

NORTH EAST ENGLAND BRANCH

# Newsletter

Issue 46: AUTUMN 2022



Butterfly  
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



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Front cover picture: Male Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*. Graham Beckwith

## Spring 2023 Newsletter

Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances, it was not possible to produce the newsletter that would normally have come out in Autumn of 2022 and we apologise for that omission. We hope that members will enjoy reading this edition.

At the time of writing, Butterfly Conservation has just released its 'State of the UK's Butterflies 2022' report (<https://tinyurl.com/2vt6p36z>) which updates a similar report from 2015. The headline conclusions of the report are very worrying with 80% of the nation's butterfly species having been shown to have declined in either abundance or distribution (or both) since the 1970s when proper monitoring began. This is all the more worrying when one considers that the butterflies are acting as 'indicator species' and their decline will have been mirrored by many other species whose populations are not actually directly monitored. We are witnessing a serious decline in biodiversity throughout the countryside. The good news is that Butterfly Conservation has demonstrated that effectively targeted, long-term conservation initiatives can be successful in reversing the fortunes of some of our rarest butterfly species. Through your membership you are helping to ensure that BC can continue to fight to protect our beautiful but threatened butterflies and moths and the habitats they depend on.

The analyses presented in the State of the UK's Butterflies report are based on data collected to a large extent by volunteers. This includes transect walkers and participants in the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (see page 19) but also everyone who submits 'casual' butterfly records which are used to track distribution changes. We encourage everyone to submit records of the butterflies they see - they really do have great value in helping biologists keep track of what is happening to our insect fauna. We have recently introduced a new on-line reporting tool for records which makes it easier than ever to submit your records and Steve Kirtley gives the details on page 17.

As usual, I am grateful to all of the contributors who have provided the articles and pictures in this edition which I hope you will find interesting and enjoyable. Once again, I would like to stress that all contributions are welcome and I encourage all readers to make submissions (text or pictures). Please see page 21 for further comments on this.

Please note that submission deadlines for the newsletter are:

Spring issue: 1st February Autumn issue: 1st September

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

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BCNorthEastEngland/](https://www.facebook.com/BCNorthEastEngland/)**

## New Committee Members

We are delighted to welcome Lea McConnell onto the committee and are pleased to note a further two members have expressed an interest in joining the committee. The committee runs the branch and its members are all volunteers and so we are always very keen to welcome new members to help with this. You do not necessarily have to be an expert Lepidopterist – just someone with an interest in and concern for the future of our butterflies and moths. We currently need a chair-person and a membership secretary but would also welcome members interested in taking on other roles so any skills you think might be helpful to our branch would be welcome.

If you are interested in joining the committee in a particular role or as an ordinary member or if you would like to know more, please contact any of the current members of the committee. The current committee membership is listed on the back page.

## AGM and Members Day

Due to unavoidable circumstances, the Members' day that was planned for October 2022 had to be postponed but we are pleased to announce that it has now been rescheduled and will be held on Saturday April 22 at Durham Wildlife Trust's Rainton Meadows Visitor Centre from 1.00pm to approximately 4 pm. In addition to the AGM there will be talks by Stephen Kirtley (NE England Butterfly Recorder) and Paul Millard (North-West Yorkshire butterfly recorder) who will talk on butterfly recording in the NE and "The Fascinating Life of the Tissue Moth" respectively. As space is limited, please can you advise David Stebbings (tel 0191 285 9097; see back page for e-mail details) by 15 April if you are hoping to attend, in order to reserve a seat. Tea and coffee will be available on arrival. There is also a coffee shop at the visitor centre serving a variety of drinks and food.

## Other Events

Dave Wainwright intends to run further training event(s) on moth pheromone trapping to survey clearwing moth species in the region. Dates are not yet finalised but will be announced in due course on the branch web-site and facebook pages.



**Red-tipped Clearwing Moth, *Synanthedon formicaeformis*. A target for pheromone trapping surveys in wet willow-carr. Photo: Dave Wainwright**

## The varying fortunes of the Holly Blue in North East England. David Stebbings

2022 was a very good year for Holly Blue in our region. I have seen more this year than I have ever seen before. Unlike most blue species it does not live in colonies but wanders the countryside and urban areas looking for nectar sources and egg laying sites. This makes it more obvious when it has a good year. It can turn up almost anywhere, but prefers flowery places near bushes, hedges or woodland edges. There are two generations of Holly Blue a year. A spring generation, which emerges in April from the over wintering pupae, these mate and lay eggs on holly to produce a second generation which emerges from late July. The second generation uses ivy as a caterpillar food plant, the caterpillars eat the flower buds. It then pupates to over winter until emerging as an adult the following spring. The Holly Blue is unique among British butterflies in using different caterpillar food plants for the two generations.

