



# North East England Branch



President Sir David Attenborough CH. FRS

DEDICATED TO SAVING WILD BUTTERFLIES AND THEIR HABITATS

**Newsletter No. 26**

**November 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

Contributions should be sent to the Editor at this address:

21 West Acres, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 2QA

E-mail [jacquelinebeaven@btinternet.com](mailto:jacquelinebeaven@btinternet.com)

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.



As I stated in the Spring newsletter, it is my intention to hand over the Branch Chairmanship to 'other capable hands'. However, for personal reasons, I have decided to stand down at the next AGM anyway.

So, we now have a vacancy for someone to chair the Committee, who are a friendly and knowledgeable bunch of individuals. Chairing the Branch is not an onerous task. It mainly involves managing Committee meetings and papers, representing the Branch at formal and informal Butterfly Conservation meetings, liaising with Head Office and with other individuals and organisations. The role of the Chair is outlined in the 'Branch Committee Induction Pack', available from Head Office or anyone on the Branch Committee.

We also have a vacancy for a Moths Officer. As a key member of the team, you would represent the Branch on all issues relating to the recording and conservations of moths. Keith Dover has decided to resign from the Committee, but will remain County Recorder for Durham. There are also vacancies for individuals to develop Branch activities that currently get little attention due to lack of time. You don't need to be a boffin, or an expert! We also need more contributions to the website - on what you've seen and done.

It has been an extraordinary year for butterflies, which are so susceptible to changes the weather. Some species, such as Hairstreaks, have barely appeared in their familiar haunts, whilst others such as Speckled Wood and Ringlet have thrived. I am now seeing Commas and other Vanessids nectaring on remnants of Buddleias in my garden.

Over the summer, I took the opportunity to get pictures of the Belsay School Grounds and some of the flowering plants. The site has good

potential for studying butterflies and moths at first hand by the children. There is also an opportunity to convert part of the school field to a wild flower meadow. Dave Stebbings and I are working with one of the teachers, Pip Forsyth. We would welcome help from anyone with ideas or skills, just contact either Dave or myself. (Details on the back page)

## **Notification of North East England Branch of Butterfly Conservation Annual General Meeting.**

This will be held at 2pm. on Saturday 16 February 2013  
In the Rainton Meadows Visitor Centre,  
Houghton-le-Spring

Business will include The Chairman's Report,  
Treasurer's Report and Election of Officers.

Any items for discussion in **Any Other Business** should be directed to a Committee Member at least twenty-one days before the meeting.

Afterwards

Dr. Dave Wainwright Butterfly Conservation Regional Officer for the North of England will talk about his work in the North of England and the Morecambe Bay Project. **The Committee would like to hear from the Membership about how The Branch can improve.**

**What would you like to see happen? Field Trips? Work Parties? Training Days? Indoor Meetings? Please let the Committee have your ideas.**

The North East England Branch of Butterfly Conservation is considering moving into the twenty-first century by asking the Membership what they think about changing to an electronic newsletter. This is due to increases in printing charges and a massive hike in postage costs. Apart from the obvious financial advantages, the Newsletter could then be seen in all its colourful glory, instead of the insipid black and white currently used to print the editions.

**How does everyone feel about this? I would appreciate some feedback. This option could also include the Annual Butterfly Summary**

There will be those of the membership who do not have access to a computer and they would continue to receive a printed copy, I also understand that there will be a small minority of people who would prefer a hard copy (I hope it is only a small minority).

Depending on your responses, I will, hopefully, be asking for e-mail addresses in the next Spring Newsletter.

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I have given the Branch Committee notice that I intend to retire as Newsletter Editor and as Membership Secretary as from the Annual General Meeting in February 2014.

I shall, by then, have clocked up over thirty years as a Committee Member for Butterfly Conservation in various guises - I think I need a rest!

I would, therefore, also like to hear from anyone who is interested and willing to take on these posts. They are, neither of them, onerous, or particularly time consuming, although a certain level of computer literacy is advisable. I am happy to talk about the posts and I invite members to e-mail or phone me to discuss the matter. (Details on the back cover.)

While we are on the subject of change and re-adjustment, Roger Norman, who has co-ordinated the Annual Report so ably for the last ten years, also wishes to hand over responsibility in the not too distant future. Roger is very happy to talk to anyone who is interested in learning the ropes and to explain the software used in the preparation of the Report.

