the caterpillars are available to introduce to suitable sites the following spring.

The butterfly requires either Marsh or Dog Violets for egg laying. Also as part of the project there are a group of commercial growers and individual people growing violets. This provides enough plants both for feeding the captive caterpillars and to provide plugs to plant out on sites to boost the natural plants numbers.

The project is looking for volunteers who are willing to give captive breeding a try. It may sound daunting but all you need is a sunny spot to put a small tub and a supply of violets (provided by the project) to feed the caterpillars. Then follow the guidelines provided on the care of the caterpillars. There is a training session to attend where all the details of raising the caterpillars are gone into. If any members are interested please get in touch either with myself, David Stebbings (details on the back of this newsletter), or Sarah Edwards at Durham Wildlife Trust.

The second project we are involved with is called the "Coal and Coast Project". This is a large project involving Northumberland Wildlife Trust and Natural England. The aim is to develop habitats inland from the existing string of reserves along the coast at Druridge Bay in Northumberland. It covers a large area from Ashington in the south up to Amble in the north and from the coast to approximately the main East Coast railway inland. Much of the area is land that has been

restored after open cast coal mining. Butterfly Conservation has been asked to do surveys and for advice on how habitats created can be made suitable for butterflies. Much of the work will involve survey work initially to see what habitats already exist and looking for potential sites. Later on there is the possibility that habitat improvement work by volunteers will be needed. The area has some good existing Dingy Skipper sites and it would be nice to create new sites to encourage this declining butterfly. This project has still to get going but when it does I will be asking members if they would like to take part in the surveys. It's a great way to get out and about and explore new areas.

### **A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY – THE 2012 BIG EVENT!**

**Members' Day at the Rising Sun Countryside Centre, North Tyneside – Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July, 10am – 4pm**

This is a 'first' for the N.E. Branch, and is an opportunity for members – and new members in particular, to have a fun day out and learn about butterflies, moths and their habitats.

The Rising Sun Centre is next to a large wetland nature reserve, once known as the 'Wallsend Swallow Pond'. It is close to the A19, and accessible by public transport. Managed by North Tyneside Council, it has facilities for conferencing, 'workshop' and field studies etc., and caters well for families with small children. Lunch can also be booked in the centre's cafe.

The past year's new members will be sent an invitation. Otherwise, go into the website nearer the date for full details, or contact a member of the Committee. For more information about the Rising Sun, try [www.northtyneside.gov.uk/parks](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/parks), or phone Loraine Sweeney on 0191 643 2241.

## YOUR BRANCH NEEDS YOU...

We are looking for keen individuals to help promote our activities and increase awareness of butterflies, moths and their habitats. 'North East England' covers the historic counties of Northumberland and Durham, i.e. the entire area between the rivers Tweed and Tees. It would be great, if possible, to have people working in both the north and south. If you have a little free time, and think you could help with the following, please contact me directly, or reply via the website. It is not onerous being on the committee, and it can be good fun!

- Publicity and promotion: e.g. liaising with other organisations, the press and media;
- Organising events, field outings, workshops etc.
- Education: liaising with schools, colleges etc. and involving young people

It may help you decide if you come to the Members' Day at the Rising Sun Centre on 7 July 2012.

**Casual Recording**

**Brian Denham**

Casual recording is important and easy. Simply record any butterflies you see in your garden, in the countryside or anywhere else in the North East England Branch of Butterfly Conservation area, which covers all of County Durham and Northumberland – Including County Cleveland north of the Tees, Darlington and Tyne and Wear.

The record spreadsheet can be down loaded onto your computer where your sighting can be entered directly onto the spreadsheet. At the end of the season the completed spreadsheet can be sent by email

to the County Recorders who will enter your sightings into the database, from which is produced the yearly summary booklet.

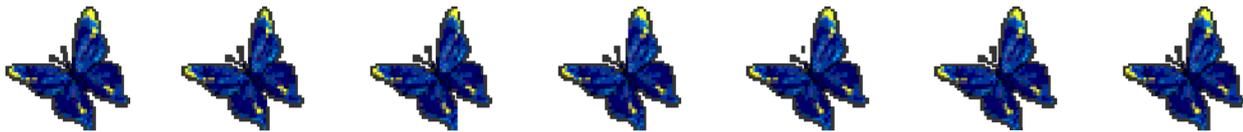
Early the following year you will receive a copy of the summary booklet, which summarises all butterflies recorded in the area during the past season.

There is no need to register as a recorder simply record your sightings and send them in.

“Record spreadsheet” can be down loaded from:

[www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk)

A useful tool on the web site is called “Grab a grid reference” which allows you to find the grid reference for you sightings without the need to use an Ordnance Survey map.



**Avoiding Irene and Katia!**

**Malcolm Hutcheson**

No, this is not about my personal life, its about our visit to Cape Cod this Autumn.

I imagined going to the Eastern Coast of the United States would be like our past late Autumn forays into Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, taking on a bit of a gamble with the weather. However, like everything in the US, it was on a much bigger scale.

When my wife Ann and I made arrangements for a fortnight holiday on Cape Cod looking for migrants, which included butterflies (Monarchs), birds and anything else that passed down the coast at that time, we did not think the weather would play such a big part. We decided to split the holiday in two parts spending the first week in the ‘Western Cape’ at Sandwich, the second week in ‘Central Cape’ in Orleans. We were going to use public transport and walk each area, which in the



Monarch



Common Buckeye

past has brought us the best results with finding the local wildlife 'treasures'.

We flew out of Edinburgh, bound for Newark, New Jersey with a transfer to Boston, then on by car to Cape Cod. We had been watching the track of Hurricane Irene the previous week, as it travelled up the American coast, then inland up the Hudson River, over New England and on into Canada. On the morning of our flight the storm had reached Canada, but had left a lot of damage and flooding in its wake. We were told that Boston airport had been closed and our airline, Continental, said they would put us in a hotel in Newark for a twenty-four hour stay, before our transfer late the next day.