It has always been known that numbers of this attractive little butterfly can fluctuate wildly from year to year. For example, from figures taken from the North East Branch's annual reports, there were 284 Holly Blues recorded in the year 2007, dropping dramatically to only 7 seen in 2009. More recently 24 were reported in 2017 rising to a record 728 in 2019. The reasons for these fluctuations were thought to be due to attacks by a parasitic wasp. Holly Blue caterpillars are attacked by a parasitic wasp, *Listrodomus nycthemerus*. It injects an egg into the caterpillar and this develops inside the caterpillar, later emerging as a wasp and killing the caterpillar in the process.

Richard Revels<sup>1</sup> investigated the link between Holly Blue and *Listrodomus nycthemerus* in the early 2000s. This parasitic wasp has only one host, the Holly Blue. He discovered Holly Blue numbers undergo dramatic cycles every 4-6 years that match the cycles of the parasite. When Holly Blue numbers are high nearly every caterpillar can be parasitised leading to numbers crashing the following year. This also affects the wasp, which with no other host to use, its numbers crash as well. Numbers of Holly Blue start to recover over the next few years but the parasitic wasp lags a year or two behind. This allows the Holly Blue to become more common again before the cycle repeats itself.

Here in the north east we are currently at the northern limit of the Holly Blue's range, although there is an anomaly with an isolated cluster of records around Edinburgh<sup>2</sup>. It is more common in county Durham and south Northumberland with only scattered records north of the River Coquet<sup>3</sup>. Climate change is likely to be a factor in it becoming more common in recent years. It will be interesting to see if the number of sightings reported this year beats the record of 728 of 2019.

1) Richard Revels - British Wildlife, August 2006

2) Butterfly Conservation web site

3) Norman, R et al, Butterflies of North East England. Northumbrian Naturalist Volume 77 2014.

## Dingy Skippers at a Metro Depot. Roger Norman



**Dingy Skipper is a species listed as being of 'principal importance' in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Roger Norman describes the discovery of a potentially important new site for the species at a Metro railway depot on North Tyneside. Photo: J Wallace**

This is a short note describing a visit made this summer to the recently established Howdon satellite depot for the Tyne and Wear Metro. There was a short film piece on the local evening TV news in summer 2021, reporting on the presence of Dingy Skippers on land at the depot. This was after the flight season had ended so any visit had to be planned for 2022. I contacted Jamie Robson, the Nexus Stakeholder Relations Officer for the Metro and he kindly agreed to a visit during the flight season. The plan was to visit on 16th May with a fall-back date of 18th if weather was inappropriate. As it happened rain on the 16th led to the visit taking place on 18th, which was fortunately a dry and sunny day.

The depot is situated on the eastern side of the A19 dual carriageway as the road approaches the tunnel from the north. It consists of several sidings and associated train sheds on the south side of the Metro main line west of Percy Main station.

The depot will be used for the de-commissioning of the current train fleet which is now some 40 years old and due to be replaced with new stock. There are two parts to the site, totaling around some 4 ha, (10 acres). The eastern half is behind security fencing but the western part, although fenced off, is accessible to the public and used by dog-walkers.

My visit to the 'public' area accompanied by Jamie Robson and Carrie Hall, Project Officer, turned up six Dingy Skipper. Tyne and Wear Metro has commenced managing this western part. They have built a long earth bank about 1-2 metres high, running east-west along most of the area. The south facing side of this will heat up in sunshine, and hopefully create good invertebrate basking areas. A number of stone/ballast areas have also been installed and Bird's-foot Trefoil plants planted which are starting to establish themselves. The general vegetation at the moment is rather lush, however, and continued management will be necessary to reduce its vigour.

I did not survey the roadside banks within the security fencing but the roadsides there looked to have low fertility soil and to be suitable for the butterfly. A university student carrying out a study for a Master's Degree reported 14 Dingy Skipper in this area by the time I left.

This is a potentially important site for this nationally important species. Whilst there are currently nearby known colonies, they are in general on brownfield, or post-industrial land and do not have long-term security. It seems inevitable that redevelopment of them will take place sooner or later. Perhaps the only safe site is the reserve at Northumbrian Water some 1.25 km distant. There are also sparse records to the north along the old Blyth and Tyne railway line.

With continued sympathetic management we can look forward to a flourishing colony within the heavily industrialized area of North Tyneside.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank Jamie Robson and Carrie Hall of Nexus for their help in arranging the visit and assisting me on the day.



**Searching for butterflies on the Howdon depot site.  
Photo: Roger Norman**

## Looking for Essex Skipper in Darlington

### David Phillips

Let us rewind to mid-July 2021. My friend was testing his new micro camera lens. He was taking photos of Small Skipper on a bright sunny afternoon in meadows at Hurworth, a small village on the SE outskirts of Darlington. The site is about 160 acres with public access restricted to a footpath across two meadows, skirting a small wood and then returning along the banks of the river Tees. The site holds a variety of butterflies with good numbers in most years and is just over seven miles from where I live.