You will have read earlier in the Newsletter that Ken Dawson is stepping down as Chairman as of now, his role is being taken by Peter Webb for the next two meetings including the AGM. It would be a great help to The Branch and to The Committee if any members would come forward to fill the gaps on The Committee and to offer any expertise that they might have. Please feel free to contact anyone to discuss these issues. Details of current Committee Members are on the back cover of the Newsletter.



## Where to see Woodland Butterflies

The Wildlife Trusts have just produced a short guide called "*Great Places to see Woodland Butterflies*". The guide lists forty nature reserves across the UK that merit a visit by butterfly lovers. Three of the reserves listed are in our own region and may be familiar to many members of the branch but for those thinking of travelling further afield in the hope of seeing such woodland wonders as Purple Emperors and White Admirals the guide could be very helpful in finding where to go. The guide can be downloaded free of charge from: <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/woodlandbutterflies>.

## Early Comments on the 2012 Butterfly Season

### Roger Norman & Steve le Fleming

At the time of writing, i.e. late October, the records for this year have barely started to come in, so any comments on the season are fairly subjective, being based on personal observations, chance meetings in the field, emails and telephone calls from keen recorders. The season started on New Year's Day with an unfortunate flying Peacock being caught and eaten by a Pied Wagtail at Hauxely. Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell were then sporadically reported up to the middle of March. There was then a burst of fine weather in March that culminated in an early flush of butterflies, with early dates for several species, including remarkably, Orange Tip on 22 March, together with Small White, Comma and Speckled Wood. Other very early sightings before the month was out were Brimstone, Small Copper, Holly Blue and Green Hairstreak. Unfortunately the fine weather that caused this emergence was not to last.

April seemed to be a very quiet month with observers reporting only small numbers of the commoner species, although Brimstone and Holly Blue were seen in Tynemouth. In May, Dingy Skipper and Wall Brown both appeared on 6 May. A Painted Lady appeared at Tynemouth on the 24 May, the first of what was a very poor year for them, and a tremendous count of eighty-three Dingy Skipper was made by Brian Pollinger at Tanfield Railway on 26 May. This followed a count of forty-two at Wingate Quarry suggesting that this species was having a reasonable year, despite the cool weather. Another species that was clocking up the sightings was Holly Blue, a very welcome change from the low point that was reached a few years back when there were only seven records for the entire year. There was then a nice flush of butterflies through June despite the start of rain which seemed to go on forever. Observers reported good counts of Common Blue at the beginning of the month. Small Pearl-bordered

Fritillary were out in late June and seventeen were counted near Rothbury on 26 June with twenty-two Northern Brown Argus at Bishop Middleham Quarry on the same date.

Nationally many species have been badly hit by the poor weather and I have no doubt that our regional totals will be well down for many species. A count of twenty-two Dark Green Fritillary on Holy Island at the beginning of July was encouraging despite the downpours, but in general, observers appear to have been recording fewer butterflies than in previous years, with ones and twos being noted where one would normally expect double figures. Personal experience and comments from many people suggested that it was hard going finding butterflies and dodging the rain. A count of two hundred Ringlets over a 2km walk in Harwood Forest on 27 July suggested otherwise, but some of the Browns seem to like damp weather. Other observers reported reasonable counts of Meadow Brown and Small Heath.

Eleven Purple Hairstreaks were seen on the 5 July at Aykley Wood but Marbled White did not appear till the 12 July, a late date for this species. It then seemed to have a good season with large counts of up to seventy-four at Wingate Quarry. So far though, it is rather disappointing that there seems no evidence of any sustained expansion from this site where it was introduced in 2000. New sites in the southern end of the North Tyne Valley were reported for White-letter Hairstreak and for Purple Hairstreak, where spotting them involved waiting for the rain to stop and for brief bursts of sunshine to occur. The Tyne Valley seems to be on the northern edge of the range of both species so these are interesting records. We need more observers looking at the North Tyne. Dave Liddle reported that the Dark Green Fritillary appears to be moving down the Browney Valley from the Waskerley Way – and he offers congratulations to all who have given time and expertise over the past few years to create new habitats.



In September, there were fifty-five Speckled Woods at Northumberland Park on 16 September and twenty-eight were in Brierdene, a small park in Whitley Bay on 18 September. Otherwise recorders seemed to be seeing butterflies in small numbers and many fewer than in a good season. My personal experience, (RN), was that Small Copper, Comma, and Painted Lady all had a really poor season. We await the full records to take stock of this extraordinarily wet summer.