We had a good flight across the Atlantic and were impressed with the huge towering storm clouds to the north over Nova Scotia, the remnants of Irene. This was our first visit to the USA and my first impression as we flew over Boston was how wooded the countryside was. At thirty thousand feet, it looked like a large forest with a few areas of open grassland. As we got nearer to New York we could see the large areas of flooding around the Hudson River and its tributaries. Many of the small towns were flooded and several transit highways cut off. No wonder Boston airport was closed.

Our arrival at Newark was in the late afternoon and after the arrivals procedures, we were taken to our hotel. We were made welcome there and after a meal, decided for a short walk round the hotel grounds.

The first butterfly we saw was a Large White. Like our visit to New Zealand, fifteen months before they seemed to be everywhere. It was a warm outdoors and we soon found our first Monarch floating around a scarlet flowered Hibiscus bush. We also noted Starlings and House Sparrows like home, but with Red winged Blackbirds, Mourning Doves and a fine Northern Oriole for company. It was getting dark when I caught sight of a Common Nighthawk flying along the New Jersey Turnpike freeway. This relative of the Nightjar was catching insects around the streetlights. I found out the South American migrant had recently established themselves on the rooftops of the Manhattan skyscrapers, using the gravel caps on the rooftops as nesting sites.

The next morning, with the aid of a local map we took a taxi to the Meadowlands Environment Centre to the north of Newark, a wetland reclamation reserve on the Hackensack River. Five large areas of wetland habitat were control flooded. Unfortunately, 'Irene' had added to this naturally and the whole site was at maximum flood level. There was plenty to see, with a central area of scientific and educational laboratories with displays, viewpoints and a well stocked shop and café.

The surrounding grounds and parkland were planted up with native and horticultural species in zones including a butterfly garden, our first 'port of call'. Here a couple of flowering Buddleja and Hebe shrubs had a few Monarchs floating around with several Skippers (later identified as Long Dash and Salt & Pepper Skippers). Also attracted here were at least three Humming Bird Hawk Moths and some very large unidentified Bumble Bees. Walking around the reserve, my bird list was growing steadily even though the open estuarine areas with covered with floodwater. We saw Clouded Yellows (known as Sulphurs here), its darker American variant, the Orange Sulphur and in an American Holly a Grey Hairstreak, looking similar to our Holly Blue. Also around this area was an active Dragonfly that I eventually got a 'shot' of. It was a large blue specimen with many black spots about it

and called the Prince Basket-tail Dragonfly. Where did it get that wonderful name from? Our visit here ended with a bedraggled Red Admiral and a 'fritillary-like' Pearl Crescent feeding in the French Marigolds.

We flew up to Boston that evening and our transfer car took us down the 90 miles to Sandwich along the Cape Highway, arriving rather late at our accommodation. The name of our Guest House for the week was The Painted Lady. It was a converted chapel and manse house and was ideal. We were given a ground floor room at the back of the building with a patio, lawn and private wooded garden area, excellent for urban wildlife to visit. Along with the Monarchs, Skippers, Sulphurs and Whites to visit 'our' Buddleja here were American (Painted) Lady and more Humming Bird Hawk Moths. Then the superb sight of a Ruby Throated Hummingbird came, just feet from us feeding in the Buddleja blooms. This gem of a tiny bird should have been well on its migration to South America by early September. Along with the family of scarlet Cardinals in the garden here, it was one of the best birds of the holiday.



American Copper



American Lady

The weather had become showery with rain often setting in during the afternoon. However a walk around the town next day we came across a military cemetery where we found a large Black Swallowtail, floating like a bat under the branches of the Oak trees. Further on another more colourful Spice-bush Swallowtail, it also managed to keep away from my camera!! More obliging were an Orange Sulphur and an

American Copper. The week passed by quickly as we fitted in a day on a Whale Watch trip (highly recommended) from the town of Barnstable as well as local circular coastal and woodland walks.

We moved to our next hotel at Orleans the following week spending the first day indoors out of the heavy rain from tropical storm 'Lee', which had followed Irene up the coast. With all the rain butterflies were scarce but the birds continued to keep me going. On one of our visits around Orleans we found The Birderwatcher's General Store, a large store with everything connected with natural history stocked in it. Its an unique shop and a 'not to miss' if you find yourself in Cape Cod. When the weather front had passed we spent a day in Chatham on the Atlantic coast and the rest around the local area of Orleans which included visits to Rock Harbour, Salt Pond Visitor Centre and Nauset dunes and beach on the Atlantic coast, within the Cape Cod National Seashore conservation site.

The last full day was spent at the Wellfleet Audubon Sanctuary. By this time we were keeping 'an eye' on hurricane Katia that was heading up the coast towards Cape Cod. Fortunately, it had changed course the previous day and was sitting one hundred miles or so offshore of Wellfleet. The day was still, sunny and warm with a thin veil of cloud overhead, while on the western horizon huge storm clouds loomed over the sea with the distant rumble of thunder. An odd effect was when aircraft passed over us on the approach to Boston airport, at about five or seven thousand feet, they were leaving a thick vapour trail of condensation from the downward movement of cold air from the near-by storm.

Wellfleet was an excellent site with wetland, woodland, heathland and saltmarsh habitats. It had a Visitor Centre with displays of the area and well stocked information centre and shop. We saw plenty of birds including waders, gulls, Osprey, Turkey Vultures, Cedar Waxwings and many small birds visiting a feeding zone. These areas also attracted Chipmunks and Reddish Squirrels. Butterflies were steady in numbers

and like previous days included Sulphurs, Skippers and several Monarchs.

The best area was the heathland where we caught up with photos of American Copper, Pearl Crescent, American Lady and a superb Common Buckeye, looking like a large, but more decorative Meadow Brown. We had a great final day at this superb reserve.

