



# North East England Branch



President Sir David Attenborough CH. FRS

DEDICATED TO SAVING WILD BUTTERFLIES AND THEIR HABITATS

**Newsletter No. 23**

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**Butterfly Conservation**

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Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition of our Newsletter. Our new members might like to know that there are two Newsletters each year and we are always delighted to include any articles, letters, photos or drawings that any member cares to submit.

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

Copy dates are unquestionably:

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

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

Contributions should be sent to the Editor at this address:

21 West Acres, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 2QA

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

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

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

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

Cover Photograph: Winner of the 2010 Photographic Competition 2010, Rob Mawson's beautiful Small Tortoiseshell.

**Butterfly Conservation: North East England Branch**

**Financial Report For Twelve Months 1.1.2010 – 1.1.2011**

Opening Balance @ 1.1.2010	£1927.69
Receipts	£1376.44
Sub-Total	£3304.13
Payments	£1075.45
Closing Balance @ 31.12.2010	£2228.68

**Breakdown of Payments and Receipts**

**Receipts**

Subscriptions	£1036.09
Interest	£ 1.35
Gross Income	
Reports	£ 75.00
Donations	£ 264.00
Total	£ 1376.44

**Payments**

Newsletters	£ 554.00
Annual Report	£ 521.45
Total	£ 1075.45



## Dates for Your Diary: Butterfly Walks and Events For Summer 2011

Two walks to look at butterflies and moths around a nature reserve and a country park near Newcastle are to be held this summer. Whether you are a beginner or an expert there will be something for you to enjoy at both these sites.

**Sunday 17 July.** Havannah Nature Reserve near Hazlerigg. Meet at 10:00am at the large car park at the airport end of the reserve about one mile west of the village of Hazlerigg, OS grid reference NZ215718. The site has a variety of habitats and therefore a great variety of butterflies and moths and the walk will last approximately two hours.

**Sunday 24 July.** Weetslade Country Park near Wideopen. Meet at 11:00am at the car park of the country park which is on a minor road the B1319, off the A189 roundabout just north of Gosforth Park. OS grid reference NZ260723. Weetslade Country Park is a former colliery site that has been planted with flower rich grassland and has grassland butterflies such as common blue, small skipper and small heath, plus grassland moths. Again the walk should last about two hours.

**Contact Dave Stebbings** (details on back of newsletter) if you require any more information about these walks. Please try to get along to support us and enjoy the butterflies of our area.

## Joint Events With The Natural History Society of Northumberland

The following events have been arranged by the Entomology and Botany sections of NHSN, and Butterfly Conservation members are invited to attend:

## **Bugs and Botany at Close House, near Heddon-on-the-Wall**

**Sat. 19<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

Catch and identify insects and see some of the experiments on plant ecology that are running at the Close House Field Station. Moth traps are also included.

The event is suitable for people of all ages with an interest in insects and plants – from beginner to expert, and runs from 10am – 4pm.

You can drop in for a short visit or stay for the whole day.

The Field Station is on the Close House Golf Centre site; O. S. Ref. NZ 128659. Access is from the old Hexham Road, B 6528, west of Heddon-on-the-Wall.

**Leader:** Dr Gordon Port, of Newcastle University

**Contact:** NHSN Office, Tel. 0191 232 6386; Email: [nhsn@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:nhsn@ncl.ac.uk)

## **Joint Entomology/Botany Outing to Bishop Middleham Quarry Nature Reserve**

Join entomologists and botanists for a day looking at the relationships between insects and plants, at this disused Magnesian limestone quarry.

It is now managed as a nature reserve by Durham Wildlife Trust. As well as a good range of limestone plants, the reserve is a key site for butterflies, including Northern Brown Argus, Ringlet, Common Blue and Small Heath.

Access to the quarry floor is by steep steps. Otherwise, walking is level, but it may be rough underfoot.

The reserve is half a mile north of Bishop Middleham village, to the west of the A177 at O. S. Ref. NZ 331326. Parking, in two small roadside lay-bys near the reserve entrance, is limited, so car-sharing is advised.