Some two weeks later whilst editing and reviewing his photos he noticed three butterflies that all looked different. Could they be Essex Skipper? By his own admission he is not familiar with Essex Skipper, so he sent me the pictures to review. I was convinced he had at least two Essex Skipper. A third showed a faint pale tinge to the club end, but this could have been wear and tear or even a trick of the light. I forwarded the photos to the County Recorder and shortly afterwards he confirmed three Essex Skipper sightings for Darlington. This was a new site and evidence that they were spreading west from their stronghold on Teesside.

I was recovering from covid at the time, so I was confined to barracks for another 4 days. With my self-isolation period duly completed I visited the meadows more in forlorn hope as I did not expect them still to be present as more than three weeks had elapsed since the initial sighting. My visit revealed Small Skipper but alas no Essex Skipper. Still there was always next year for me to find Essex Skipper on my local patch.

Fast forward to early June 2022 and the rough grassland meadows at Hurworth looked promising with an abundance of weeds including emerging thistles. I would need to check other sites, but Hurworth Meadows looked ideal and would be the focal point for my local Essex Skipper search. Besides, the site had a proven record. Further, given the ever-increasing cost of petrol and to help off-set my carbon footprint from my visit to Northern Ireland (subject of another article) I decided it would be both prudent and very enjoyable to stay local again.

My first Skipper in Darlington was expectedly a Large Skipper observed at Red Hall Nature Reserve on the first day of June. Five days later I saw my first Large Skipper in the meadows at Hurworth with a peak of nine here on 21 June.

My wife and I were away for a few days at the end of June celebrating our wedding anniversary in North Wales with Silver-studded Blue for me and some retail therapy for my wife. Whilst I had seen Small Skipper elsewhere, I had to wait until July 9th to see my first Small Skipper in Hurworth Meadows. An astonishing count of thirty-one were observed as I walked across the two meadows. I accept a few records may be duplicated but equally I would have missed some. This was my highest count ever for this site and I suspected this would be my peak count for the year and so it proved. The prolonged dry weather had begun to take its toll on the meadows. That said, the next day I counted nineteen Small Skipper and a five days later seventeen with ten noted on 19th July. Other visits to the meadows revealed only single figure counts. Five other sites around the town occasionally revealed between 0 and 2 Small Skippers.

In summary in June and July I had made ten visits to Hurworth Meadows and nine to four other sites across the town. Even with the assistance of friends no Essex Skippers were recorded in the Darlington Borough area. Fortunately, I had observed them further afield on the Tees Marshes in the middle of July where they outnumbered their relative the Small Skipper. However, I still wanted to see them locally, although hopes were fading as we entered August.

The first day of August gave me a welcome encounter with a worn Purple Hairstreak as it descended onto brambles at Hurworth Meadows. This chance meeting changed my plans for the rest of the day and indeed my Skipper fortunes. I decided to visit Coatham Wood near Longnewton just east of Darlington to look for more late Purple Hairstreaks and emerging Brown Argus.

I did not expect to find either target species, yet it provided me with my first visit to this site for the year and a change of scenery. A visit to a few oaks met without any hairstreak success, so I decided to try a small clearing in the wood with rough grass and thistles for any lingering Skippers and newly emerged Brown Argus.

My initial search was interrupted by a lost family who needed me to guide them towards the car park. My return to the woodland ride revealed several worn Small Skippers present on the thistles before another Skipper suddenly appeared deep in the long grass just to my left. It was much too close for me to clearly focus my camera or my binoculars, so I slowly stepped away. The long grass and the breeze made securing a clear view extremely difficult, yet it looked like an Essex Skipper! I managed one picture before I moved slowly round for a head-on picture. I managed another photo as it took off after being flushed by a Small Skipper and a bumblebee. I was certain that it was Essex Skipper, but I needed photographic evidence to be sure as all my attempts to relocate the butterfly failed. It was late afternoon and cloud was building so I decided to head for home and review my photos. As I was leaving the wood a Silver-washed Fritillary flew over the trees.

After reviewing my photos my suspicions were confirmed. My worst ever pictures of a worn male Essex Skipper. The short straight male sex brand and the black underparts to the clubs provided the necessary confirmation. After weeks of searching, I had finally found a local Essex Skipper, plus Purple Hairstreak and a Silver-washed Fritillary and all on the same day! I returned the next day to Coatham Woods where I found Small Skippers and Brown Argus.

Technically Coatham Wood falls with the Stockton local authority area but it is just over six miles (10k) from where I live in Darlington and less as the butterfly flies. I am therefore claiming it for Darlington. Besides Teesside has plenty of Essex Skipper so they can at least give one to Darlington.

I did have a possible sighting of a male Essex Skipper at Hurworth Meadows on 3rd August, but it did not linger, being chased off by a Small Skipper; and it could not be relocated. At the time of writing my last Skipper sighting for Darlington came from these meadows with three Small Skippers spiralling upwards in the sunshine on 6 August.