On boarding our overnight flight home the following day, the captain told us that Katia had now reached the UK coast as an Autumn storm. We were to expect a wet and windy arrival in the morning at Edinburgh. As dawn broke we could see the sea crashing on the Antrim coast, Arran and Ayrshire before we flew through a misty approach to Edinburgh. Over the Forth estuary on 'finals' the thin sunlight produced a fine Broken Spectre, a circular rainbow with the shadow of our plane at its centre. A rather spectacular end to a great holiday.

**Species recorded; Aug 30 – Sep 9 2011.**

Canadian Tiger Swallowtail.

Spicebush Swallowtail.

Black Swallowtail.

Cabbage White.

Clouded Sulphur.

Orange Sulphur.

American Copper.

Gray Hairstreak.

Pearl Crescent.

Red Admiral.

American Lady.

Common Buckeye.

Monarch.

Tawny-edged Skipper.

Pepper & Salt Skipper.

Long Dash Skipper.

**References:**

Kaufman Field Guide to Butterflies of North America by Jim P Brock & Kenn Kaufman

Birds of Eastern North America by Paul Sterry & Brian E Small

**Waterproof folding Guides:**

Common Butterflies of New England

Pocket Naturalists New England Trees & Wildflowers.

Massachusetts Audubon – Guide to North Eastern Dragonflies and Damselflies and Guide to Backyard Birds.

2011 wasn't perhaps that memorable for wonderful weather through much of the summer, despite the spring having started very promisingly. It was therefore my expectation that the level of activity of migrant moths would be fairly low and to a large extent I was not disappointed as even Silver Y *Plusia gamma*, which often appears as a common immigrant in large numbers, was fairly scarce.

I was somewhat surprised then to find Golden Twin-spot *Chrysodeixis chalcites* on a moth trapping visit with fellow branch members Daphne Aplin and Joyce Scott to Cowpen Bewley near Billingham. We were graced by the appearance of not one but three specimens of this species on 25 August 2011. Golden Twin-spot is not a resident species in the UK and is sometimes imported as larvae in plants such as Chrysanthemum (Skinner, 2009). From the freshly emerged condition of these moths, and the fact that all occurred on the same site some distance from any possible importation source, it would appear that they had bred on site originating perhaps from an immigrant female slightly earlier in the season. The larvae use a variety of low-growing plants.



Golden Twin-spot

Although Golden Twin-spot is a very rare visitor to the north-east it has been recorded in VC66 in recent years on the basis of two moths at Stockton on 14 August 2010 and a singleton at Souter Lighthouse,

Whitburn on 31 October 2004 (Keith Dover, pers. comm., 2012). Three moths were also reported from the Tynemouth area of south-east Northumberland in VC67, one in 2009 and two in 2005 (Tams, 2012). Abroad, the Golden Twin-spot is a common multi-brooded resident in the Canary Islands and is a regular migrant or temporary resident in many parts of southern Europe (Goater *et al*, 2003). It is much scarcer in northern latitudes where there are regular records from the south coast of England.

References:

Goater, B., Ronkay, L., and Fibiger, M. (2003). Noctuidae Europaeae, Volume 10, Catocalinae & Plusiinae. Entomological Press.

Skinner, B. (2009). Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles. Apollo Books.

Tams, T. (2012). Northumberland Moths. Available from [www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk) [Access date: 7 March 2012].

## A Fascination with Butterflies

Steve Austin

It started with a friendly competition with a mate of mine at the start of this century to see who could see the most birds in the one year. This ran for a few years and then for a change, we decided to look for butterflies.

My first year was appalling with a total count of around twelve (yes that low) and I had falsely included the Brimstone. I obtained a copy of the *Observer's Book of Butterflies* for Year Two and also a little digital camera. I had also read somewhere that twenty or so butterflies could be seen in most areas with a little effort. By this time I had caught the "bug" and I distinctly remember shyly confessing to a passer by at Rainton Meadows that "I was looking for butterflies", when asked if I had seen anything (meaning birds). He stated that he had just seen Orange Tips and I walked ever so quickly to where he said he had seen them, and found them myself dancing in the air (males) and I was captivated. I saw my twenty that year, I had found my first Dingy

Skippers and a Northern Brown Argus and I had taken some photos. I also decided to buy a better camera and obtained a Digital Nikon, a Macro lens followed later.

So a few years after my first sightings – I was getting more confident and proficient, learning the difference between male and female butterflies, Large and Small Skippers and the different markings on the under wings. I was learning about flight times and going to specific locations at certain times, but most important of all, having successful and enjoyable outings. A trip to Arnside Knott in the Lakes was superb and we saw High Brown and Dark Green Fritillaries flying golden in the sun, Grayling with the most wonderful camouflage sitting on the limestone scree slopes. We had a truly wondrous day in Yorkshire where after some research we found the Duke of Burgundy and later in the day Painted Ladies flying down the valley like miniature jet fighters; it was the 2009 invasion and they were passing every few minutes fast and furious and non stop, heading north.

I obtained Patrick Barkham's book *The butterfly Isles* – what inspiration to look for all sixty of Britain's butterflies in the one year. Who says butterfly watching is not challenging? I purchased and devoured Jeremy Thomas and Richard Lewington's book *The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland*, learning about the relationship between some blue butterflies and ants. Richard's paintings are worth the money alone and the descriptions of caterpillar behaviour are all the encouragement one needs to add egg and caterpillar hunting to the endless list of things to self-research next year. Peacock butterflies, he states, produce a warning hiss, so there is something else to investigate the next time I see one.