**Booking is essential.**

**Leader:** Dr Gordon Port, Newcastle University

**Contact:** NHSN Office, Tel. 0191 232 6386; Email: [nhsn@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:nhsn@ncl.ac.uk)

**B. C. Branch contact:** Steve le Fleming, Tel. 0191 386 7309

Email: [lsklef@aol.com](mailto:lsklef@aol.com)

## Some Interesting Residents of Tees Valley Brownfield Sites Dr Robert Woods

Some industrial sites in the Tees Valley, formerly the old county of Cleveland in North East England, have a very special assemblage of flora and fauna. This is often a factor of the habitat type and because some larger sites have areas that do not have public access and have remained undisturbed for many years, this allows nature to flourish.

One such site in the North Tees area of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees is an operating brinefield. Habitat on this site consists of a rich mosaic, including relic saltmarsh and areas that now have saltmarsh vegetation as a result of deliberate application of brine as a nature conservation measure to encourage habitat rich in saltmarsh plants. Saltmarsh is a rare habitat in the Tees Valley and is also a UKBAP priority habitat.



Many specialised saltmarsh plants occur on this site, including various species of Glasswort (*Salicornia* spp.) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*). In surveys of the moths of this site during 2010 a number of scarce species were found that specialise as larvae in feeding on saltmarsh plants. Of the species found at least five were regionally significant, but even more exciting is just how abundant some of the scarcer species were. This includes the Dog's Tooth (*Lacanobia suasa*), recorded on 17 June 2010 and the Saltern Ear

(*Amphipoea fucosa*) recorded on the 4 August 2010. At least forty individuals of the former species and twenty of the latter were found in surveys during summer 2010, indicating that both are well established on the site. This finding is important, especially in view of the fact that both species were previously known only from a very few records in North East England. The record of Saltern Ear is particularly noteworthy as it is the first for County Durham (VC66) and is some one hundred miles north of the nearest known established colony at Spurn Point in Yorkshire.



Dog's Tooth



Saltern Ear

In addition to the Dog's Tooth and Saltern Ear other significant records of moths from the same site include specialised saltmarsh species such as the Crescent Striped (*Apamea oblonga*), which is associated with various species of Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia* spp.). Four examples of this species were recorded on 4 August 2010 and the site is one of only two currently known locations for this species in North East England.

Several interesting microlepidopteran species were also found on the same site. Of these, *Coleophora salicorniae* was represented by six moths that were recorded on 4 August 2010. This is the first record for VC66 and currently appears to be the most northerly record for this species in the UK, the nearest again being Spurn Point. The Gelechiid *Scrobipalpa salinella*, of which three were recorded on 17

June 2010, is the first record for VC66 since at least 1912. Both species are known to use various species of Glasswort (*Salicornia* spp.) as larval foodplant. These plants abound in parts of the brinefield site.

Industrial sites across the Tees estuary are also home to a significant amount of reedbed, which is part of the habitat mosaic found on such sites. This is in itself a scarce habitat, being listed as a UKBAP priority habitat.



Many of the reedbeds in the northern part of the Tees estuary and in Billingham have become important for wainscot species, which are at the northern edge of their range. As more of the larger reedbeds are investigated it is increasingly being found to be the case that those which are dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) support established populations of Brown-veined Wainscot (*Archanara dissoluta*), Obscure Wainscot (*Mythimna obsoleta*) and Southern Wainscot (*Mythimna straminea*). These species were first reported in the Teesmouth area during 2004 and 2005 from a reedbed at Dorman's Pool (Jamie Duffie, pers.comm.).

In addition the Fen Wainscot (*Arenostola phragmitidis*) is the most recent to have been found to have become established. Apart from one record originating from 1976 during survey of a reedbed at Haverton Hill in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees (Russell McAndrew, pers.comm.) it was hitherto unknown. Studies at four sites in the North



Tees and Billingham areas over the 2009 and 2010 seasons have shown the species to be resident at a low density on all of these sites, with records spanning the period mid July to mid August.



Fen Wainscot



Obscure Wainscot

These results are from baseline studies carried out by Robert Woods of the Tees Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA). Some of the results derive from a brownfield invertebrate habitat creation project which is being conducted in partnership with Buglife, the Invertebrate Conservation Trust and the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. The data illustrate how important brownfield sites are for sensitive environmental indicators such as moths. Thankfully many industrial organisations also show a great deal of support in conserving areas on their sites which are recognised as being important for wildlife.

