



North East England Branch



President Sir David Attenborough CH. FRS

DEDICATED TO SAVING WILD BUTTERFLIES AND THEIR HABITATS

Newsletter No. 21

April 2010



Butterfly Conservation

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Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)**

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:.....

1st March April Edition

1st 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

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.

Cover Photograph of Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnets from Tim Nelson: Winner of the Moth Category of the 2009 Photographic Competition

**Butterfly DVD – On sale to raise funds for the North East
England Branch of Butterfly Conservation**

Sandy Harman, who has been a member of Butterfly Conservation for twenty-five years has produced a new DVD entitled “The Best of Butterfly Days PLUS” It is compiled from some of best clips of the past five versions of “Butterfly Days” and much fresh material. The PLUS refers to a new section, showing some of the rarer butterflies that visit this country and/or were once resident here – a further eleven species.

This DVD can be likened to a field trip around Britain to see butterflies during the six months from April to September. Fifty-eight species (in addition to the eleven in the PLUS section) are identified by discreet captions, as are most of the other subjects. These include caterpillars, dragonflies, moths and wildflowers etc. There is no music, minimal voice-over, and only natural sounds of the countryside. Detailed close-ups abound.

This ninety minute DVD costs £8.00, including p&p, and of this, £6.00 goes to our Branch funds – more if you add something to cover the postage costs, as many members have.

To buy, just send a cheque, payable to ‘S Harman’ to
31, Upper Manor Road, Milford, Godalming, GU8 5JW.– and why not get one for a friend as well. You can enjoy beautiful views of our wonderful butterflies, enhance your identifying skills, and help support our Branch at the same time.



National BioBlitz

14+ Locations

24 Hours

1,000+ Volunteers

Millions of Species



DO YOU DARE to GET INVOLVED?!

The **National BioBlitz** is all about volunteers, scientists, naturalists, wildlife enthusiasts, school groups, students and members of the public working together to find as many different species as possible within the a natural area – all whilst racing against the clock!

With over **fourteen events** happening across the UK, can you help a BioBlitz near you by exploring for wildlife and sharing any knowledge you have about nature with the public? Volunteers will be needed for the following roles at each event: ***“Naturalists”*** will be crucial in helping us to find and identify species within the estate and to engage the public in wildlife identification and recording. ***“Guides”*** will share knowledge and interpret ID keys alongside members of the public and identify species to as best a level as possible. These can then be verified in further detail by someone with more expertise back at Base Camp so the pressure is off! ***“Stewards”*** will be the backbone of the event, engaging with schools, students, the public, and of course Bristol’s diverse natural spectrum. ***“Media Volunteers”*** will manage the technical side of the web link up on site and report online of any finds made. ***“Liaisons”*** will be essential in promoting the National BioBlitz Programme through University networks and will involve liaising with local BioBlitz organisers and helping to facilitate volunteering in your area.

What is a BioBlitz event?

A “BioBlitz” is a large–scale event that engages large numbers of people with biodiversity, inviting them to get directly involved in surveying and monitoring. The events have three main elements:

- Length – BioBlitz events are run over twenty–four hours in a single location
- People – BioBlitz events involve large numbers of scientists and members of the public

- Focus – BioBlitz events place equal emphasis on scientific recording and public engagement

What takes place?

During a BioBlitz event scientists and members of the public work together to survey a natural space; seeking, identifying and recording as many species as possible over twenty-four hours. The majority of events work directly with an environmental records centre or within certain parameters in order to ensure that the data collected will have maximum scientific impact. Previous events have located between three hundred and seven hundred unique species, depending on the site and number of people involved.

BioBlitz events in the UK – International Year of Biodiversity

BioBlitz events originated in the USA in the mid-90's. They have been run in the UK since 2006. In celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity there are currently fourteen events that will take place across the UK.

How will the BioBlitzes work together?

The current BioBlitz events have agreed to partner on following projects:

1. Experts / Naturalists

- Thanks to support from Natural Environment Research Council we'll be working together to help scientists, amateur naturalists and taxonomists access events across the UK

2. Volunteers

- Thanks to support from vInspired students, the student volunteering programme run by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, we'll be supporting volunteers across the UK to take part in Bioblitz.