**(Don't forget to send in your records to Roger and Steve as soon as you can. Ed.)**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plans for a “Butterflies of Northeast England” – A Request for Authors</b></p>
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Since Butterfly Conservation initiated the Butterflies for the New Millennium project in 1995, the Branch has accumulated a large number of records, now well over two hundred thousand. Whilst these have been published annually in our Annual Summary, the Branch Committee feel that it is now appropriate to summarise these and have decided to prepare a publication with the provisional title of “The Butterflies of Northeast England”. The previous overview of the region was by Tom Dunn and Dr J. D. Parrack in 1986. The knowledge, distribution and fortunes of many of our species have changed markedly in the intervening years. The provisional plan is that this publication would appear as a complete issue of the *Northumbrian Naturalist*, which is the title of the Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria. The Society, located at the Great North Museum: Hancock in Newcastle, published one of the earliest surveys of our Lepidoptera, by John Robson in 1899. The anticipated publication date would be in two years time, i.e. late 2014.

As with the Annual Butterfly Summary, the Committee would like to invite members to volunteer to write one or more of the species accounts for our thirty-three or so regular species. For a small number of species we are fortunate to have regional experts and we will be inviting them to contribute, however, this will only be for maybe four or five species. We would provide a 'template' giving the layout to be followed and copies of the previous publications for the region, of which there are actually only a small number. At the moment, our guess is that each account would be of the order of one thousand words or so and would need to be written before Christmas 2013.

If you would like to volunteer and put pen to paper, please get in touch with any of the working group organising the publication: Roger Norman, Steve le Fleming, Dave Stebbings or Jonathan Wallace. (Contact details on the back cover.)

**Butterfly Recording 21<sup>st</sup> Century style: 'Record Wildlife' recording app, reviewed by Jonathan Wallace**

One of the beauties of the study of butterflies is that it requires very little in the way of expensive equipment. Armed with just a pencil and notebook and a pair of sharp eyes it is possible to make useful and important observations and records and it is probable that a very high proportion of the two hundred thousand or so butterfly records in the North East England data-base were obtained with just such limited equipment. Nevertheless in the centuries that have passed since the Aurelians first rambled across the countryside armed with nets and a keen interest in butterflies, there have been significant advances in technology that have benefited our study, not the least of which is the development of computing technology that allows us to store and analyse large quantities of data. One of the latest products available –

‘Record Wildlife’ – aims to use modern computing technology to make the notebook and pencil redundant.

Record Wildlife is an ‘app’ – which is to say a small programme designed for use on a modern ‘smart-phone’. It was developed by a company called Creative Beans, based on a concept by Neil Gregory and launched on 1st September 2012. The concept is fairly simple: the app can be used to record details of any wildlife you see including species name, numbers and any notes and the grid reference and time and date are automatically recorded using the phone’s built in GPS, clock and calendar functions. The app also allows photographs, taken with the phone, to be appended to a record. The app builds up a log of records and these can be selected and e-mailed to a recipient in the form of a csv file suitable for importing into a spreadsheet.

So how well does it work? As the app was launched at the tail end of the butterfly season, I have not had a great many opportunities to use it but initial impressions are that it is straightforward and easy to use. At the bottom of the screen four menu options allow you to enter personal details (including the e-mail address to which any record will be sent), add a sighting, view the log or seek help. Adding a sighting is very simple. There are three fields for recording the species name, number seen and any notes respectively. There is also an option to add a photograph and then the record can either be saved or cleared by touching the relevant button at the base of the screen.

All of this seems to work quite well in practice but I did notice a few small shortcomings in its use. The first of these concerned the entry of species names which are often not recognised by the phone’s spell-checker which then tries to auto-correct the spelling. This is a minor issue as it is possible to override the suggested spelling or even to turn **off** the spell-checking function altogether (but it is then disabled for other programmes as well) but I did find it an irritant. A more significant issue was that there does not seem to be any means of deleting entries from the log and so heavy use would quickly result in an unwieldy list of records. As the app is intended primarily as an

electronic field notebook rather than a data-base this is a nuisance. Another small gripe with the programme itself is the lack of a field for recording the location name. Although this can of course be included amongst the 'notes' it would be tidier (and more compatible with wildlife recording data-bases such as *Mapmate* or Butterfly Conservation's *Levana*) to have a dedicated field for this.