#### **Acknowledgement**

Thanks are due to various landowners for granting access permission to carry out moth recording on their sites. This includes BP, Huntsman Pigments, Lucite International, SABIC UK Petrochemical Ltd and the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. I would also like to thank Harry Beaumont, the Microlepidoptera recorder for Yorkshire, for verification of the microlepidopteran species mentioned in this report, to Jon Clifton for confirmation of the record for Saltern Ear and to County Moth Recorders Keith Dover and Charles Fletcher for confirming the distributional status of some of the species mentioned here.

Dr Robert Woods

## Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey: BC & Brian Denham

We are delighted to inform you that we have decided to continue the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) again in 2011. Once again this will be a collaborative project with BTO and CEH. We would like to thank everyone who took part last year and especially the WCBS Champions who helped promote the survey within the Branches. The survey had another successful year with nearly seven hundred squares sampled. We hope you will continue to survey the same squares in the same way as last year. Our priority is to re-survey these squares for at least the next two years so that we can determine trends in the wider countryside and see whether they differ from transect trends. We also welcome new participants either to help re-survey old squares, or to survey new ones for the first time. New surveyors will be allocated randomly selected 1-km squares in their Branch area. The squares need to be surveyed in July and August by two visits at least ten days apart. Anyone interested in taking part in the WCBS in North East England in the coming season should contact Brian Denham (the Branch Champion) for further information.

### **Brian's Bit**

The WCBS is the first UK-wide survey of butterfly abundance based on random sampling and has been running for the past two years.

Basically, a recorder selects 1km square from a list of randomly selected squares which have been allocated to the North East Branch. On at least two occasions in May to August the recorder records all the butterflies he/she sees whilst walking along two 1km lines, running roughly north south, through the 1km square. The two lines to be approximately half a km apart. At the end of the season the results are entered on a report form and forwarded to HQ.

If you would like to help in this survey full information can be found on the Butterfly Conservation web site - [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org) or by contacting Brian Denham. (contact details are

on the back of this newsletter)

Volunteers to do this survey would greatly appreciated as the North East Branch has very few 1km squares being recorded.

**Available 1km squares:-**

NT9222, NT9935, NU0436, NY6662, NY6859, NY6869, NY7189, NY7482, NY8583, NY8974, NY9085, NY9796, NY9971, NZ0825, NZ0953, NZ2024, NZ2075, NZ2159, NZ3934, NZ4234

If you decide you would like to carry out a survey in 2011 please select one or more 1km squares and let Brian Denham know which one you have selected. This is to avoid a particular square being over recorded.

**Results for 2010.**

Between April and September five hundred and fifty-eight volunteers had made one thousand, four hundred and thirty-eight visits to six hundred and eighty-eight squares.

Combining 2009 and 2010, almost 3000km were walked and eighty-two thousand, two hundred and twenty-four butterflies seen of forty-six species.

Due to the random nature of the survey it generates new 10km records for the Butterflies for the New Millenium (BNM) distribution database. Fifty-six new 10km records were generated this year compared with ninety last year.

The best record for 2010 was Norfolk with twenty-nine 1km squares - with only two the North East has some catching up to do.

**There will be no Photographic Competition this year. The Committee have decided that, due to the lack of response from the general membership (we had only four entrants last year), you are all encouraged to submit your photographs to the Web Site, where everyone can appreciate them.**

I noted with interest, Jonathan Wallace's article on Burnet moths in the November edition of the North East newsletter. What specifically interested me was his comment on the under-recording of the Six-spot Burnet in County Durham, which positively amazed me having seen the greatest abundance of this, or any other moth species, I have ever seen in the British Isles (or anywhere else in the world for that matter), in 2008 and 2010.

So if you want to see a Burnet bonanza this year, then my advice is to get yourself down to Seaham in late summer when the moths emerge from their papery cocoons. Best place to look is all along the seafront near the car park around the interpretation boards, flags and sculptures. I plan to get down there and count a great many more than the one hundred individuals recorded from ninety records!

Whilst you are in the area the wildflower meadows in this location are also alive with many other butterfly species including the Northern Brown Argus further towards the coastal margins.



The branch's first recorder, Ian Waller, included four records of Small Blue, *Cupido minimus*, in the database for 1994. After trawling through the branch's archives in ten large box files, I recently found a fifth record, for 1995, lurking in a printout from the East of Scotland database. These records, together with a couple more recent reports that lacked supporting documentation, started me wondering whether Small Blue was still present in the region.