Other local highlights included large numbers of Holly Blue, a few Brown Argus, Small Copper, White-letter and Purple Hairstreaks. Avian highlights included breeding Spotted Flycatcher (first for over 20 years) breeding Tawny Owl and Yellow Wagtail.

I do not net butterflies which probably makes finding Essex Skipper more difficult. Instead, I rely on field observations and my camera to capture them. Even though my local Essex Skipper was worn, my sighting was very brief and my photos poor, I am incredibly pleased to have found an Essex Skipper on the fringes of Darlington. You just need to get out there and keep looking or, as in my case..... just let Essex Skipper find you.



**Two images of the Essex Skipper showing key identification marks. Top: - the fine, short sex-brand of the male that is parallel to the leading edge of the wing (in the Small Skipper males have a more strongly marked, longer, curving sex-brand that is at an angle to the edge of the wing). Bottom: the 'dipped in black ink' tips of the antennae (in contrast to the orangey brown tips to the Small Skipper's antennae). This feature is best viewed from below. Photos: D Phillips.**

## **Finding Purple Hairstreaks    Val Standen**

I saw my first Purple Hairstreaks this year. I now know they are not rare, but I had always thought of them as being butterflies seen only in the south. They are not often recorded on the standard Pollard walks (butterfly transects) because they are active in early evening. Butterfly Conservation HQ have recently designed a new protocol to monitor numbers. Prompted by this I went to look for them at 6pm in a nearby woodland. Immediately I saw fast flying silvery/grey specks in the tops of the trees and then one landed and I got a good view of it with binoculars, sunning itself with wings out-stretched - brown with a marked purple sheen. The trees are the ones I see from my house where I have lived for 55 years – so if you haven't seen Purple Hairstreaks near you – it's well worth going to look for them! The flight period is throughout the months of July and August, normally peaking in early August.



**Purple Hairstreak. Photo: Jim Asher, Butterfly Conservation**

## **Butterflies in Churchyards    Val Standen**

Volunteers from five Durham churches invited their congregations to take part in a Butterfly Count this summer. Lured by tea, scones and strawberries I attended four of the events and was heartened to see how many people are sympathetic to the idea of managing part of their churchyards for butterflies and other insects. The new booklets were very well received by the children who took part. We meet again in autumn to compare notes and decide if this might become a regular event and how to involve other churches in 2023. If you know of a church group near you who might be sympathetic to the idea of managing part of their churchyard for wildlife in general and butterflies in particular, please ask them to contact me (see back page for contact details).

## **Marsh Fritillary Survey 2022**

### **Walia Kani**

Marsh Fritillary was re-introduced to the shores of Ennerdale Water in 2007 by a partnership of National Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Natural England, local farmers and volunteers. Ennerdale Water is the most westerly lake of the Lake District, west of Buttermere, and north of Wast Water.

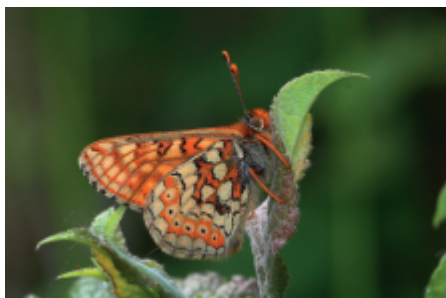
In late August Dave Wainwright organised a two-day survey of the Marsh Fritillary at its larval stage. Val Standen and I drove across the Pennines to join the local National Trust volunteers wading through long grasses, thistles, brambles and nettles searching for Devil's Bit Scabious plants, which are the nesting plants of the marsh fritillary caterpillar.

The nests are dense, dark coloured webs, created low down the plant stem, attached to the broad leaves. Each nest contains large numbers of small brown caterpillars.

We strode across the meadows in rows, like policemen at a crime scene, planting a stick at each located nest. Unlike me, most people were sensibly clad in waterproof trousers and boots.

The meadows used to be appropriately grazed to support the devil's bit scabious, but a discovery of freshwater mussels in the River Ehen, which flows from Ennerdale Water, resulted in new restrictions on grazing being imposed by the water authority, United Utilities, to prevent contamination of the river. A conflict of interest between two rare species...

I am looking forward to a return visit next May to see the beautiful butterfly.



**The beautiful Marsh Fritillary. Larval web (left image) and adult (right image). Photos by Graham Beckwith.**

## In Memoriam: Dave Liddle

It is with great sadness that we report that Dave Liddle passed away on 22 June 2022. Dave was a countryman with a deep knowledge and love of the wildlife of his 'patch' in County Durham. He worked for the Durham County Council Ranger Service where he was for many years a tireless champion for butterflies in general and the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary in particular.