Other reservations relate to the GPS and photo aspects of the app. So far, the grid references that have been applied to my records by Record Wildlife have proved to be accurate when checked against an Ordnance Survey map but it is important to bear in mind that the GPS does not work well in all circumstances and, in woodland for example, may not get a strong enough signal from enough satellites to be able to calculate an accurate location. It would be prudent therefore to check all grid references for accuracy before submitting the records to the County Recorder. It is also worth pointing out that the grid reference given is that of the phone's location rather than that of the animal or plant being recorded. For a butterfly the difference is rarely likely to be significant but for bird-watchers there could sometimes be several hundred metres between the bird and the observer (in the case of an eagle, say, soaring over a mountain ridge) and so due adjustment would need to be made to the record.

Whilst allowance can be made for possible inaccuracies in the GPS location, shortcomings on the photographic side are less easily overcome. Most phone cameras are unsuited for recording wildlife as they lack adequate macro focussing capability to give satisfactory detail on insects and other small animals or plants whilst also lacking sufficient telephoto 'power' to satisfactorily record birds and mammals. It is likely that not many photographs produced by these cameras would be of suitable quality to allow validation of records of 'difficult' species.

All things considered, I don't see Record Wildlife replacing the trusty notebook and pencil or the digital camera any time soon but I think that it does have its place. For those members who do not use a smart

phone (I suspect many of you!) the app will obviously be of no use at all but if you do have one it can be a useful addition. For example, when at work, I will generally have my phone with me but will not necessarily have my field notebook to record any butterflies I might happen to see. Since the app is free there is nothing to lose.

Record Wildlife is available for Apple i-Phones and i-Pads only. It can be downloaded from the i-Tunes web-site free of charge. The developers, whose web-site is at [www.recordwildlife.co.uk/](http://www.recordwildlife.co.uk/) suggest a voluntary donation of £1.00 to support future development.



## Fighting Meadow Browns

Steve Austin

It was a good early August day, weather wise, with some free time to be had, so yes, I was off. Thinking of Painted Ladies I headed for Blackhall Rocks where they have been sighted in the past. I had not seen any this season and so was looking to increase my year's tally. Blackhall Rocks is always a good place to visit anyway, as if I needed another excuse. So after parking my car and walking a short distance along the cliff tops, with my little book and pen in the pocket, bins dangling from my neck and my camera ready I was all prepared.

The weather was still good and I had started to count the butterflies along the way when I noticed a disturbance on the path just in front of me. My first thoughts were mating Meadow Browns but on a closer inspection they were both males. One male was fluttering its wings furiously and clearly had the upper hand in what looked like a fight. The dominant male repeatedly attacked the other male on the ground; it retired close by only to repeat its attack. The losing male lost part of its wing and again the dominant male attacked with, I believe, every

intention of killing the other. The attacks were vicious on a, by now, helpless opponent. I kneeled close by to take a photo which caused the winning male to disappear and left me wondering if a fatal attack had been stopped.

I have only seen aerial attacks of butterflies before, these being fairly brief with a short skirmish usually over territory, the intruding butterfly making a quick exit and never lingering to extend the fight. Small Coppers and others, no doubt, are known to attack with vigour any passing insects and even birds that stray into their domain.

So whatever next – Meadow browns versus the Ringlets in a takeover battle with the males kissing the females and little caterpillar's goodbye as they fly off to battle?

Surely there is only one species on earth that is capable of such stupidity?

I would be interested in hearing of any similar encounters witnessed by other members. I am also left wondering how the fighting takes place and how one butterfly could lose part of its wing. There appear to be no sharp parts to a butterfly, any teeth or claws for instance, so surely the only contact would be of a bumping and fluttering nature.

I still wait to see Painted Ladies.



Photograph by J Beaven



About five years ago it lay neglected behind the bus depot and a burnt out hotel: twenty or so hectares of mixed woodland, scrub and bog crossed by muddy footpaths. So some locals sort of got together in a huddle and emerged as the Friends of Flass Vale, intent on cleaning it up.

Himalayan Balsam seized the opportunity and quickly overran everything. Eradicating it became a priority, but much was inaccessible in wet ground or fallen branches; so winters were spent making habitat piles of dead wood, digging out culverts, making up paths. The rest of the year we pulled, strimmed and slashed the now accessible Balsam. We are just about on top of it and the Vale is now available for wildlife. We have seen deer, foxes, bats plenty of birds, and up to now twelve species of butterfly – nothing spectacular as yet, just the usual culprits: Orange Tip, Large, Small and Green-veined White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Comma, Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Small Copper and Speckled Wood. Larvae of Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock have thrived. Only a matter of time, we hope, before Small Heath, the blues, the burnets and the skippers find us, and there is potential for Purple and White-letter Hairstreak.