3. Schools

- Thanks to support from Airbus and a partnership with STEMNET, we'll be helping schools across the UK access educational opportunities at BioBlitz events across the UK

4. Data and Research

- We'll be focusing on establishing strong scientific outcomes, and a national set of data in partnership with Defra, local record centres and scientists
- For more information please contact **Harriet Martin**, National BioBlitz Programme Manager, Bristol Natural History Consortium on 07917453795 or **Harriet@bnhc.org.uk**

Bristol Natural History Consortium, Third Floor, Bush House,
72 Prince Street, Bristol BS1 4QD. www.bnhc.org.uk

Bristol Natural History Consortium is a collaboration between Avon Wildlife Trust, BBC, Bristol City Council, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Environment Agency, Defra, Natural England, University of Bristol, The University of the West of England, Wildscreen, and Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

Registered Charity: 1123432

2010 Calendar (as of March 2010)

Event Location	Date	Event Location	Date
Bristol	May 21/22	Devon	June 11/12
Northumberland	May 21/22	LINCOLNSHIRE	July 9/10
New Forest National Park	May 21/22	Nottingham	July 18
Swansea	May 21/22	Lancashire	August 7/8
London	June 5	Cambridge	TBC
Derby	June 5/6	Flintshire	TBC
Brighton	June 5/6		

The Northumberland BioBlitz Event 2010

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity and as part of the events for the year Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership is holding a BioBlitz.

A BioBlitz is a race to record as many species of wildlife as possible, plants and animals, over a twenty-four hour period in a selected location.

Butterfly Conservation in the North East has been invited to take part in this year's event to help identify species of butterflies and moths on the site.

The site chosen for the BioBlitz is Ashington Community Woodland and the event will start at 13:00 on Friday 21 May and finish twenty-four hours later at 13:00 on Saturday 22 May. The site is a former colliery that was planted as woodland in the 1980's and is crossed by a network of paths and rides. It will be interesting to discover the variety of moths and butterflies that have moved into the area.

If anyone is interested in helping to search for and identify butterflies and moths on the site please get in touch with David Stebbings (phone number and email address on the back of the newsletter).

Obviously, you do not need to be involved for the whole twenty-four hours; just a couple of hours of your time over the day would be much appreciated. Otherwise please try to come along to the event for a visit anyway.

Ashington Community Woodland is located just to the north of the town of Ashington, off the A197, at grid reference NZ267887.



Habitat Creation Boosts Site's Potential for Scarce Butterflies; Robert Woods: INCA

Huntsman Pigments have a long-standing commitment in support of the wildlife that flourishes on Greenabella Marsh. This area is a mosaic of different habitats, which is immediately adjacent to their Greatham site at Hartlepool.

As part of Huntsman's commitment to Greenabella Marsh and working with the Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA) a Biodiversity Action Plan was developed which identifies species and habitats that are of conservation importance in parts of the site. This plan links in closely with the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan and it details appropriate management to maintain habitats in favourable conditions.

One aspect of the management relates to enhancement of grassland habitat for nationally scarce butterflies such as the Dingy Skipper and Grayling shown in the pictures below. Both are UK and local BAP priority species.



Grayling



Dingy Skipper

Habitat creation work took place in late December 2009. It was advised by INCA and Butterfly Conservation, planned for and managed by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and funded through the Impetus Environmental Trust. The objective of these habitat improvements was to create habitat with a range of slopes, aspects and vegetation cover. Two scrapes lined with weathered blast furnace steel slag, each with a mini-embankment that serves both as a sun-trap and shelter have now been created. Blast furnace slag might seem an unusual addition to a nature conservation project, but being a low nutrient alkaline substrate it encourages growth of Bird's-foot

Trefoil, the larval food plant of the Dingy Skipper butterfly, and Sheep's-fescue, the larval food plant of the Grayling butterfly.

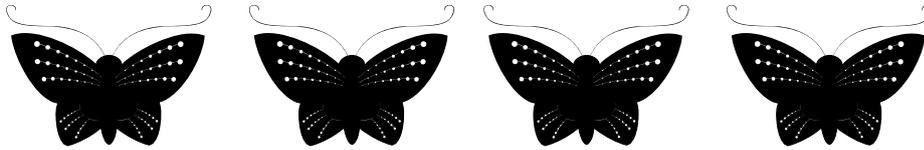
The pictures below show the work team from the Wildlife Trust creating the scrapes



Excavating the scrapes



Backfilling with blast furnace slag



On Butterfly Conservation's web site there is a map that indicates the number of transects in each country and individual counties. In England there are records for one thousand, two hundred and fifty two transects, Scotland one hundred and eighteen transects, Wales eighty-one transects and Ireland twelve transects. There are records that exist for all transects which have at some time been recorded but are not necessarily active now. In the North East, which includes Durham, Tyne & Wear and Northumberland there are records for forty-seven transects, of which there are thirty currently recorded transects.