Conservation is a team activity and - whether it was persuading farmers and land owners to apply the right management measures, organising and leading volunteer work parties or coordinating butterfly surveys, with his natural charm, Dave was very effective at persuading others to pull together on behalf of the butterflies!

On his retirement, Dave joined the branch committee and continued to play an active role in the conservation of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary until ill health forced him to stop. Dave will be widely missed but the continuing health of 'Small Pearl' colonies in County Durham represents a fine legacy.



**Dave Liddle - a great champion for butterflies.**

**Photo: J Wallace**



**Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Dave was a key player in the efforts to secure the survival of this species in County Durham.**

**Photo: Jonathan Wallace**

# Looking for Cryptic Wood White in Northern Ireland

## David Phillips



**Cryptic Wood White at Craigavon Lakes,  
County Armagh, Northern Ireland.  
Photo: David Phillips**

Of the fifty-nine UK butterfly species only two remained on my list to see pre-pandemic. I had planned to see Cryptic Wood White\* in Northern Ireland and Glanville Fritillary on the Isle of Wight in May and June 2020 respectively but for obvious reasons both trips had to be cancelled.

I dusted off my plans at the start of 2021 but abandoned them in April for personal health reasons and furthermore Irish travel restrictions remained in situ. As it happened, I needed a hospital operation in mid-May, so it was fortunate that I had not arranged to travel for either butterfly.

The beginning of 2022 saw my plans dusted off yet again. By early Spring I had decided to concentrate on Cryptic Wood White. This would give me additional time (in the event of any poor Irish weather) to see this butterfly and to explore Northern Ireland with my wife, Sharon. Glanville Fritillary could wait until our 40th wedding anniversary celebrations next year. I must go on record here to say that my wife has endorsed this plan... honestly!

I perused the weather charts and we decided to go to Ireland in mid-May, making use of a potential short but good weather window. I contacted Ian Rippey, the Butterfly Recorder for Northern Ireland for any updates since we first corresponded in 2020. Craigavon Lakes (J048569) remained the best site for Cryptic Wood White with Irish Damselfly possible at Montiaghs Moss, (J091654).

\* So called because it is a species that was effectively hiding in plain sight. Superficially more or less indistinguishable from the Wood White (*Leptidea sinapis*) it was only recognised as being a different species in 2001. Initially it was thought to be Real's Wood White (*L. reali*) but in 2011 genetic analysis showed that it was a third species, the Cryptic Wood White (*L. juvernica*). In the British Isles the ranges of Cryptic Wood White and Wood White do not overlap with the former found in Ireland and the latter in southern England (and a small population on the Burren in the west of Ireland).

Two days preceding our departure Northern Ireland had experienced extremely heavy rain and flooding. Very few Cryptic Wood White and only one possible Irish Damselfly had been reported prior to our departure. Maybe we were going too early. Undeterred Sharon and I took off from Newcastle into a clear blue sky on 18 May and more importantly landed in sunny but breezy conditions at Belfast International Airport. At Newcastle we had met Dr. Martin Partridge, Chair of the Yorkshire Butterfly Conservation Branch making use of the same good weather window on a day trip with the same objective to see Cryptic Wood White.

Sharon and I picked up the hire car from the airport and we drove a short distance (just over twenty-six miles) to Craigavon Lakes which we reached in about forty minutes. We approached Craigavon Lakes from the western side (J042584) and walked under the main Belfast to Dublin railway. After turning right, we saw our first butterfly, a Holly Blue! Just like Darlington! We then walked along a footpath between the railway line and the northern shore of the southern lake. We found Cryptic Wood White here in good numbers with a total of thirty-four at two separate locations. Orange-tip and Green-veined White were also present on site. Whilst here we met Ian Rippey and Dr. Martin Partridge who advised us that the footpath, we were planning to take to return to the car park was extremely wet, so we retraced our steps.

Craigavon Lakes holds a wide range of birds a diversity of plants and butterflies and you can even see trains. I was in my perfect element. That said, please be aware of hidden pools anywhere on site amongst the rough meadow and expect to get very soggy feet. Wellingtons are highly recommended; but you will pay a fortune in airline baggage fees!

In the early afternoon we found our bed and breakfast and explored the local area and even managed to locate Montiaghs Moss, a lowland raised bog and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Whilst it is only about 15 minutes from the motorway it is in the middle of nowhere. There are several pools but most of it is on private land. The site is not signposted although this should improve as RSPB Northern Ireland have recently purchased a small part of this site. I was fortunate to meet Cathryn Cochrane, RSPB Warden for Lough Neagh - Montiaghs & Lough Beg who was busy undertaking a wildlife survey. She kindly explained the exciting plans the RSPB have for this site and to encourage visitors to see the special odonata and plants when the necessary infrastructure is in place.

That evening I dried out my shoes and reviewed my plans for the next day as the weather forecast looked even better.