Comma, Flass Vale, 5.8.2012



Small Copper, Flass Vale, 21.8.2012

We held moth evenings with Dave Wainwright this year and last, and the list this year despite awful weather included: Small fan-footed wave, Svenson's copper, Large yellow underwing, Lesser broad-bordered yellow underwing, Six-striped rustic, Square-spot rustic, Dun-bar, Double square spot, Brimstone, Mother of pearl, Common Lutestring and Willow beauty.

Crucial to the whole project have been the leadership of a qualified ecologist and the half dozen or so volunteers who turn out for a couple of hours three mornings a week. Among the latter are pensioners, working people with free days and young men, temporarily unemployed; all have benefitted from the experience and the physical work.

A significant part of the Vale is now a designated Local Nature Reserve. It is close to the centre of Durham behind the now thriving King's Lodge Hotel and criss-crossed by clean public footpaths including part of the old pilgrims' route to Beau Repair (Bear Park). As a public amenity it cannot be claimed for butterflies alone, but there is no doubt that the removal of Balsam and the increased variety of nectar and food plants are benefiting Lepidoptera. Which is not to say we couldn't do with specialist advice; there could still be room for a bit of habitat management in support of a target species. Any suggestions?

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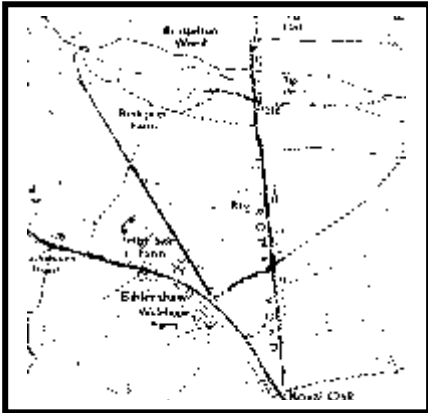


NZ2024 is a one kilometre square in County Durham a few miles south of Bishop Auckland. This area is mostly farmland, hedgerows and unimproved grassland. A possible claim to fame is that Dere Street, the Roman Road connecting York with the Firth of Forth runs through it. In 2009 the square was randomly selected for monitoring as part of the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) and as I live about half an hour's drive away I volunteered to survey it during July and August each year.

The ideal route for the WCBS comprises two parallel 1 Km long survey lines running N-S or E-W across the square subdivided into ten continuous 200m sections. The survey lines should be 500m apart and 250m in from the edge of the square. Following an initial visit to the area I contacted the national survey coordinator and we agreed that the survey should be along Dere Street as far as the corner close to Brussleton Wood and along the bridleway which borders the farm shown as High Side Farm which is now part of Kay's Hill Animal Sanctuary.

The survey has shown that the area is home to at least seventeen species of Butterflies and the table below shows the species of butterfly and numbers recorded from the required two visits in July and August for each of the last four years. The WCBS team have advised caution in interpreting the data from the survey as it reflects a combination of differences in abundance as well as differences in recording conditions and may not always reflect an underlying trend.

As the surveys are not necessarily carried out on the same day in July or August each year anomalies can appear. The apparent decline in Wall Brown was probably as a result of carrying out the August surveys



## **NZ2024**

## **Small Skipper a NZ2024 regular**

earlier in the month in 2011 and 2012 rather than supporting the national decline in the species. However, the data supports other evidence that 2011 and 2012 have been relatively poor years for common and widespread butterflies

Recently acquired funding for the project will allow WCBS staff to develop new analytical models which will take these factors into account and make the best use of the data collected to estimate reliable long term trends.

The survey has produced some unexpected results of a different kind and in 2011, I found my way along the public bridleway which borders the animal sanctuary blocked by a large, smelly but very friendly Billy Goat. During my July survey this year I shared the bridleway with a local rambling group whose members were very interested in what I was doing and shared my concerns about the lack of butterflies.

WCBS reports that the most butterflies counted over a two visit summer survey in 2011 was in Gloucestershire where 831 were seen and the most diverse was 24 species seen over three visits on a square in Sussex. It is unlikely that anything this dramatic will occur in County Durham but I look forward to seeing what will be flying in NZ2024 next year.