So I have become one completely fascinated chap, planning next year's outings and plotting dates in a diary – wondering if I can again arrange a holiday in Scotland to coincide with the Chequered Skippers. Can I get over to the Lakeland fells and find a Mountain Ringlet for the first time? Will the Duke of Burgundy still be there? I have even produced a database with queries showing – peak times and locations,

hotspots and food plants, of all butterfly stages with counties and grid references for all the species including “The Purple Emperor” and “Swallowtail”, so I will know when and where to find them, if I get a chance. I will also be found again next year looking hopefully up into elm trees on a foot bridge in the middle of Durham, trying to catch a glimpse of a White Letter Hairstreak in my binoculars, I will bite my tongue and resist the temptation of throwing the next person into the river Wear, who passes by and says “it’s a tree”! I will probably go cross-eyed staring at bilberry bushes looking for Green Hairstreaks. I will drive my wife mad and spend days out without her, or leave her in the car for hours on end, as I go searching for something elusive, returning laughing and happy or glum and stropky, depending on the day’s outcome. I will shuffle my feet and disregard the garden on warm sunny days and make an excuse and be off again, camera and notebook in hand, and binoculars dangling from my neck.



Female Marbled White

I will take hundreds of photos and delete most of them, looking for the right shot, with no blurring and the correct depth of field. I will run up and down, crouch and creep, trying to capture the perfect photograph. Regarding butterflies I am by no stretch of the imagination an expert. I am still a beginner and an amateur faithfully recording my sightings and counting the numbers seen each trip. Even

the ones that pass through my garden are put into my little book and then emailed to Butterfly Conservation at the end of the year and I must admit that it's nice to know that these records are important and my input counts. That numbers of the more common butterflies are counted and recorded and, in their own way are just as important as the rarer ones. Monitoring the environment must be a good thing and I find it enjoyable to have a leisurely amble along my own patch and record what is there.

I was once in a Welsh forest looking for the Silver Washed Fritillary, I was talking to an old hippy type who made a living out of coppicing and wood working, and spent most of his time living in the forest. I was explaining my fascination for butterflies to him! "No wonder you are fascinated by butterflies" he said "they are a prelude to angels" and that just about sums it up.

## **A Personal View of Moth Recording**

**Peter Webb**

My main aim in writing this short article is to encourage more people to become involved in moth recording. Although there are at least two thousand active moth recorders in Britain there are only nineteen in County Durham. Much has been written in recent years about the decline in the numbers of moths and the importance of recording and "The State of Britain's Larger Moths" which is available from Butterfly Conservation head quarters for the cost of an A4 size SAE. is essential reading for anyone interested in Moths. People record and study moths because they are amazing animals.

Although the current emphasis is on recording moths attracted to a moth trap, enabling them to be identified before release, in the past collecting moths and butterflies was a popular pursuit for many amateur naturalists before the invention of light traps.

My interest in moths and butterflies goes back to the late 1950's when growing up in the Southern outskirts of London where many now scarce butterflies were often abundant and moth collecting consisted

of catching whatever was flying at dusk, searching tree trunks and fence palings for moths and garden shrubs and trees for caterpillars. We became very skilful at identifying the presence of Privet Hawk larvae by their droppings under lilac bushes and then crawling into an unsuspecting neighbour's garden to capture our prize. Searching the trunks and digging at the roots of the Poplar and Lime trees which lined the roads was a valuable source of larvae and pupae of Red Underwing, Puss Moth, Poplar and Lime Hawk Moths. Many sunny days in the spring were spent searching the hedgerows of country lanes, where we found caterpillars of Lappet, Oak Eggar, Drinker and several species of Tiger Moth.



Old Lady

1000 plus Orange Underwings!

Our only reference book at that time was Richard South's Moths of the British Isles and that not only helped us with identification but from it we learnt other methods of moth collecting including "sugaring" which he described as "the most exciting phase of collecting" and "sallowing" shaking a flowering willow bush onto a sheet which had been spread below it. By this time we were allowed to go out after dark with our only source of light a paraffin lantern.

My brother and I constructed our first moth trap from a Cheese Tub, a cone made from linoleum and a 150 watt tungsten bulb. We were amazed by the results and operated our garden moth trap for the next ten years. Sadly I no longer have a copy of the records we kept.

Whilst traps have become an essential part of modern recording some species (Old Lady for example) are rarely caught in light traps and methods such as sugaring, searching flowers during day and night time can be very rewarding. For some species searching for caterpillars is not only effective but confirms where it is breeding.

Anyone with a passing interest in insects could not fail to be excited by moth trapping and when I retired and moved to County Durham ten years ago one of the first things I did was to buy a moth trap.

A Mercury Vapour Trap was not a possibility so I purchased a 15 watt actinic Skinner Trap and two years later this was converted to a portable trap which could be operated from 18 amp battery. To buy this equipment now would cost £140 for the Skinner Trap with light sensor and £110 for the battery and charger. Although a mercury vapour trap would result in larger numbers of moths each night, for a beginner the numbers coming to a 15watt actinic light is often more than enough. I regularly get several hundred moths of thirty or more species on a mild night in July or August and in 2002 a migration of Large Yellow Underwings resulted in more than one thousand!

I have found a simple digital camera essential as a substitute for my earlier desires to form a moth collection and to aid identification. It is possible to identify many species using a website such as UK Moths or by reference to guides such as Bernard Skinner's "Moths of the British Isles" but a picture emailed to a more experienced recorder can prove very helpful.

The sheer numbers, unusual names and confusing similarities are daunting to many amateur naturalists but the thrill of opening a moth trap and seeing a Merveille du Jour (pictured on following page) on a damp October morning is something you'll never forget.



Left: Merveille de Jour  
(Photos : Peter Webb)

Right : Pale Pinion

Here are three short articles that Roger Norman wrote for the Alnwick Wildlife Group Newsletter – They are timely for the start of the new season.

### Scarce Spring Butterflies in North Northumberland

Heeding the offer from the editors in the January Newsletter, I have put together a short note on some of the scarce butterflies that might be around in the north of the county over the next couple of months. As the county recorder for Butterfly Conservation, this is not a disinterested effort! as we are short of records from the north of the county and without knowing what species are around, it is impossible to take any action to conserve them.

There are three scarce spring species that I would be very keen for members to look out for and to receive reports about them. Probably the first on the wing will be Green Hairstreak, *Callophrys rubi*. As the name suggests, this is a small green butterfly, which has Bilberry, *Vaccinium myrtillus* as it's a favoured food plant, although many other plants can be used.