2009 has been a relatively good year compared with recent years. It is the third best year since 2000 behind 2003 & 2006 with 2008 and 2007 being the poorest since 2000. The best year since 2000 was 2003.

There were a total of twenty-five thousand, four hundred and sixty-two butterflies recorded on North East transects in 2009. Meadow Brown and Ringlet were the most common with five thousand, five hundred and forty-four and three thousand, two hundred and ninety respectively. The lowest numbers were for Brimstone, one, Gatekeeper two, and Clouded Yellow two. There was a large influx of Painted Lady during 2009. At the RSPB reserve at Saltholme I counted in excess of one hundred over a 100m length of scrub and wildflowers. Speckled Wood continued to increase. In some areas it is becoming the most common butterfly and the one with the longest flight period.

As I wrote previously, thirty transects were recorded in 2009. We lost two transects and gained two new ones. Please continue to record your transect as we have one of the largest numbers of transects in the northern half of England and a continuation of records is essential. Recorders for new transects would be welcome.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will find an article on the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey. We desperately need some more recorders for this scheme. It is not difficult and only needs three to four visits over the summer.

The scheme only started in 2009 but has now got funding to continue through 2010 & 2011. Please read the report and consider helping with the survey

Transect Monitoring.	Brian Denham
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The requirements are relatively simple.

- A) A suitable transect site about 1 to 1.5 km long not too far from your home. Weather conditions can change significantly if you have to travel too far. A Transect site is basically a walk where you know you will normally find a variety of butterflies. The Transect is normally split up into a maximum of fourteen sections. You then record all butterflies that you see as you walk through each section.
- B) A commitment to record once week for twenty-six weeks between beginning of April and the end of September.
- C) Flexibility - Recording can only be done between 10.00am and 5.00pm when weather conditions are suitable. This means that you cannot say you will set aside a particular time each week but that you must be ready to go when the conditions are suitable.

I always feel that I am putting people off recording a Transect by specifying the above conditions. It is however better to know what you are letting yourself in for before you spend a lot of time setting up a Transect and then find that it is too much of a chore to complete.

Brian Denham

Transect Co-ordinator

01325 263449

Butterflies are widely accepted as invaluable ecological indicators of ecosystem health. Their high reproductive rates, short life cycles and often, specialised habitat requirements allow butterflies to respond rapidly to environmental change.

Being insects also adds to the value of butterflies as biodiversity indicators, as insects account for more than 50% of global biodiversity and majority of

animal species in the UK (twenty-four insect species, compared to around two hundred breeding birds for example).

Butterflies also have great popular appeal and are easy to observe and record.

These attributes have enabled a substantial body of transect data to be collected in the UK over the past three decades and these data have proved invaluable for a wide range of applications, including conservation management, population ecology and [climate change](#) research.

Welcome to the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS), a recently formed merger of the long-running Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) with Butterfly Conservation's co-ordination of 'independent' transects. The resulting UKBMS dataset is one of the most important resources for understanding changes in insect populations.

The scheme has monitored changes in the abundance of butterflies throughout the United Kingdom since 1976. Over the thirty-two years of the scheme, recorders have made over one hundred and seventy thousand weekly visits to fifteen hundred separate sites, walking over three hundred and seventy-five thousand kilometres and counting over twelve and a half million butterflies!

The UKBMS is based on a well-established and enjoyable [recording method](#) and has produced important insights into almost all [aspects of butterfly ecology](#).



Wide Countryside Butterfly Survey. 2010	Brian Denham
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In 2009 a number of people in the Northeast took part in the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey. This survey was very successful and Butterfly Conservation has received funding for a further two year. In 2009 seven hundred and sixty-three 1 km squares were recorded by over six hundred volunteers.

If you recorded an area last year, Butterfly Conservation would like you to record the same area again this year and next year. I shall be obliged if you will let me know as soon as possible if you can do this. I would also be obliged if you would let me know if you are not going to record this year. Even if your numbers recorded were very low, the result are equally important to the survey so please do not give up on your allocated square.

The basic survey procedure is as follows:-

The requirement is to make a minimum of two visits, July - August with optional visits from May until August. North East England Branch will probably be allocated twenty 1km. squares which will have been chosen randomly to gain a representative sample of the branch regions and their habitats.