Species	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Jul	Aug	Jul	Aug	Jul	Aug	Jul	Aug
Small Skipper	18	5	4		9	1		8
Large Skipper	4						3	4
Large White	6	17	1	4	2	1		2
Small White			5		1	2		
Green-veined White	8	32	18	8	8	10		6
Small Copper						3		
Common Blue	1							1
Red Admiral	1			2		2	1	
Painted Lady		8						
Small Tortoiseshell		5	4	1	1	2		
Peacock	1	4		2	3	3		
Comma		1						
Speckled Wood				5		1	1	
Wall				12				
Meadow Brown	28	5	20		12	8		9
Small Heath				1				
Ringlet	20		14		3		5	3

**Table showing numbers of each species recorded in NZ2024 .**

Assisting with the WCBS takes no more than a few hours each year but as reported in April's newsletter the majority of the 1Km squares in the North East remain unrecorded. If you are interested in assisting with the survey please contact Brian Denham on 01325 263449 or [brian.denham@ntlworld.com](mailto:brian.denham@ntlworld.com) .



The task that the winter work party undertook has had some success, and has provided a few cleared areas where we might at least be able to introduce Birds-foot Trefoil. There may also be opportunities to introduce food-plants for moths. We want to know of these. The caterpillar of one scarce species, *Pyrausta aurata*, feeds on Marjoram, which is fortunately abundant on the Spetchells.

Unfortunately, the Ash stumps were not treated with herbicide, and are effectively 'coppiced', showing a luxuriant growth of new shoots.

In my experience, 'Roundup' treatment often falls off the list, as nobody is specifically earmarked to do it. In this case, the County Council team had made an informal offer.

I am considering planning another work party for this winter, and would welcome any offers of practical help. There might also be an opportunity for people to grow plants at home to be transplanted. If you think you can help, just get in touch with either myself or Dave Stebbings, and look out for more information on the website.

On 27 September I was contacted by the Sainsbury store at Throckley where staff had found what they believed was a Satin Stowaway Moth in a box of bananas that had been imported from Colombia. I went to collect the moth which did indeed appear to be the Satin Stowaway, *Antichloris viridis*, and I took it to the Northumberland County Moth Recorder, Tom Tams, for further investigation.

Male Satin Stowaways have a number of relatively clear features that permit the species to be distinguished quite easily from its close relative *Antichloris caca* ('the Docker') but our specimen was a female

and available information on the differences between the females was limited and frustratingly imprecise. However, it was concluded that it was indeed *A. viridis* and this conclusion was subsequently also confirmed by Martin Honey of the Natural History Museum in London. The Satin Stowaway is a member of the Ctenuchidae, a mainly tropical family of moths that is considered by some taxonomists to be a sub family of the Arctiidae, which in our country includes the familiar Tiger Moths and Ermines. Its natural range is around the Caribbean region and northern South America where it can be a significant pest in banana plantations. Very occasionally individuals are exported to Europe, presumably as pupae in most cases, emerging as adults on arrival at their destination. There are a small number of records for the UK and our moth represents only the second for Northumberland (the first record, oddly enough, also being in a box of Colombian bananas in a Sainsbury's store in Alnwick in January 2012). As a tropical species with banana as its larval food-plant there is virtually no chance of the Satin Stowaway ever becoming established in this country and the few individuals that arrive here are doomed to die without ever mating or passing on their genes. This is not the case for all the species that are from time to time imported accidentally with imported food or other goods such as timber or garden plants. Some such species can go on to establish themselves and can potentially become serious pests and for this reason many countries operate rigorous controls on the importation of commodities, aimed at preventing unwelcome 'hitch-hikers' arriving as part of the cargo. One final point of interest concerning the Satin Stowaway is that banana is its only known food-plant. The surprising aspect to this is that the moth is restricted to the New World whilst the banana is an Old World species that was only introduced into the Caribbean region by European settlers, in the sixteenth century or later (Field 1975). On the basis of a nineteenth century illustration of a different *Antichloris* species, Field suggests that *Canna* is one possible candidate for a

native food plant for various members of the genus including *A. viridis*.

Photographs of both of the Northumberland Satin Stowaways can be seen on the Northumberland Moths web-site at [www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk).

Reference:

Field, W.D. (1975) Ctenuchid Moths of *Ceramidia* Butler, *Ceramidiodes* Hampson, and the Caca Species Group of *Antichloris* Hübner. Smithsonian contributions to zoology, no. 198.