We returned to Craigavon Lakes and walked the same route as yesterday before returning along the footpath north of the railway line (J056581). This traversed the southern shore of the northern lake. Despite two days of sunny and breezy weather this route remained extremely wet. We did see a total of twenty-one Cryptic Wood White, Speckled Wood, Painted Lady, Orange-tip, Green-veined White, and nearby Large and Small White which are uncommon in this area.

Having exhausted Craigavon Lakes, we went to Tannaghmore Gardens and Lough Neagh before arriving at Montiaghs Moss. The breeze had dropped, and we were afforded good views of several Irish, Azure and Variable Damselflies plus Four-spotted Chasers, a Hairy Dragonfly and Cryptic Wood White in the warm sunshine. Round-leaved sundew, Erect Cinquefoil and Water Horsetail provided a botanical interest.

When on site, Ian Rippey contacted me to ask if there were any Irish Damselflies on the wing. Shortly afterwards he came across the moss with a small group of visitors. As he walked across the site male Emperor Moths started dashing around, attracted by the lure he had forgotten was in his pocket. Montiaghs Moss was a bit too wet for Sharon, so she returned to the car to read her book. I just had time for Ian to take me to see the first of the emerging Marsh Fritillaries before the points on my good behaviour pass ran out. I would not have found their location without his assistance. Well satisfied we paid a brief visit to Portmore Lough RSPB Reserve to see Glossy Ibis before returning to the B&B.

We spent the next two days doing the tourist things. We visited Giant's Causeway, spending a few hours wandering around this amazing geological site. We set off in lovely sunshine but on the return journey we could see an Atlantic storm approaching fast. We just arrived back at the visitor centre when it poured down. An hour later we were walking around Ballymena in lovely sunshine. This was the only rain we had on the whole trip. Next day saw us visit Belfast and the fascinating Titanic Museum. Belfast also provided Sharon with some very much needed and deserved retail therapy. Three Black Guillemots on the River Lagan near the harbour entrance provided an avian interest.

Twelve Cryptic Wood White butterflies gave themselves up in the early evening sunshine on a brief visit to Craigavon Lakes on our return journey to our accommodation.



**Cryptic Wood White at Craigavon Lakes.  
Photo David Phillips**

Face to face communication is the norm in Northern Ireland. Eye contact is always maintained. I found the Irish people warm and very friendly. When looking for butterflies around Craigavon Lakes everyone said 'hello' as you went past and several asked if we were looking for the butterflies and wanted to know what we had seen; something I rarely experience in England. We found Northern Ireland exceptionally clean with many bungalows and houses set in their own spacious surrounds.

It has been too long since I last visited the Emerald Isles and I will not leave it as long to return. I certainly hope this article has whetted the appetite for those members planning to visit this area next year and hopefully it may encourage others to visit who may be wondering where to go on holiday next year. There are regular flights from Newcastle and Teesside to Belfast and Dublin and you can even make Craigavon Lakes and Montiaghs Moss into a day trip should you so wish.

I certainly would have struggled to find Montiaghs Moss and to see as many species as I did without the marvellous help of Ian Rippey and Cathryn Cochrane.

I will be pleased to give more precise directions to any of the above locations if you wish to contact me by email at [dsphil1920@gmail.com](mailto:dsphil1920@gmail.com).

## New Butterfly Recording Tool Steve Kirtley

The new on-line recording tool is now up and running thanks to brilliant help from Mark Eastlick of Cumbria branch. This allows records to be submitted electronically and should make Steve Kirtley's job easier. The tool allows users to view recent sightings and the options (which are reasonably self-explanatory) allow display of records over different time periods, by location, species etc. It is all ready to use to if you want to try using it please feel free to upload records to it (one proviso to note – there are now a number of different ways in which records can be submitted and it is important that each record is only submitted by one of these methods in order to avoid duplication of records). The reporting tool is located at: <http://northeast-butterflies.org.uk/report/> and the sightings page is <http://northeast-butterflies.org.uk/sightings/>. As well as the usual details it also allows the user to upload photos in support of the record.



**Screenshot of the new record reporting tool.**

Records are key to Conservation and are therefore very important. The North East England branch welcomes records for all species in County Durham and Northumberland.

There are now 3 ways of sending in your records: -

1) By using the Excel spreadsheet which can be downloaded from the Branch website. This includes instructions on how this should be completed and then submitted as an email attachment to **records@northeast-butterflies.org.uk** . In order to assist with compiling the records, can I ask everyone using this method to send in their annual records before the 30th November and to take care in typing the species details & also the date format to avoid the data not loading without manual intervention.