Not surprisingly, it can be extremely hard to spot when perched on green bilberry leaves! and may best be spotted when in flight, when it can easily be dismissed as a small brownish moth. We only have a dozen or more records from the Cheviots and points east and these are not

very recent, eg. ten to fifteen years old, and we would love to have more up-to-date records. Numbers tend to peak in late April and early May and the season is effectively over by the end of May. (Green Hairstreak photo courtesy of Mike Coates).

The second species to be out and about is probably Holly Blue, *Celastrina argiolus*. This is on the edge of its range in Northumberland and appeared to be expanding northwards with a record 284 individuals counted in the north-east in 2007. However, only 159 were seen in 2008 and, due perhaps to bad weather for the second generation in the August of that year, or possibly parasitism, numbers crashed and only 7 records came in for the whole of 2009, (with one from a garden in Alnwick). With 70 records in 2010, but none north of Newcastle and Tynemouth, it may now be on its way back. Look for a smallish silvery blue butterfly around Holly trees, *Ilex aquifolium*, in parks, cemeteries and gardens in late April through May. The second generation will not emerge till late July.

The last species, which is a bit hopeful on my part, is Dingy Skipper, *Erynnis tages*. This is a species of coastal cliffs and brownfield sites in County Durham and of brownfield sites in the southern half of Northumberland. As a declining butterfly it is important to know its true range. Last year was a very good year for it and it may well have spread to new locations. We have old records from one or two of the quarries east of Alnwick, in the Longhoughton area and these, or

similar sites, may yield records if searched. Its favoured food plant for the caterpillars is Bird's-foot Trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*, and bare ground is favoured for basking. It will be flying from mid-May till late June but numbers tend to peak at the end of May. Like the other species, warm, sunny days are best times to be out.

If you come across any of these butterflies, or indeed of any others, please let me know, noting the grid reference, to six figures preferably, and how many were seen. I can be reached on 0191 285 8314 or at [roger@norman784.plus.com](mailto:roger@norman784.plus.com). A spreadsheet for sightings can also be downloaded from our website at [www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk)

### Scarce Summer Butterflies in North Northumberland

Following on from the article in last month's newsletter about scarce spring butterflies, I have put together a note about four butterflies for June and July. They are a mixture of two scarce, but findable species and two really rare ones, one of which may not be present. The first two are definitely present and these are our two fritillaries.



Dark Green Fritillary, *Argynnis aglaja*, is quite common in a good year on the dune system on Holy Island and the Long Nanny at Newton-by-the-Sea. Elsewhere along the coast it occurs in smaller numbers from Cocklawburn in the north to Druridge in the south. Being a large butterfly it can be a dramatic sight when seen in any numbers. My reason for including it in this article is to try and establish its inland distribution, in particular whether we have any

breeding colonies in the north of the county. It is a strong flier and can range quite widely, so records of single individuals might only mean a wandering individual. Records of more than one would be really valuable as it would hint at a presence of a colony. It has been doing well in the last few years with strong colonies established in the west of County Durham and a new colony in Dipton Woods found in 2008. There is a small colony in Harwood Forest, but I do not know of any north of there. The larval food plants are violets so the chances are that any sightings will be near to damp areas. It will be on the wing from late June through to early August.

The other Fritillary is the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, *Boloria selene*. This has a fair number of colonies in the Wark Forest and a number of



sites around Sweethope Lough. As a UK Bio-diversity Action Plan, (BAP), Priority Species, knowledge of its true range would be very valuable. Apart from a couple of sightings near Rothbury last year, the only other known site in the north of the county

is Ford Moss, although there have been no records from there for several years. The food plant for the caterpillars is Marsh Violet, *Viola palustris*, and the adults will be on the wing from mid-June to mid-July. I have often found that the adults will nectar on Marsh Thistle, *Cirsium palustre*, which is very convenient as it is a tall plant and can be seen from a distance, especially with binoculars and helps to locate suitably damp areas.



The other two species are either extreme rarities or are not actually present! Small Blue, *Cupido minimus*, was last reliably recorded in 1995 in the county. Previous records refer to Davidson's Lynn at the head of the Usway Burn in 1948 and to an unidentified site on the coast just south of Berwick, thought to be around Cocklawburn nature reserve,

during the 1939–45 war. The only known food plant for the larvae is Kidney Vetch, *Anthyllis vulneraria*, and it should be on the wing in June or possibly at the end of July and into early August. This is a small butterfly which can be overlooked. Look for warm sheltered spots where the food plant is present. Colonies can be very small in area



My last species is Northern Brown Argus, *Aricia artaxerxes*. In County Durham there are colonies in some of the Limestone quarries and on the coast. There has been one site found recently in the county at an undisclosed location. The food plant for the larvae is Rock Rose, *Helianthemum nummularian*, and the butterfly will be on the wing from early June until late July. Like the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and Small Blue, this is a UK BAP Priority Species. As with the other

species, warm, sunny days are best times to be out searching

If you come across any of these butterflies, or indeed of any others, please let me know, noting the grid reference, to six figures preferably, and how many were seen. Given the extreme rarity of the last two species, it would be extremely helpful if any sightings could be photographed and if I were contacted straightaway. I can be reached on 0191 285 8314 or at [roger@norman784.plus.com](mailto:roger@norman784.plus.com). A spreadsheet for sightings can also be downloaded from our website at [www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk)

Photographs courtesy of Jim Asher, Butterfly Conservation.

### Scarce Late Summer Butterflies in North Northumberland

Following on from the recent newsletter articles about scarce spring and early summer butterflies, this is a last note, for this summer at least, about three species that you may come across in the next month or so. The first two are definitely present, but the third is more in hope than expectation.