Robson<sup>1</sup> reports that the only 19<sup>th</sup> century records for Northumberland were a reference in the introduction to Selby's Twizell list and a single specimen in the Twizell Collection. In Durham, Robson knew it from several places and thought it could be found almost anywhere Kidney vetch, *Anthyllis vulneraria*, grew. Sites listed included Marsden, Witton-le-Wear, Castle Eden Dene and Blackhall rocks. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dunn & Parrack<sup>2</sup> report a record from Davidson's Lynn for 24<sup>h</sup> July 1948. This site is at the head of the Usway Burn between Windy Gyle and Bloody Bush Edge. A second site was reported during the 1939–45 War and, although the exact location was never precisely divulged, was thought to be in the vicinity of Cocklawburn nature reserve on the coast just south of Berwick. The 1995 record was for the mouth of the Carey Burn in the Harthope Valley in the Cheviots.

Robson reports that it should be sought for in the last week of June or the first in July. The Cumbrian website<sup>3</sup> shows that the peak flight time is earlier, in week twenty-three (about 10 June–17 June). This also agrees with the figures given in the Butterfly Atlas of the Scottish Borders<sup>4</sup>, which shows a peak of records in early June for the now extinct site in Hawick. Small Blue was recently rediscovered on the coast just north of the Scottish Border in 2007, this was also in early June. These dates pose a puzzle, since all the recent records, in 1948, 1994, 1995, and the two more recent, 21<sup>st</sup> century reports, have been significantly later, at the end of July and into early / mid August.

The southern England population has a first generation in late May – late June and a partial second generation in late July/ early August, but there is no evidence that this second generation occurs for the Cumbrian population at Workington or, that the Hawick colony had a second generation. The Butterfly Conservation factsheet<sup>5</sup> suggests that the Small Blue relies on habitats that have a very specific combination of shelter to provide a warm micro-climate and early successional conditions where Kidney Vetch can flourish. Suggested

sites include chalk and limestone grassland, coastal grassland and dunes, river gravels, quarries, gravel pits and disused railways.

With the species present just over the border in Scotland, and to west of the region, is it possible that we could establish Small Blue as currently breeding in the north-east? This is a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. I would like to urge everyone to search any substantial areas of Kidney Vetch in both early June and at the end of July / early August for this easily overlooked butterfly. It would be a tremendous discovery if we could add it to our list of North-east species.

If anyone does discover it, could they let the recorders know straight away? To support the sighting, we would strongly suggest that notes are made of the sighting and photographs taken if at all possible.

### References

- 1 Robson, John E., *A Catalogue of the Lepidoptera of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon-Tyne*. Part 1, Vol. XII of the Natural History Transactions of The Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, and the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club. 1902.
- 2 Dunn, T. C., & Parrack, J.D., *The Moths and Butterflies of Northumberland and Durham, Part 1, Macrolepidoptera*. The Vasculum, (Supplement No. 2), published by the Northern Naturalists' Union, 1986. ISSN 0049-5891.
- 3 [www.lakelandwildlife.co.uk](http://www.lakelandwildlife.co.uk)
- 4 Mercer, J., Buckland, R., Kirkland, P. & Waddell, J. *Butterfly Atlas of the Scottish Borders*. Atropos Publishing, 2009. ISBN 0-9551086-2-4.
- 5 Butterfly Conservation, *Factsheet: Small Blue, (Cupido Minimus)*.



## The Small Copper–A Herald of Summer David Stebbings

If the swallow is the harbinger of spring then in my mind the Small Copper is the herald of summer. I know summer has arrived when I see my first Small Copper of the year. It is one of my favourite butterflies with its rapid flight making it a blur of brown and when it lands the surprise of the beautiful golden orange markings. It is also an aggressive little character, flying up and chasing any passing insect that ventures into its territory.

The first Small Coppers of the year are normally seen in the first week in May, but the earliest date it has been seen in this region is the 13 April. By the end of May the numbers are increasing, although the spring generation is never really numerous making it uncommon enough to grab my attention when I see one. There are two generations a year in the North East, and occasionally three in warm summers. The spring generation is usually over by the end of June. There then follows a period in late June and through July when no Small Coppers are seen as the second generation develops. So there is the bonus of anticipating the sighting of the first Small Coppers of the second generation, usually in early August. The second generation is always more numerous than the first. 2010 seemed to be a particularly good year for the second generation with large numbers seen throughout August. This second generation lays eggs and the resulting caterpillars over-winter, completing their development the following spring.