## A Review of the British Butterfly Families David Stebbings

This is the second of a series of articles 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. This time I am dealing with the Pieridae family which are the 'Whites' and 'Yellows'. Members of the Pieridae have mainly white or yellow wings. There are eight species found in Britain with only two not recorded in the North East. However, two species, Brimstone and Clouded Yellow are extremely rare in this region. Most members of the family roam

around the countryside looking for suitable plants on which to lay their eggs and are not confined to specific colonies. This means they are familiar to most people and can be seen almost anywhere, including urban gardens. The family also includes the only British butterflies which are a problem to gardeners and commercial growers, the so called 'Cabbage Whites' which in reality covers two species, the Large and Small White. These two have a liking for plants of the brassica family such as cabbages and can be devastating in vegetable gardens. The four common species found in our region all over-winter in the chrysalis stage of their life-cycle, and as a result are some of the earliest butterflies to emerge in spring.

The four common species found in the North East are:-

### **Large White.**



Caterpillars on Nasturtium

Photo by Dave Stebbings



Adult Large White

Photo by permission of Jim Asher

This is the largest of our common white species. Apart from its large size it can be distinguished from other whites by the bold black wing tips and large black spots on the forewings, although some spring males lack the wing spots. There are at least two generations each summer and sometimes three. It can be seen on the wing in warm days in April as overwintering pupae emerge as adults. They lay clusters of yellow eggs on plants of the brassica family. These develop to become the second generation flying from July to well into

September. Both the eggs and caterpillars are easy to find. The caterpillars are a particularly striking black and yellow, which advertises their poisonous nature to predators such as birds. They concentrate poisons from their food plant in their bodies as a very effective deterrent. The Large White will also use nasturtiums as a food plant. A few years ago I planted some nasturtiums in my garden specifically to attract them and had several batches of eggs and caterpillars on the plants.

### **Small White.**

This and the next species, the Green-veined White, are quite difficult to tell apart when flying. However a view of the under side of the hind wings when at rest readily distinguishes them. In the small white it is a uniform pale yellow. Whereas the Green-veined White, as its name suggests, has a pattern of greyish-green veins running over the pale yellow ground colour. The Small White is another common and familiar butterfly. Again there are two or three generations a year, with the spring emergence laying eggs which develop into the late summer generation. Brassicas growing in gardens are also used as a food plant by the butterfly. Interestingly, the Small White caterpillars do not seem to be toxic to predators in the way that Large White caterpillars are. They are a uniform leaf green colour relying on camouflage for protection. Many are eaten by birds and are a good source of food for nesting birds, particularly tits.

### **Green-veined White.**

To my mind the Green-veined White is a much-maligned species. It is often confused with the `cabbage whites` which is a pity because it is an interesting species in its own right and does not attack plants of the cabbage family at all. It is very common here in the North East, but is found in much damper places than the other whites preferring damp grasslands, meadows and woodland rides where its caterpillar food plants, garlic mustard, hedge mustard and cuckoo flower grow. As with other whites it is a common visitor to urban gardens as the adult butterflies wander around quite widely. As with the closely related



Small and Large Whites there are two generations a year, with a spring and late summer generation. The caterpillars from the second generation feed into the autumn when they pupate to pass the winter.



Green Veined White

Photos by Jaci Beaven



Male Orange Tip

### **Orange Tip.**

For me there is no more pleasing a sight than seeing the first Orange Tip of spring. The brilliant orange markings of the male are unmistakable. The Orange Tip can be found widely over our region in damp meadows, riverside woods and woodland rides. The adults emerge from hibernating chrysalises in April and are on the wing until early June, but unlike the other Whites there is only one generation a year. Although the males are so noticeable with their orange wing tips the females lack the orange flashes and are much more secretive and rarely seen. The males fly about quite widely investigating grassy banks and tussocks looking for females to mate with. The females on the other hand remain hidden in the undergrowth and only emerge after mating to go on egg laying flights. The females can easily be mistaken for Green-veined Whites, particularly as they are found in the same damp habitats. However, a view of the underside of the hind wing of the Orange Tip reveals a distinctive mottled green colour. The females lay eggs particularly on hedge and garlic mustard and on cuckooflower (Lady's Smock). It quite easy to find the yellow eggs by

examining the flower heads. The eggs are laid one per plant as the caterpillars are cannibalistic and if more than one female lays on the same plant only one caterpillar will survive.

Two other species are very rare in the North East:-

### **Brimstone.**

The distribution of the Brimstone butterfly in Britain closely matches the distribution of its caterpillar food plant, Buckthorn and Alder Buckthorn. Seeing that these plants are not found in the North East it is not surprising that the Brimstone is not found here either. See p. 27 However, it has been recorded occasionally here. The butterfly is a very mobile species with individuals known to travel great distances. So it could be that we are seeing some of these wanderers. The Brimstone has the distinction of being the longest-lived in the adult stage of any British butterfly. Adults that emerge in August can still be around in June the following year, having over-wintered as an adult and mated the following spring. It can be seen flying even on sunny days in winter, I have seen one flying in the Lake District in February. It is interesting to speculate on whether the Brimstone could become established here if Buckthorn were planted around the Region. It might even be worth members planting some in their gardens, particularly in the south of the region, to see what happens!