The first is one that I mentioned in spring, the Holly Blue, *Celastrina argiolus*. This is because it has two generations and the second one should be emerging just about as this newsletter reaches you. Whereas the spring generation uses Holly as the food plant, the summer generation switch to Ivy, *Hedera helix*, so it is likely to be found around blocks of Ivy, perhaps in churchyards or mature gardens and more than likely, Alnwick could hold a few. The spring generation this year was reasonable in Northumberland Park in Tynemouth where up to four were seen at any one time so it seems to have started to bounce back from a low of only 7 records for the whole of the north-east in 2009.



The second of the three is one that Group members have found at two new locations in the past couple of years, in the Kyloes and near Amble. This is Grayling, *Hipparchia semele*, which has its strongholds in Lindisfarne NNR, particularly the dune systems and on brownfield land on the old coal storage areas of the

demolished Blyth power station at Cambois. It has amazingly cryptic plumage and will probably only be spotted if it flies or flicks its wings. When on the ground on bare patches of sand, stones or ballast, it can be extremely hard to see. It looks rather like a Meadow Brown in flight but more colourful. Flights are often fast and short before it lands and appears to disappear! It is on the wing now and for the next few weeks until late August.



The last butterfly is one that is not officially in the county but I have recently come across a photo taken at the upper lakes at Cragside in the 1970s. This is Scotch Argus, *Erebia aethiops*, where the nearest current records are over the border in the tetrad (2km square) NT6610. The Borders Atlas<sup>1</sup> reports that it is a butterfly of damp grassland

that is lightly grazed or ungrazed and large colonies exist in open sunny glades in woodland, including conifers. Several sites in the Borders are on basin mires or fens, known locally as mosses. It is thought to be under pressure as populations move north under the effect of increasing temperatures. The Atlas<sup>1</sup> shows that it is on the wing from early July through to early September and that the peak abundance is in early August. NT6610 is only some 5 km north-west

of Carter Bar so if you are out on the fells or in our forests in the next month, please keep your eyes peeled!

If you come across any of these butterflies, or indeed of any others, please let me know, noting the grid reference, to six figures preferably, and how many were seen. Given the extreme rarity of the last species, it would be extremely helpful if any sightings could be photographed and if I were contacted straightaway. I can be reached on 0191 285 8314 or at [roger@norman784.plus.com](mailto:roger@norman784.plus.com). A spreadsheet for sightings can also be downloaded from our website at [www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk)

Holly Blue and Scotch Argus photos courtesy of Jim Asher, Butterfly Conservation.

References: Mercer, J., Buckland, R., Kirkland, P., Waddell, J., *Butterfly Atlas of the Scottish Borders*, Atropos Publishing.

## A Review of the British Butterfly Families

David Stebbings

This is the first of a series of articles I plan to write looking at the different families of butterflies found in Britain and covering in more detail the members of each family found here in the North East. I am starting with the HesperIIDae family which is the skipper family.

Members of the HesperIIDae family are the most moth-like of the butterfly families. There are eight species found in Britain with only three members found in the North East. Most members of the family lay their eggs on various species of grasses. Five of the family are often referred to as the golden skippers. They are orangey-brown in colour and rest with their fore wings held at an angle of about 45 degrees to their body, in a characteristic V shape. The golden skippers look confusingly similar and some patience is required to distinguish them. The antennae of skippers have a rather hooked appearance

rather than the solid club-like appearance of other butterflies. The name “skipper” is thought to have been given to them because of their fast darting flight.

### **The Golden Skippers**

**Large Skipper.** The largest of the golden skippers found in our region. It is common and widespread but not usually seen in great numbers, often being seen singly. It is on the wing from around the beginning of June to mid-July. It has black streaky markings on orange-brown wings with some darker patches toward the trailing edges of the wings. It is a butterfly of sheltered grassland where coarse grasses are allowed to grow tall and form clumps. Look for it where there are clumps of cock's-foot grass, which is where the females lay their eggs and is the food plant of the caterpillars. Males are easier to find as they patrol field or woodland edges or woodland clearings and rides looking for females. They also perch on prominent leaves on bushes, look for the characteristic ‘V’ shape of the wings, and fly up to investigate any passing insect. If it is a rival male it will be chased off, even hover flies will come under attack. It is often found in damper conditions than the small skipper.

**Small Skipper.** This is the other golden skipper found in our region. It is a relative new comer, one of a number of butterfly species to spread into the region in the last twenty years. It is smaller than the Large Skipper and its wings have a more uniform golden-brown colour, lacking the dark streaky marks of the Large Skipper. It is found in dry meadows and rough grassland where its caterpillar food plant, the grass Yorkshire Fog, is found. It can be quite numerous in places where it is found and is often seen in greater numbers than the Large Skipper. The Small Skipper is on the wing about a month later than the Large Skipper, July being its main month with a few lasting into early August.

The remaining three golden skippers are not found in our region. These are:-

**Essex Skipper.** Very similar to the Small Skipper and also a butterfly of open grassland. The only way to distinguish the two in the field is to examine the tips of the antennae; they are black in the Essex Skipper and brown in the Small Skipper. It is a common butterfly but is restricted to the South East of Britain, roughly South East of a line drawn between the Humber Estuary and Bristol.

**Lulworth Skipper.** An extreme rarity and Britain's smallest skipper. Only about one hundred colonies are known, all found on the chalk downs and cliffs of the Dorset coast around Swanage. It can be numerous within these colonies and is believed to be increasing in numbers as a result of controlled livestock grazing on the sites where it is found.

**Silver-spotted Skipper.** Another very rare species, found only on a few south facing chalk downs of South East England. It gets its name from a series of bright silver coloured spots on the upper and lower surfaces of its wings.

### **Other Skippers**

**Dingy Skipper.** The third of the skipper family found in our region and to my mind the most moth like. It is a local species that is declining mainly due to loss of its favoured habitat. It is found mainly on sheltered warm sites with bare areas where its food plant, Bird's-foot Trefoil, grows. These include former colliery sites, quarries, railway embankments and other brown field sites and also in the coastal sand dune systems of the region. Fortunately many former colliery sites and disused railways are now nature reserves, country parks or cycle ways and so some suitable habitat has been preserved. The Dingy Skipper has a mixture of light and dark brown patterning on its wings, with a lighter fringe to the outer edges of the wing often with a row of light dots parallel to the fringe. When it flies it is a brown blur weaving rapidly about a foot off the ground and is difficult to follow. However, it lands frequently on bare patches of ground to sun itself giving one the opportunity to examine it more closely. This is a springtime butterfly, being on the wing from mid-May to mid-June.