The Small Copper is a widespread butterfly breeding in a variety of habitats. Pasture land, road side verges, railway embankments, coastal dunes and urban wasteland are all typical sites for colonies. In fact colonies can be supported in any dry place where its caterpillar food plants, Common Sorrel and Sheep's Sorrel, grow. The adult butterfly is a wanderer and can be found well away from its breeding areas. It is

also a frequent garden visitor. I have seen it feeding on lavender in my garden on several occasions.

The Small Copper is a member of the *Lycaenidae* family, and is included among the blue butterflies in guide books. This always used to surprise me as there is no blue colouring on the insect at all. It is other morphological features which it shares with the blues that puts it in that grouping. However, there is an aberrant form, which does have some blue on it and it is relatively frequent. The form is called *caeruleo-punctata* and it has a row of blue spots near the bottom edge of the hind-wings. It is well worth examining any Small Coppers more closely to look for these blue markings.

The season is usually over by early September, but in warmer summers there can be a third generation giving flying butterflies well into October. I saw one such Small Copper in mid October in 2003 in the Lake District, which I assume was from the third generation. In contrast Small Copper numbers can suffer in wet cool summers such as 2007 and 2008 that were poor years for the butterfly. However, it bounced back strongly from these set backs and 2010 was a very good year. Thankfully the populations of Small Copper seem to be stable in the region. Common and Sheep's Sorrel are common and can quickly colonise bare and disturbed ground, and as the butterfly is a mobile species it can quickly establish itself in new suitable habitat.



Small Coppers Mating and Small Copper (photos by David Stebbings)



The Monarch is a rare visitor to our shores, coming here mainly in the autumn months with the peak of the autumn Atlantic gales. As a converted birdwatcher I have always been alert for these lovely migrants during my regular visits to the South-west.

I have seen them briefly on two occasions, in a rainstorm at St.Ives Island in September 1999, and again flying over a hedge on the Isles of Scilly in October 2001. With that background, 2010 turned out to be a remarkable year.

It all started when my wife and I were invited to Singapore by my wife's niece, who was living out there, working on a five-year contract. So last year we decided to go as we never thought we would get the opportunity to visit the other side of the world during our retirement. We thought we would make it memorable by staying in Singapore a fortnight and going on the New Zealand for the rest of the month.

Our trip started with an overnight flight in a Qantas B.747 from London to Singapore. The highlight of the flight was opening of the window blind in the morning and seeing the vast spread of the Himalayas at 36.000feet, in all their snowy glory against a royal blue sky. That sight will be with me for a very long time.

We took a while to get used of the hustle and bustle, heat and size of Singapore. Everywhere there was 'greenery' as the city skyscrapers were set amongst the native rainforest with mature evergreen trees lining the streets and boulevards. Orchids were everywhere, especially in our hotel where a thirty-foot water cascade in the hotel lobby was clothed with pink and mauve Moon Orchids.

I was eager to get to the Botanic Garden, as I thought I might see some local topical birds and butterflies there, as well as the world renowned orchid collection.

My idea was to try to photograph the wildlife we saw and identify them on our return home. Of the many butterflies we saw the most striking was the Common Rose, a large red, black and white relation of the

Monarch. This contrasted with the Lesser Grass Blue, the smallest. We recorded twenty-two species here. There were many dragonflies over the lake, the beautiful pink Crimson Dropwing being the most eye-catching. We saw forty species of birds, including the richly colourful Hooded Pitta, a ground thrush migrant from the Philippines which Malaysian, Japanese and American birders were 'twitching'. Yes, twitching is a worldwide ornithological affliction!!



Crimson Dropwing Dragonfly



Common Birdwing

A visit to Hort Park, which included a demonstration garden, informing the local people to encourage wildlife nearer to their homes. Part of this site was a Butterfly Garden and like in the U.K. they were using plants (tropical) and shrubs to attract their butterflies. We saw several colourful specimens here with wonderful names like; Common Birdwing, King Crow, Lemon Emigrant and Horsefield's Baron.