### **Clouded Yellow.**

A distinctive species having lemon yellow wings with black wing edges and a white spot on the underside of the hind wings. The Clouded Yellow is a migratory species that travels each year from Europe to Britain in relatively small numbers. Although more common in the south of England it can be seen in our region occasionally. The best year recently was 2006 when forty-eight sightings were reported around the region. However, in the three years 2008 to 2010 none was reported here.

Two members of the family not found here are:-

### **Pale Clouded Yellow/Berger's Clouded Yellow.**

These two species are also migrants but much rarer than the Clouded Yellow, turning up in southern England occasionally. Interestingly the two were only identified as separate species in 1945, and the only reliable way of distinguishing the two is by the extreme method of killing them and examining their reproductive organs. The two have paler yellow wings but otherwise are very similar to the Clouded Yellow.

### **Wood White.**

In Britain the Wood White is only found in a few woodlands of southern England and the Welsh Borders. It is a greyish or off-white colour with a dark grey blotch at the tip of the forewings. The Wood White has a curious recent history. In 1988 it was discovered, by genetic tests and examination of the reproductive organs, that there were two species of Wood White living side by side over much of Europe. The new species was named Real's Wood White. In 2001 it was realised that virtually all the Wood Whites found in Ireland were in fact Real's Wood White: only the ones found in the limestone country of the Burren on the west coast were the original Wood Whites. The English Wood Whites are not members of the new species and Real's Wood White has never been found in England or Wales. To complicate things even further, in 2011 it was discovered that the new species, Real's Wood White, was in fact not one species but two. The newly identified species is called Cryptic Wood White. Clearly the Wood White is a species which is much more complex than once thought and further research will no doubt throw up more surprises.

The Brimstone was reported in the Annual Report 2011 as breeding on Buckthorn at Newton Hall Junction in 2009.

Welcome to the following new members as notified to me as of the end of October. You are all most welcome and I hope you find interest in this latest edition of the newsletter.

Mr N P Adams	Whitley Bay
Mrs F H Armstrong	Choppington
Ms C Brock	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Mr D Charlton	Houghton-le-Spring
Dr E and Dr T Charman	Riding Mill
Mr N C and Mrs R Cheswick Gough	St. Albans
Mr J and Mrs L Fean	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Mr T D Goddard and Ms L Pratt	Durham
Mrs J Green	Durham
Mr S I Hardman	Durham
Mrs H Ledger	Wallsend
Mr P Lowdon	Whitley Bay
Mr D G Mitchell	Durham
Dr M G Partridge	Yarm
Dr S C Passey and Ms H Sanderson	Alnwick
Mr P Sheard	Wooler
Mr N and Mrs M Tuck	Whitley Bay
Ms C Whithers	Newcastle-upon-Tyne

As far as I am concerned this has been an awful year for butterflies in my garden – and possibly in the wider countryside. By now I would be transcribing ten A4 sheets of records for Roger Norman for the Annual Review – this year I have barely three sheets! The Alnwick Garden, where I volunteer as a gardener, has been little better. Even the usual suspects, the Vanessids, have only been seen in single figures. Perhaps next season will make up for it all.

**Do not forget to send your sightings to Roger and Steve**

## 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. Be aware of Ticks. Check the recommendations on the Butterfly Conservation Web Site.
8. Dogs are normally welcome on our walks, but must be kept under control.
9. 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.
10. 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>	The 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.

**Durham (Vice County 66)**

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 Spike, 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 2011 – 2012

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 2010 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:**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ274423	Palace Green, Durham City	22-Aug-2010	Large White	7	
2	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ196858	Morpeth (riverside)	24-Sep-2010	Peacock	2	Very worn
3	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ2514	Baydale Beck Darlington	1-Jul-2010	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)

## 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

Vacant,

### 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: [sklef@aol.com](mailto:sklef@aol.com)

### Transect & WCBS Co-ordinator

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

### Acting Chairman

Peter Webb, Tel: 01833 650772  
Email: [apwebb@uwclub.net](mailto:apwebb@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: 0191 285 9097  
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)

### Web Master

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

### Committee Members

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

### 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)  
Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP  
Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)