The survey is **NOT** designed to replace transects, but to compliment them by collecting different data on common and widespread species that we suspect are fairing differently outside nature reserves and SSSI's, and therefore, the survey has to be random to get a representative picture of the countryside. The basic requirement for surveying a 1km square is to create two survey lines approx. 1 km long, 500m apart and approx. 250m in from the edge of the square. Pairs of survey lines are to run N-S or E-W.

It is appreciated that this is the ideal situation and most sets of survey lines will be an approximation of this requirement. The two survey lines are to be divided into five 200m. long sections and the butterflies identified with the 200m section in which they were seen.

It is important not to reject squares on the grounds that they appear uninteresting. Squares containing few species are just as valuable as squares with many species.

It is intended that the recorded data will be sent electronically to Butterfly Conservation via the website. However if you do not have access to a computer the data can be recorded on paper record sheets, which will be supplied. At the end of the recording period the completed paper record sheets are to be forwarded to Brian Denham (See below for address) who will enter the data.

The above is a very broad outline of the survey method. If you decide that you would like to help in this survey, please contact me and I will send you more details together with a list of available 1 km squares. Only when you have studied the detailed instructions and confirmed that you wish to carry on with the survey will we finally allocate the 1 km square you have selected

Brian Denham
Survey Champion North East England
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brian.denham@ntlworld.com
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079 694 595 97

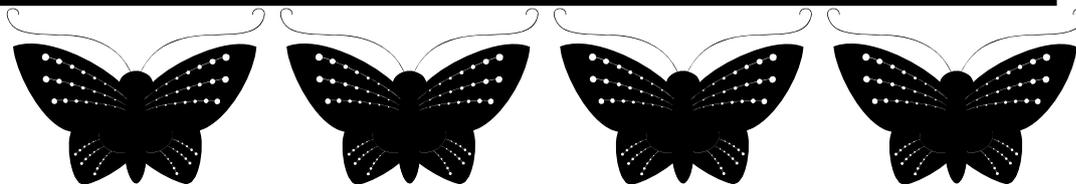


Wanted Urgently.....

Butterfly Recorder for North East England Branch

Conservation Officer for County Durham

**Please contact any Committee Member
It's not too onerous....Honestly!**



At the Annual General Meeting in February, Dave O'Brien, the Butterfly Recorder for our area, stepped down from the Committee, due to pressure of work, and his continued commitment to the Yorkshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation. The Committee would like to say a heartfelt "Thank You" to Dave for all his hard work for our Branch over the past five years.

His dedication and fine work producing the Annual Butterfly Report have been of great value to North East England Branch.

Winners of the 2009 Photographic Competition



Above: Large Skipper by Rob Mawson. Overall Winner, and Best Butterfly.

Right: Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet Moths by Tim Nelson. Best Moth.

Next Page: Speckled Wood Chrysalis by Rob Mawson. Best Immature Stage.





Congratulations to all concerned. The standard, once again, was very high. We will be running the competition again this season, so get your cameras ready!

Butterfly Atlas of the Scottish Borders: by Jon Mercer, Richard Buckland, Paul Kirkland & Jeff Waddell. Atropos Publishing. £15
Reviewed by Jonathan Wallace

When butterfly enthusiasts in North-east England – especially those from the southern parts of the region – turn their thoughts to seeking butterflies a little further afield, I suspect that it is our neighbours to the south and west that we think of most often, tempted by species such as Marsh Fritillary, and Duke of Burgundy that do not occur in our own patch. A newly published atlas of the butterflies of our northern neighbour, the Scottish Borders, may therefore be of interest in reminding us of what lies to our north! More importantly from a North-east English point of view, perhaps, is the opportunity it provides to compare the distribution and status of butterflies in the Borders with those in our own region.

So what does this comparison show? Well, the immediate impression is that butterflies are thinner on the ground in the Borders than they are here. Even species that are pretty much ubiquitous in Northumberland and Durham show plenty of gaps in the map of the Scottish Borders. This may be partly

explained by a lower intensity of recording. The Borders are much more thinly populated than our region and this inevitably is reflected in fewer active butterfly recorders with the result that the Borders Atlas is based on a total of fourteen thousand, six hundred records covering the whole history of butterfly recording in the region, compared to about one hundred and forty-seven thousand records held for NE England up to 2008 (Norman, 2009). However, in the period covered by the *Butterflies for the New Millennium* project 61% of the tetrads in the Borders region have been surveyed for butterflies and, at the 5 km square level, coverage is virtually complete so recording intensity is certainly only part of the story and ecological influences are also likely to lie behind the apparent thinner distribution.