**Chequered Skipper.** A very rare butterfly. In Britain it is now found only in colonies around Fort William in Scotland. About fifty colonies are known on damp lightly wooded slopes usually alongside lochs or rivers where tussocks of Purple Moor-grass grow. Strangely these colonies were not discovered until 1942. However, until the mid-1970's it was found in several places in the English Midlands, but these colonies suddenly declined and disappeared and it has not been seen there since 1975. It is a very attractive butterfly with a chequer board pattern of light and dark brown markings on its wings.

**Grizzled Skipper.** A declining species that is becoming increasingly rare. It can be found over large parts of southern England, south of Birmingham, and along the South Wales coast. It is an attractively marked butterfly with small white patches on dark brown wings. Each wing is fringed with a white band and the band is broken with dark cross lines. It is found in dry scrubby places, woodland rides and railway embankments. The Grizzled Skipper probably uses a greater range of plants on which to lay its eggs than any other British butterfly. It has been recorded egg laying on about ten different species of herbs and flowers including Wild Strawberry, Creeping Cinquefoil, Wood Avens and Bramble.

I must apologise for the rather truncated acknowledgement of all the new members to the branch. I have run out of space. If I over do this last page I must assemble another three pages to allow for printing. It has to be done in multiples of four you see!

However – you are all most welcome. I hope you find the newsletter of interest.

Mr N Clark; Miss W E Dickson; Mr and Mrs Foster; Mr D Gregson;  
Ms E Halliday; Mr P and Mrs P Hambleton; Ms M D Harris;  
Mrs J Helliwell; Mrs M and Mr S Hingston; Dr M Jeffries;  
Mr P A Johnson; Mr M Knipe; Mrs J Lee; Mr G Levy;  
Mrs G Lovett–Hume; Ms H Makepeace; Mr M R Mallaby;  
Mr D McKinnie; Ms A Middleton and Mr M Davison; Mr S J Mitchinson;  
Dr I Noel; Mr R Pears; Mr D Rayner; Mr A Roberts;  
Mr I Schofield; Mr A Swanston; Miss S Taylor and Mr M Walker.

The growth in membership of the North East England Branch continues expand, this is encouraging news in that the message for the need for the conservation of our most delicate of habitat and climate indicators is reaching an ever–increasing audience.

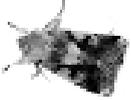
The wonderful weather we have had at the end of March, followed by the bitterly cold days in April does not bode well for our early butterflies. Reports of Holly Blue in March were encouraging, as were the sightings of the over–wintering Peacocks, Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells. Let us hope the temperatures now start to rise again. Don't forget to record all your butterfly and moth sightings and send pictures to the Web Site.

## Butterfly Conservation Safety Note

As with any other activity, there are hazards in the countryside and everyone taking part in a Field Trip or Working Party has a responsibility, for their own safety and that of others. We always ensure that our events present no greater hazard than any other walk in the countryside, but please note and act on the following:

1. The leader will provide a briefing on the trip before setting out, with details of any known hazards, and will give advice on what to do in an emergency. Please listen carefully.
2. At the briefing, let the leader know if a) you have a mobile telephone and are able to take it with you on the walk, and b) if you have a first aid qualification.
3. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Stout shoes are a minimum requirement for any walk.
4. In sunny weather take a hat, use sun cream or protection for exposed skin. Make sure that you have adequate food and liquid to drink with you.
5. When on a walk, look out for any hazards – rabbit holes, fallen or hanging branches, barbed wire, boggy areas etc.
6. Children are welcome on our walks, but if under the age of 16 must be accompanied by at least one adult for two children. It is the responsibility of the accompanying adult(s) to ensure that the trip is within the children's capability.
7. Dogs are normally welcome on our walks, but must be kept under control.
8. If you are uncertain about any details of the trip, ring the leader/contact in advance. If you decide to leave the trip early, please tell the leader.
9. Take care at all times and above all ENJOY YOURSELF.

## How to Submit Moth Records



Over 1200 species of moth have been recorded in our region, some common and widespread, others represented by very few, or in some cases, only a single record. Submitting records of moths helps to improve our understanding of the distribution and abundance of these fascinating insects and to enable potential problems they may be experiencing to be detected. Separate databases are maintained for Durham and Northumberland and records should be submitted to the appropriate recorder depending on where they are made.

In all cases the following information should be recorded:

<b>Species name:</b>	Please indicate scientific and (where there is one) common names.
<b>Location:</b>	Where the moth was recorded.
<b>Grid reference:</b>	Ideally a six-figure grid reference for the location.
<b>Vice County:</b>	66 for Durham, 67 for South Northumberland and 68 for North Northumberland.
<b>Date :</b>	For light trapping records the convention is that the date should be that of the evening when the trap is set rather than the morning when it is emptied.
<b>Recorder:</b>	Name of the person who caught/observed the moth(s).
<b>Determiner:</b>	Name of the person who identified the moth(s) (if different to the recorder).
<b>Life cycle stage:</b>	i.e. adult, pupa, caterpillar or egg.
<b>Quantity:</b>	The number of each species recorded.
<b>Method:</b>	Type of trap, field record, or how the moth was caught.
<b>Durham (Vice County 66)</b>	

Records should be submitted to either of the joint moth recorders for Durham:

**Keith Dover**

4 Lindisfarne Avenue  
Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham  
e-mail: [k.dover879@btinternet.com](mailto:k.dover879@btinternet.com)

**Tim Barker**

Tap and Spile, 27 Front Street  
Framwellgate Moor, Durham  
e-mail: [tim@tapandspile.co.uk](mailto:tim@tapandspile.co.uk)

A spreadsheet for the submission of moth records for County Durham can be downloaded from [www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk/recording](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk/recording)

**Northumberland (Vice County 67 and Vice County 68)**

Records should be submitted to **Tom Tams**, the moth recorder for Northumberland, 191 Links Road, Tynemouth, Northumberland. Tel: 0191 272 8499

e-mail: [tomsphotos@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tomsphotos@hotmail.co.uk) or [recorder@northumberlansmoths.org.uk](mailto:recorder@northumberlansmoths.org.uk)

Full details for submitting records in Northumberland, including a downloadable spreadsheet are given at [www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk).