The next place we visited was the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. This is a saltwater mangrove swamp near the north coast. The first thing of note, were the Saltwater Iguanas lying at the water's edge of the raised footpaths, some of them up to five feet long. The large flocks of migrant waders on the saltmarsh surprisingly included European species like Greenshank, Redshank and Common Sandpiper amongst the Pacific Golden Plover and Asiatic Whimbrel flocks. Butterflies here included the Malaysian Egg Fly, Banded Swallowtail and Common Tiger, a close relative of the Monarch. Our butterfly list had reached thirty-two

The following week we took a flight from Singapore to Auckland in the North Island of New Zealand. We had organised a rolling programme spending three days in the city, before travelling by Kiwi Rail to Wellington on the 'Overlander' train, a journey of twelve hours.

New Zealand has only a few native butterflies left, as when the Europeans settled here they accidentally introduced the Large and Small White butterfly with vegetable importation. The rapid spread of these 'pests' were controlled by toxic chemicals and parasitic insects which in turn eventually affected the local species with drastic results. I was keen to see their Red Admiral, a different species to ours, and their Yellow Admiral.

After a days sightseeing and a visit to the volcanic island of Rangitoto, we decided the next day to get a suburban train to Oraki Basin and walk back along the coast road to the hotel. Crossing the open grassland of Takaparawha Park reserve, we found several New Zealand Common Blues feeding on vetch flowers, along with the common 'whites'. My bird-list was taking on a strange context with European introductions like Blackbird, Song Thrush and Linnets along with the native Welcome Swallows, Silvereyes, Silver and Dominican Gulls. In a damp hollow we came across three Pukeko, a large Moorhen-like bird, with a big red waxy bill.

The train journey down North Island to Wellington was a wonderful trip. We travelled through various landscapes at a leisurely pace allowing us to take in the changing countryside. We had a lunch stop for an hour at National Park where the scenery was similar to Highland Scotland, with its heather clad mountains, except these peaks were volcanoes.

We thought Wellington was the best city in New Zealand. It is clean and very 'green' with ideas of conservation everywhere. A visit to the Botanic Gardens was a pleasant surprise with our first Monarch of the trip. There were around ten parading amongst the flowerbeds, favouring red Dahlias, as well as Hebes and Helletrope. They were very territorial, chasing rivals away from their favourite plant and that

included humans with cameras who got too close!! We also found Yellow Admiral here behaving like our Graylings, closing their wings tight on landing for fear of being chased off by the Monarchs.



Three days later we took the ferry across the Cook Straits to South Island and our train journey to Christchurch. Again we found Monarchs in the Botanic Gardens, which is a bit surprising as our reference books said they were scarce in the South Island. They first occurred in New Zealand in 1974, presumably from Australia.

Our best day of the whole trip, was a return day flight to Dunedin and a trip with Monarch Wildlife Tours to the Otago Peninsular. This is the only mainland breeding site of the Royal Albatross. We saw lots of waders, wildfowl, penguins, seabirds and Fur Seals. Those large Albatross gliding almost motionless on the wind on their eight foot wings was unforgettable.

We had a break of three days in Sydney on our way back to London as I wanted to come home on the new Airbus 380 jumbo-jet.

After some sightseeing in Sydney we found ourselves in the Botanic gardens - where else!! and got a real 'Aussie' wildlife experience. Lots of Rosella parakeets, White Ibis, and Sulphur crested Cockatoos flying around with a colony of Flying Foxes and plenty of butterflies to keep us alert.

The first butterfly of note was a Grass Blue, then a Eastern Painted Lady, very like ours except it has four small 'eyes' on its rear wings. We also saw Grass Yellows, Common Brown and several Darts and Skippers. On the way out we passed a Buddleja in flower, which

attracted four Blue Triangle butterflies. Related to the Monarch with a black, white spotted body and dark wings with triangular areas of translucent blue on each wing.



Eastern Panted Lady



Orange Palm Dart

The last day before our flight home, we decided to take the high speed ferry to Watson's Bay at the entrance to Sydney Harbour and walk round the coastal path to Hornby Light and back. Walking through the suburban back streets we noted several butterflies and birds. On reaching Hornby we had seen the White banded Plane, Small Pied Blue and Yellow Albatross (much like our Brimstone). Past the lighthouse, along the Pacific coastline it became more vegetative with low coastal plants and shrubs. Here we saw Grass Yellow, Common Blue, Orange Dart and the Orchard (similar to the Common Rose we saw in Singapore). Of the birds we encountered were Blue Wren, Willie Wagtail (nothing like ours), Crested Pigeon and a noisy group of New Holland Honeyeaters.