This is borne out by the fact that a number of species that occur in our region are absent or virtually absent from the Borders region. Examples include Dingy Skipper (absent), Small Skipper (two colonies known, discovered in 2006), White-letter Hairstreak (absent), Holly Blue (recorded in Galashiels in 2006) and Speckled Wood (recently recorded at St Abbs and at Harestanes). Part of the reason is that the Borders are that little bit further north and fall just beyond the edge of the range for some species. This, of course, is a dynamic situation as illustrated by the recent history of Speckled Wood and Small Skipper in our own region where in the space of relatively few years they have gone from being absent to their current widespread status. If these trends continue northwards, the picture in the Borders may well look quite different in a few years time! In the case of the Dingy Skipper, its absence from the Borders is explained by a shortage of suitable habitat. Brownfield habitats, that are important for this species in Durham and Northumberland, are relatively scarce in the Borders whilst coastal sand dunes, used by Dingy Skipper elsewhere in Scotland, are also very limited in extent.

The Atlas, which is published by Atropos Publishing, is very attractively produced with clear printing on good quality paper and with copious illustrations. There are four introductory chapters which together provide an overview of the region, its geology, geomorphology, land use, climate and principal habitats as well as a history of butterfly recording in the region and an account of the methodology used to produce the Atlas.

These chapters are followed by the individual species accounts. Distribution is shown at the tetrad level and a colour coding system is used to distinguish between recent records (1995–2006), records from the period 1970–1994 and pre 1970 records. The maps are nice and clear and decently sized. Each species is given a two page spread and in addition to the map there is a phenogram showing the flight period of the adult as determined from the available records (and therefore not given for those species for which few records exist) and a text that gives a general outline of the species and its biology and a short review of the species' history and trends within the Borders. For no obvious reason some species are also accorded a description in the text whilst others are not. Each species is illustrated with a good quality photograph.

The Atlas is completed with chapters on 'trends and outlook', a gazetteer, Butterfly Conservation Scotland and several appendices. The gazetteer will be of interest to anyone planning excursions within the Borders region as it identifies some of the best sites and indicates the habitats and species that can be found at them.

I noticed some small errors or inconsistencies: the chapter on habitats mentions Avenel Hill and Gorge SSSI near Galashiels as an important site for Green Hairstreak (albeit noting the reduction in grazing at the site as a threat to the species' continued presence) whilst the species account states that Green Hairstreak has not been recorded there for the last two years and may have died out. Secondly, the section on Scotch Argus quotes research showing that it is responding to climate change by shifting its range northwards but then states that the average latitude of this butterfly in Scotland is *decreasing*. It is clear from the rest of the text that this should read *increasing*. Then, in the chapter on Trends and Outlook, when speculating on future colonists of the Borders region it is erroneously stated that Brown Argus *Aricia agestis* already has colonies firmly established in Northumberland. Since this is not the case it may be that this species will take a little longer before arriving in the Scottish Borders than the author envisaged!

These, however, are minor flaws in what overall is a fine Atlas and a credit to all those involved in its production, including the observers themselves. Hopefully it will stimulate further interest in the butterflies of the region both in terms of future monitoring and recording and in terms of protecting the habitats and sites on which the scarcer species depend. For those of us living in North East England it may very well persuade us to cast our attention northwards from time to time as it clearly shows that there is much of interest in the Borders, not the least of which is the presence of the very handsome Scotch Argus at several sites.

Reference

Norman, R (2009): Butterflies for the New Millennium – The end of Phase III. Butterfly Conservation, North East England Branch Newsletter No 20. pp 3 – 6.



Contributions wanted for the website

By the time this lands on members' doormats the new butterfly flight season shall be upon us and people will be venturing out to their favourite butterfly sites. With this in mind I would like to remind members that I am always keen to receive contributions to keep the web-site up to date.

As always any contributions to the website (www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk) are welcomed. In particular we would welcome the following:

- Details of sightings of butterflies (not necessarily rare ones and as soon as possible after you have seen the butterflies so that the 'Recent Sightings' page can give users an indication of what is currently on the wing and where as the season progresses).
- Photographs of butterflies and moths in all life stages (first and foremost from North East England although pictures taken outside the region of species that regularly occur here are also acceptable). If you have a digital camera you can simply send pictures to me by e-mail but if you use film you can send me prints and I will scan them so they can be uploaded. All photographs added onto the site are credited to the picture taker who, of course, retains copyright.
- Any news items likely to be of interest to BC members.