### Validation

It is important that records are accurate and based on correct identifications and one of the responsibilities of the County Recorders is to scrutinise submitted records and check that this is the case. For any records of rare species, easily confused species or records of species that are outside their usual geographic range or flight period they may ask for supporting evidence to be supplied before the record is accepted. Suitable evidence may include good quality photographs, or sight of the actual specimen (moths can be kept captive for a day or two in a pot in a cool place without being harmed).

## Submitting Butterfly Records in 2012 – 2013

Records are the bedrock of conservation and the North East Branch welcomes records of all species, for all dates and places, and of course for all forms.

**From 2012 there will be two ways of sending your records in. For those without a home computer, the existing yellow paper casual record sheets will continue unchanged. However, if you have a PC, the Branch would urge you to send in your records using a spreadsheet such as Microsoft Excel. Each record should occupy one line and the format of the spreadsheet should look something like the following example:**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>1</b>	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ274423	Palace Green, Durham City	22-Aug-2012	Large White	7	
<b>2</b>	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ196858	Morpeth (riverside)	24-Sep-2012	Peacock	2	Very worn
<b>3</b>	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ2514	Baydale Beck Darlington	1-Jul-2012	Comma	1	<i>Hutchinsoni</i> form

**Column A** – Recorder/s names.

**Column B** - Grid reference, which should be two letters, (NT, NU, NY or NZ), followed by four or six numbers. The first two (or three) numbers are the Easting, read from the top or bottom of OS maps, the last two, (or three) numbers represent the Northing, read from either side of the map.

**Column C** - Site name. For obscure place names please include a nearby town or village.

**Column D** – Date (please try to follow the format shown)

**Column E** - The name of the species seen.

**Column F** - The number seen. The actual number is preferred rather than the letter system. For larva (L), ova (O), pupa (P) or mating (M) records, please use the code letter provided, optionally adding numbers seen.

**Column G** - For any comments you may wish to add.

Optionally, you can add a habitat code to column H if you wish.

A blank spreadsheet, with the date formatted, is available by contacting the recorders. Electronic records are most easily sent as an email attachment. However, you can also send them in by post on CD or memory stick. The deadline for records to be included, and credited, in the 2012 Annual Report is 30 November 2012. Depending on where you live, please send records to:

### DURHAM

Steve Le Fleming  
 7 Albert Street  
 Durham,  
 DH1 4RL  
 0191 386 7309  
 : [lsklef@aol.com](mailto:lsklef@aol.com)

### NORTHUMBERLAND

Roger Norman  
 1 Prestwick Gardens, Kenton  
 Newcastle-upon-Tyne,  
 NE3 3DN  
 0191 2858314  
 : [roger@norman784.plus.com](mailto:roger@norman784.plus.com)

**A recording spreadsheet is available to download from our Website**

## North East England Branch Serving Committee Members for 2012

### Branch Organiser, Secretary and Treasurer

Steve Kirtley, Tel: 01325 460198  
Email: [stephen@skirtley.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:stephen@skirtley.fsnet.co.uk)

### Moth Recorder

Keith Dover, Tel: 0191 388 9640  
Email: [k.dover879@btinternet.com](mailto:k.dover879@btinternet.com)

### Butterfly Recorder Northumberland

Roger Norman, Tel: 0191 285 8314  
Email: [roger@norman784.plus.com](mailto:roger@norman784.plus.com)

### Butterfly Recorder Durham

Steve le Fleming. Tel: 0191 386 7309  
Email: [lsklef@aol.com](mailto:lsklef@aol.com)

### Web Master

Jonathan Wallace Tel: 0191 274 4303  
Email: [jonathan@cherryburn.com](mailto:jonathan@cherryburn.com)

### Chairman

Ken Dawson, Tel: 01661 852928  
E-mail: [kdaw27@uwclub.net](mailto:kdaw27@uwclub.net)

### Membership Secretary & Newsletter Editor

Jaci Beaven, Tel: 01665 510713  
Email: [jacquelinebeaven@btinternet.com](mailto:jacquelinebeaven@btinternet.com)

### Conservation Officer (Northumberland)

David Stebbings, Tel: 01912 859097  
Email: [david.stebbing@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:david.stebbing@blueyonder.co.uk)

### Conservation Officer (Durham)

Michael Harris. Tel: 0191 522 0160  
Email: [michaelsharris@talktalk.net](mailto:michaelsharris@talktalk.net)

### Committee Members

Peter Webb. Tel: 01833 650772  
Email: [apwebb@uwclub.net](mailto:apwebb@uwclub.net)

Robert Woods,  
E-mail: [rwoods1163@aol.com](mailto:rwoods1163@aol.com)

### Transect Co-ordinator (Non Attending Member)

Brian Denham, Tel: 01325 263499  
Email: [brian.denham@ntlworld.com](mailto:brian.denham@ntlworld.com)

### Butterfly Conservation Regional Office (Northern England)

Dave Wainwright. Butterfly Conservation, Low Barns, Witton-le-Wear  
Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 0AG  
Tel: 01388 488428 Email: [dwainwright@butterfly-conservation.org.uk](mailto:dwainwright@butterfly-conservation.org.uk)

### Website

[www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk).

### Butterfly Conservation

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468)  
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Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)