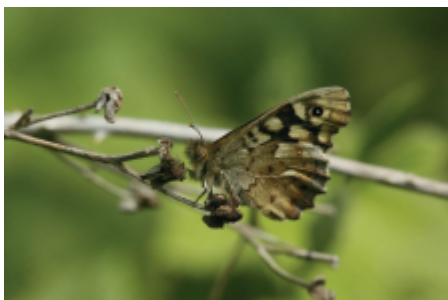
2) iRecord – available at **<https://irecord.org.uk/>** . Recorders need to register to use the system, but this is not onerous. There is a huge amount of information in the database now & as well as being useful to submit records, there is also a lot of information in there to look at as well! Once you get into the routine of using iRecord, it is straightforward to use & you can also look at maps in the system to help pinpoint your records & to submit multiple species records for a site.

3) New Website Tool – see page 17. Started last year, usage is building and it also provides visual information on the branch website for members to see what is out and about at any time.

Finally, I would also ask if any Recorders are unsure about the identification of what they have seen or are concerned that the information may be sensitive that they contact me via **records@northeast-butterflies.org.uk** before submitting their records. This is especially relevant re iRecord and the Website tool.

If anyone has records to send in & they don't have access to have a PC, then I will still accept paper records but would like to try to keep these to a minimum in view of the growing volumes. Many Thanks

Now that I have become more familiar with the role, I plan to complete the 2021 report as quickly as possible with that for 2022 to follow.



**Speckled Wood: records have shown a major northward range extension in this species this during century. Photo: Jonathan Wallace**

## Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey

The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) is the main scheme for monitoring population changes of the UK's common and widespread butterflies. It is important in both assessing the changing status of widespread butterfly species and in providing an indicator of the health of the wider countryside. Data from this scheme feeds into the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). Each 1km square is walked at least twice in July. More information and the results from all the previous years of the survey (nationally) can be found here: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/recording-and-monitoring/wider-countryside-butterfly-survey> (latest results currently available: 2020).

Squares that have been selected for our region are listed below and the method involves making a minimum of two visits to a square chosen from the list between May and August. At each visit butterflies are counted along two 1km survey lines running roughly north-south through the square. The survey will be co-ordinated centrally by Butterfly Conservation but with the help of a WCBS Champion in each Branch. If you would like to take part, please get in touch with Val Standen - [valerie.standen@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:valerie.standen@hotmail.co.uk).

<b>Grid reference</b>	<b>Location</b>
NT9145	7.5 km NE of Coldstream
NT9935	7 km N of Wooler
NU2404	2.5 km W of Amble
NY6662	4.2 km SW of Haltwhistle
NY6849	5 km NW of Alston
NY6859	5.5km SSW of Haltwhistle
NY6869	6 km NNW of Haltwhistle
NY7189	Near Hawkope, near Kielder Water
NY7352	5.7 km North of Alston
NY7482	5.8 km SW of Lanehead near Kielder Water
NY7691	11.5 km West of Otterburn - Kielder Forest
NY8525	5 km SW of High Force
NY8961	5 km SE of Haydon Bridge
NY9796	4.5 km NW of Elsdon on B6341
NZ0480	15 km NW of Ponteland off A696
NZ0510	4.5 km SW of Greta Bridge off A66
NZ0630	0.5 km NW of Hamsterley Forest Grove car park
NZ0825	Near Copley
NZ0919	4 km NE of Barnard Castle
NZ0953	Near Shottley Bridge
NZ1030	2 km SW of Hamsterley
NZ1070	3.5 km NW of Heddon on the Wall
NZ1579	5 km East of Belsay
NZ2075	Near Dinnington off A1
NZ2327	1 km NE of Shildon.
NZ2425	2 km SE of Shildon.
NZ3934	Near Hurworth Burn
NZ4048	0.5 km North of Murton off A19
NZ4234	Near Hurworth Burn

## Silver-washed Fritillary in NE England

### Steve Kirtley



**Male Silver-washed Fritillary (note the thick 'sex brands' along the veins of the forewing).**

**Photo: Steve Kirtley**

The Silver-Washed Fritillary has been absent from our region since the mid-19th Century so it was a major surprise when it was spotted in 2017 at Wynyard Woods by Jeff Fowler on his Transect walk. Since then, numbers have grown at Wynyard and it appears now to be established there with growing numbers of males & females seen each year.

There have also been records away from Wynyard - see notes from Alan Edwards below. Singles have also been seen in Darlington by David Phillips in 2019 and 2022 (see page 9) and

at Thrislington by Nick Patel in July 2022. This last record was also of a female which raises the possibility that the species may also colonise that area.

These records also suggest that the butterfly is likely to occur in other areas especially in the south of County Durham, so do please keep on the lookout for it. It is a strong & fast flyer but adult butterflies like to nectar especially on bramble & knapweed so they can be more closely observed when feeding.

## Records of Silver-washed Fritillary in Castle Eden Dene Alan Edwards

As the 2022 transect season heads towards a close this month here is just a quick update on the state of the Silver-Washed Fritillaries on my UKBMS (UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) transect at Castle Eden Dene (West End section 7)

First a quick history of the butterfly at the site:

- 2020, two mating Silver-washed Fritillaries recorded.
- 2021, one male and one female recorded on separate weeks.