Other types of contribution are also welcome. We would also welcome any suggestions members may have about additions or improvements to the website. During the winter I have undertaken a small amount of general maintenance and tidying up of the site and have also introduced a new grid reference finder tool which hopefully will prove useful when you send in records of butterflies you have encountered.

Please send any contributions to Jonathan Wallace (contact details on back page).

Durham Wildlife Trust and Northumbrian Water have launched a new project to protect rare species in the face of climate change. Butterfly Conservation staff and branch committee members are assisting by providing advice and guidance.

At the heart of the new project, is the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Durham's rarest butterfly. The butterfly has declined by over 93% in recent times. Reasons for its decrease include:

- Habitat loss through agricultural intensification, afforestation and development.
- Declines in habitat quality through agricultural abandonment and changes in woodland management.
- Habitat fragmentation and isolation

The historic range of the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary in County Durham included the heaths and shallow valleys around the central belt of the County and the project area, over 29,000ha⁻¹, is concentrated around these areas.

With the help of local landowners and local communities, the five-year project aims to secure the remaining relic areas of heathland, mire, wet and unimproved grassland by ensuring that existing breeding areas are effectively managed. A further aim is to then expand these sites and identify others with the aim of linking all these areas together. Ultimately this will increase the amount of available habitat and allow the species to move through the landscape, not only to expand their range but also to enable movement in response to a changing climate.

These habitats are not only home to the small pearl bordered fritillary, but many other species of conservation concern, including the dark green fritillary, adder, grass snake, lapwing, curlew and many more.



The project funded by Northumbrian Water is part of a national network of projects run by the Wildlife Trusts (Living Landscapes) and Northumbrian Water (Branch Out), which eventually aim to provide a national network of high quality habitat that will allow wildlife to thrive and adapt in an uncertain future.

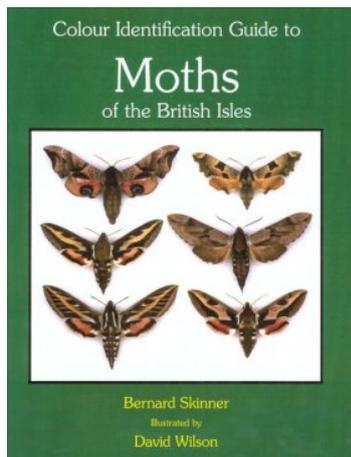
Photograph by kind permission of Jim Asher. Butterfly Conservation Trustee.

Moth Guides: Which One to Choose? Jonathan Wallace

Because moths are much more numerous than butterflies, are mainly nocturnal and not infrequently come in muted shades of brown and grey, the identification of species can sometimes be a challenge and so a good guide is essential to anyone wishing to get acquainted with this group. In the last Newsletter I gave an overview of some of the field guides that are currently on the market for butterflies and in this article now turn my attention to the moths. For moths there is a smaller choice of guides available, reflecting the relative popularity of these two groups of Lepidoptera, but fortunately there are some excellent choices amongst the small number on the market.

In contrast to the butterfly guides reviewed in the last newsletter the moth guides reviewed here are all restricted to the British Isles in their coverage. Since there are over two thousand species of moth on the British list that is probably quite enough for most of us to be going on with! Moths have traditionally been divided into the 'macros' i.e. the families of mainly larger species and 'micros' which, as the name suggests, include the families of mainly smaller species. Micros have tended to receive much less attention than macros (due to the fact that they are more difficult to identify rather than inherently less interesting or important!) and most guides do not cover them. This is therefore an important consideration if you wish to get to grips with micro moths.

Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles. Bernard Skinner & David Wilson. 3rd Edition. Apollo Books £59.99



First published in 1984 by Viking Books, “Skinner” has become established as a standard reference for moth identification in the British Isles. The latest edition was published in 2009 and updates the text to reflect changes in distribution and other new knowledge that has come to light since the previous edition. It also adds a couple of plates of new species and a group of plates comparing features of critical species.