Our overnight flight home in the A380 was great with lots of space to stretch out and excellent service. I thought it a supreme aircraft despite its recent engine 'teething troubles'. We arrived at Heathrow at 6.30a.m, straight into a strike by cabin crew. This delayed our flight to Edinburgh by an hour or so making the trip from Sydney to Berwick some twenty-two hours long. It took us well over a week to get our sleep patterns back. However it was truly an exhilarating and memorable experience. Where to next? You might ask. Well we've never been to the USA and there is a good bird and butterfly migration through Cape Cod in the autumn!! Watch this space.

Mike Coates (2010) published a valuable list of the species of butterflies he had recorded in recent years in Northumberland Park, Tyneside. This is the first comprehensive survey to be carried out in the park and includes the Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*, which Mike first saw in August 2004. However, there are earlier published records of the presence of the Holly Blue in North Tyneside, including Northumberland Park, over a decade previously.

My interest in the Holly Blue began in 1990, when a male individual appeared in my garden at Tynemouth on 22 August. This proved to be the first record for the Holly Blue in Northumberland (Ellis, 1990). My garden is situated about 1 Km. From Northumberland Park across Tynemouth Golf Course and at the time I thought it possible that the Holly Blue had strayed from the park where the larval foodplants, ivy and holly, occur. A search of the park on the same day failed to reveal any additional Holly Blue butterflies. However, whilst walking to the park I discovered a female Holly Blue in a garden in Millview Drive. Further south, 1990 proved to be an exceptionally good year for the Holly Blue, and since the species is a well known nomad, it was assumed that the Tynemouth individuals were isolated strays from an expanding more southerly population.

In 1991, a female Holly Blue visited my garden on 11 and 12 August and I found ova and larvae on ivy growing on the garden wall of a house in Albion Road, North Shields, suggesting that the holly Blue was breeding in the region (Ellis, 1992). This view gained support when in the spring of 1992, Valerie Laws saw Holly Blue in her garden in Queen's Road, Whitley Bay (pers. comm., 1994) on 23 April and Mrs N Cook recorded one in Holly Avenue, Jesmond on 29 April. Also in the spring, a female Holly Blue visited my garden repeatedly between 13 and 20 May and in the summer at least four (males and females) appeared there between 5 and 26 August. Several ova deposited on

ivy growing on my garden wall were discovered between 19 and 26 August. These findings provided the incentive to carry out a wider search, which resulted in my finding ova and/or larvae on ivy in Albion Road, North Shields, near Dene Cottage, Holywell Dene, Seaton Sluice, Whitley Bay Cemetery and in Northumberland Park, Tynemouth. (Ellis, 1993). In Northumberland Park on 3 September 1992 there were numerous ova on ivy growing on the low stone walls on each side of the main paths. In a short time (ten to fifteen minutes) I was able to find sixteen ova and three second instar larvae. As far as I am aware, this was the first evidence of the presence of the Holly Blue in Northumberland Park. Even in its strongholds in southern England, the Holly Blue is well known to undergo major fluctuations in its fortunes and so it was not entirely unexpected when shortly after 1992 the Holly Blue became scarce in Northumberland. There was a gap of six years before it again visited my garden between 4 and 6 August 1998. Subsequently the situation remained more or less the same, with only one individual reported in 2000 in Northumberland by Neville Stead at Whitley Bay on 26 July. None was reported in the county in 2001 and only two in 2002 – one of these visited my garden between 4 and 15 August (a male) and the other I recorded on the wagonway near Crow Hall Farm, Holywell on 12 August (a female). From 2003 onwards, the status of the Holly Blue improved in Northumberland and it was in 2004 that Mike Coates saw his first Holly Blue in Northumberland Park. 2006 and 2007 could be regarded as the “golden years” for the Holly Blue in North east England, including Northumberland, where it became more widespread and numerous. Thus in 2006 and 2007 combined, I was able to record forty-two Holly Blue plus ova and larvae in fifteen different 1km. Squares (ten tetrads) in the south east corner of Northumberland and in 2007, local recorders collectively reported two hundred and eighty-four individuals in fifty-seven tetrads in the whole of Northumberland and County Durham (O’Brien, Norman and Le Fleming, 2007).