The following records were made in the 2022:

- 17 July: one male and three females .
- 28 July: one male and three females again.
- 4 Aug: one tattered male.
- 9 Aug: one butterfly (sex not seen).
- 14 Aug: one very worn female.

The West End meadow is approximately 92 m x 15 m and surrounded on all sides

by dense woodland. I believe there were only a total of only 4 SWF's in the dene this year, with individuals seen on 5 separate occasions.

The good news is that SWF's may be on the way to establishing themselves in Castle Eden Dene and I look forward to the 2023 flight season for even greater numbers!



**Female Silver-washed Fritillary. Photo: Steve Kirtley**

## **Contributions Wanted**

Do you feel the urge to put pen to paper? Or do you have photographs (or other artwork) of butterflies or moths you would like to share? The contents of this newsletter are entirely dependent on contributions from members and we are always keen to include content from new contributors. We are primarily interested in articles and pictures relating to the butterflies and moths of North-east England but do include occasional pieces about butterflies beyond the boundaries of our region (see e.g. David Phillips' article in this issue about his search for the Cryptic Wood White in Northern Ireland). We are interested in hearing about favourite sites or species, memorable excursions, projects undertaken (either individually or by groups and organisations), interesting observations...in short anything concerning our butterflies and moths. You don't necessarily need to be an expert entomologist and articles reflecting a more personal response to our butterfly fauna are welcome alongside more 'technical' pieces.

If you wish to contribute something it is a good idea to contact the editor first (see back page) to help with planning issues. If you wish to submit words and pictures please do not embed your pictures within the article but send them as separate (full size) files as this makes the page-setting easier. Publication of this issue was delayed but the normal deadlines for receiving copy are 1st February (Spring) and 1st September (Autumn).

## **Pocket Guide to the Butterflies of NE England**

With financial support from Northumbrian Water and a bequest from the late Harry Eales the branch has produced a pocket guide to the butterflies of NE England. Designed to be a small guide that can easily be taken on a walk in the countryside, it is hoped that this booklet will help and encourage more people to get to know the region's butterflies.

If you would like to receive a free copy of this guide by post please send a stamped addressed envelope (DL size: 220 mm x 110 mm; standard letter rate) to:

Jonathan Wallace  
50 Cherryburn Gardens  
Fenham  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 9UQ



# Submitting butterfly & moth records 2023

Records are the bedrock of conservation and observers are encouraged to send in their records of moths and butterflies seen or trapped within the region to the relevant recorders. Different arrangements are in place for butterflies and moths.

## Moths

Separate databases are maintained for Durham and Northumberland and records should be submitted to the appropriate recorder depending on where they are made. Recorders are encouraged to use Mapmate recording software ([www.mapmate.co.uk](http://www.mapmate.co.uk)) to file and submit their records but an excel spreadsheet, suitable for use in both counties, can be downloaded from [www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk/submit\\_records.php](http://www.northumberlandmoths.org.uk/submit_records.php). This also gives guidelines on the information to be recorded. The county recorders in both counties request that moth records should NOT be submitted via iRecord or other recording apps.

### Durham (Vice County 66)

Records should be sent to the Moth Recorder for Durham.

Tim Barker  
26 Farrier Close  
Pity Me, Durham, DH1 5XY

e-mail: [timvc66@uwclub.net](mailto:timvc66@uwclub.net)

### Northumberland (Vice Counties 67 and 68)

The Moth Recorder for Northumberland is Tom Tams e-mail: [tom-tams@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:tom-tams@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Butterflies

There is a single recorder covering Durham and Northumberland and three routes are available for submitting records.

- 1) via the reporting tool at: <http://northeast-butterflies.org.uk/report/>
- 2) via e-mail to [records@northeast-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:records@northeast-butterflies.org.uk)
- 3) via iRecord (<https://irecord.org.uk/>)

To avoid duplication please do not send any record by more than one of the available methods.

For those submitting records by e-mail a spreadsheet is available and can be downloaded from [www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk/downloads.html](http://www.northeast-butterflies.org.uk/downloads.html).

Records will be reviewed by the Recorder prior to being added to the data-base.

Records should be submitted by 30 November in order that they may be considered in the Annual Butterfly Report for the year in question. Valid records received after this will still be added to the data-base but may not be included or credited in the Annual Report.

If you have any difficulties in submitting records via these methods please contact the Recorder (see back page).

## Validation

It is important that records are accurate and based on correct identifications. It is the responsibility of the Recorders to scrutinise submitted records to ensure that this is the case. Where records concern rare species, species that are outside their known range or flight periods or species that are easily confused they may ask for supporting evidence to be supplied. This may include good quality photographs or, in the case of moths, sight of the actual specimen (moths can be kept alive without harm for a day or two in a pot stored in a cool place).

## **Branch Committee 2023**

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