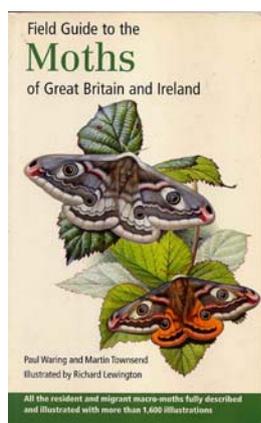
The guide covers the ‘macro’ moths only but gives excellent coverage of these. In particular, it gives very good coverage of the range of variation noted in some species, an important consideration given the degree to which some of the forms can differ – as between the melanic and normal forms of the Peppered Moth to take a particularly well known but far from unique example. The moths are illustrated by photographs of pinned specimens set out in rows as if in a museum display cabinet. This has the advantage that it permits the marking of the hind wings to be seen – a diagnostic feature for some species, but the disadvantage that living moths simply do not sit in this posture. For some users the mental repositioning of the wings of the specimen in front of them that is required to compare it with the illustration in the book is a significant problem. The plates are all grouped together at the end of the book which means that the user is obliged to do a good deal of flicking backwards and forwards through the book when consulting text and plates to secure an identification.

The text is very good and provides plenty of detail for each species including (where relevant) details of diagnostic features to separate similar species, description of variation occurring within the species, flight period, range, status and habitat, larval food plants, larval period and over-wintering stage (egg, larva, pupa). A small number of sketches are provided within the text to illustrate diagnostic features of similar species.

This guide is a large format hardback which is not likely to be a significant inconvenience when used at a light trapping event but may be a

consideration for those intending to take it on a hike. Overall this is an excellent book for the serious enthusiast but the high price and some of the less user-friendly aspects of the format and layout may deter those with a more casual interest in moths.

Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland. Paul Waring and Martin Townsend. Illustrated by Richard Lewington. British Wildlife Publishing. £29.95 (paperback)



Like the previous guide this book is restricted to the macro moths but reckons to cover all of the resident and regular migrant species occurring in the British Isles (over eight hundred and eighty species). The first edition (2003) was a significant innovation in that it was the first guide to illustrate moths in their natural resting postures and this certainly makes it easier to compare the plates with a live specimen. Where hind wing markings are important to identification these are also shown, however. The plates, painted by Richard Lewington, are of a very high standard.

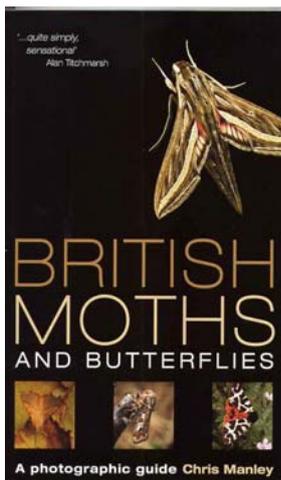
The text is clear and well written and provides a similar level of detail to Skinner's guide, covering broadly the same topics but with the addition of a written description of 'field characters' for each species. There is also a photograph of the caterpillar accompanying the text for some of the species. The first edition has a somewhat inconvenient layout with the plates grouped in several sections (each relating to a major group of moths) interspersed with pages of text. Furthermore, rather than referencing the exact page on which the accompany text for a given species is located, each plate refers to a range of up to seven pages for all of the species depicted on the plate. As a result, flipping between text and illustrations can be a bit frustrating. The second edition (of which I do not possess a copy) has addressed this to some extent by grouping all of the plates together but it should be said that 'best practice' in field guides nowadays is to place the plates and the associated text on facing pages opposite each other. Notwithstanding this minor criticism this is an excellent guide that can be strongly recommended and the paperback edition, whilst not exactly a giveaway, is affordable enough to be attractive to a wide audience.

Concise Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland. Martin Townsend & Paul Waring, illustrated by Richard Lewington. British Wildlife Publishing. £12.95

This guide is a trimmed down version of the previous one and has a number of features that make it a very practical guide for use in the field. The plates are the same as those in the larger guide but the text has been substantially reduced. The sacrifice of the extra information that this entails has enabled the book to be significantly reduced in size (one hundred and sixty pages compared to well over four hundred) and more importantly has facilitated the rearrangement of the text and plates so that each plate now faces the text for the species it depicts.

The book comes in a stout PVC wallet, providing great protection from the rigours of field use, and is wire bound. This last feature means that the book opens flat and stays open, thereby avoiding the frustrations of trying to hold the book open at the right page whilst one hand holds the moth you are examining and the other holds your torch!

This combination of features and the low price should make this an attractive option and worth considering even for those whose ambitions do not extend much beyond identifying the occasional moth that flies in through the bathroom window.



British Moths and Butterflies. A photographic guide. Chris Manley. A & C Black Publishers. £22.49

This is the most recently published of the guides discussed here, being first published in 2008. It diverges from the previously mentioned guides in having by far the most comprehensive coverage for it includes not only eight hundred and fifty macro moths but also some five hundred micros and seventy-four species of butterfly as well as illustrations of the immature stages (mostly caterpillars but a fair number of eggs and pupae as well) of a wide selection of these species.

As the title indicates, the book is illustrated with photographs and these are of a very high standard. A high proportion of them were taken by Manley

himself and the remainder contributed by around 60 different photographers. Although the blurb on the book jacket states the photographs are all of living specimens taken in natural conditions this is slightly misleading since many of the moths are photographed on substrates on which they would not normally settle and I suspect that they are specimens that have been caught in light traps and then transferred onto a leaf or tree trunk to provide a naturalistic background for the photo. This is a minor quibble however; they are certainly of live specimens and the pictures depict them as you might expect to see them on a moth trapping outing. Perhaps a more significant quibble is the fact that unlike the other books discussed here the insects are not depicted at life size or indeed all at the same scale. As a consequence, for example, the enormous Death's-head Hawk-moth with its 120mm wingspan appears opposite a similarly sized picture of the 30mm Grass Wave on the facing page. Although the text for each species does indicate the normal wingspan, this lack of scale in the plates could be a pitfall for the unwary and at least delay the process of finding the correct identity of the moth at hand.

The text is very succinct and in most cases is restricted to the wingspan, flight period, range and habitat and larval food plant with occasional comments on distinguishing features where confusion with other species is likely. In addition to the short species accounts a very useful inclusion in the text at the back of the book is an extensive list of food plants with the moth and butterfly species associated with them.

There is no doubt that this is a beautiful book and given the coverage and the price tag it is likely to be an attractive 'one stop shop' for many people. The coverage of the micro moths is very welcome although some caution is required as far as these are concerned since even with five hundred species illustrated that still leaves about two thirds of the British micro species excluded!

These four guides, then, are really the only options for anyone wishing to buy a decent general guide to British moths. There are a number of other books available covering butterflies and some moths and also general insect guides but the problem with most of these is that far too few moths are included for them to be of much use. Heading in the other direction, there

are specialist volumes treating restricted groups of moths but these are expensive and outside the scope of all but the most serious amateurs. It is also worth mentioning the web where there are a number of sites with good illustrations of moths, particularly Ian Kimber's UK Moths site (www.ukmoths.org.uk) which provides images of just under two thousand of the species on the British list.

Of the four traditional printed guides discussed here, my personal favourite is the Waring and Townsend guide (the full size version). However, the choice between them probably comes down largely to a matter of taste regarding type of illustrations, style of layout and so on and none of them should disappoint.



Membership Matters

Jaci Beaven

Welcome to the following new members of North East England Branch of Butterfly Conservation.

Mr A J Ballard	Ryton
Mrs S Bennington	Warkworth
Mr R G Goodings	Morpeth
Mrs H Holliday	Horsley, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Dr A R Hiley and Dr R Witcher	Lanchester Durham
Mr R Hines	Fatfield, Washington
Dr J B and Mrs C Lyall	Durham
Miss C Ormston	Heaton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Ms J Raby and Mr N O'Donnell	North Shields
Mr P Roxby	Coxhoe, Durham

Well! We've started! I've seen my first Peacock, in spite of the wet weather. I am hoping that this season will be as interesting as the last, but I doubt that we will see the Painted Ladies in such numbers for a while. Good hunting, and don't forget to fill in your records for Roger, and let Jonathan know about unusual bits and pieces, as well as your recent sightings. I forgot to tell him about my Peacock Oh! and take your camera with you!

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.

Submitting Butterfly Records 2010

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.

As for 2009 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 or Lotus 123. 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-2004	Large White	7	
2	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ196858	Morpeth (riverside)	24-Sep-2004	Peacock	2	Very worn
3	Name/s of recorder/s	NZ2514	Baydale Beck Darlington	1-Jul-2004	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 floppy disc or on CD. The deadline for records to be included, and credited, in the 2005 Annual Report is 30 November 2005. Depending on where you live, please send records to:

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 7 Albert Street
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 H1 4RL
 0191 386 7309
 lsklef@aol.com

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Vacant

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