Unfortunately since then there has been a further decline. For example, in Northumberland Park I recorded five Holly Blue on 26 April 2007 but none since and Mike Coated (2010), who regularly monitors butterflies in the park, states he has not seen the Holly Blue in the park since he recorded two individuals in June 2008. The only Holly Blue I have seen throughout 2010 visited my garden on 9, 10 and 17 August and I failed to find ova on ivy at the usual sites in 2009 and 2010.

The reasons for these fluctuations of the Holly Blue are incompletely understood, but numbers increase after warm summers and decline after a cold one. The parasitic ichneumon wasp *Listrodomus nycthemerus* is host-specific for Holly Blue larvae and must also affect the density of the butterfly population. The parasite is known to be present in our region and I have obtained it locally from Holly Blue larva found feeding on ivy growing on a wall in Beach Road, Tynemouth on 27 September 2006. In 2007 I was disturbed to find that as part of the "improvement programme" in Northumberland Park, the massive growth of ivy on the wall, where I had previously observed ova and larvae, had been ruthlessly pruned. Whilst this action did not favour the Holly Blue, it cannot have been solely responsible for the disappearance of the species from the park since the recent decline has been widespread throughout Northumberland.

#### **References:**

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- Ellis, H.A. 1990. The Holly Blue butterfly *Celastrina argiolus* Linn., in Tynemouth. A new record for Northumberland. *The Vasculum* 75(3): 43-44.
- Ellis, H.A. 1992. Further observations on the Holly Blue butterfly *Celastrina argiolus* L. in North Tyneside. *The Vasculum* 77(1): 4-5.
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- O'Brien, D., Norman, R. & Le Flemming, S. 2007. Butterfly Conservation North East England Branch Butterfly Survey 200



On Sunday 27 March, representatives from the north regional Branches got together for a seminar at the RSPB Old Moor Nature Reserve near Barnsley. This annual event, organised by the BC staff, serves to present an update on conservation work in the region.

### **Conservation of the Duke of Burgundy and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary in North Yorkshire**

#### **Dukes on the Edge**

In the 1990s, there were seventeen known small sites, holding small populations of the Duke of Burgundy. Encroachment of scrub, due to the abandonment of traditional coppicing and lack of management, had altered the habitat and depleted the food-plants. Only ten sites held the species by 2002.

In the Pickering area, the butterfly, noted as 'abundant' in 1968, is now known at only one site, and since 1995, has been on the verge of extinction. To reverse this trend, a project named "Fit for a Duke" has been launched. Supported by a grant of £234,000 from WREN (a landfill consortium), it aims to consolidate the remaining scattered populations. Contractors and volunteers are working on the following:

- Clearance of gorse scrub and dense ground vegetation
- Cowslip seed collection, propagation and transplantation
- Ongoing management

#### **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries**

The two remaining sites for this species have small, but stable populations. Partnership funding has supported landscape-scale works, scrub clearance and grass-trimming etc. Much still needs to be done, and help is needed as follows:

- Donations of money
- Practical work
- Habitat and species surveys
- Collection of seeds and propagation of plants

- Captive rearing of butterflies

The key sites are all privately owned, and the landowners are supportive, as the conservation work enhances their game rearing business etc. Work can also proceed without the restraints and bureaucracy linked with land in public ownership.

### **Conservation of the Pearl-bordered Fritillary in the Morecambe Bay Area**

Dave Wainwright and Martin Wain are managing an extensive project in Cumbria/North Lancashire, where the species is currently declining more rapidly than the High Brown. Formerly recorded in 27 10 km squares nationally, it is now found in only 23. Major research and practical work is being done, with money from the BC reserve fund, the National Lottery, and donations etc. Advice is also being given on higher level stewardship schemes. Private landowners and the Forestry Commission as stakeholders, are supported by a diversity of volunteers. The following work is currently under way:

- Habitat management on 27 sites, using contractors and volunteers
- Grantscape management work on 16 sites
- Rides opened up as corridors, to form a network of linked sites
- Student research project: marking and trapping of butterflies to show movements
- Education and public relations

Volunteers are wanted for all the above projects, so don't hesitate to contact Dave Wainwright if you think you could help in any way.

### **Butterfly Conservation's 20-20 Vision**

Sam Ellis outlined the aims and objectives of the society. Increase of membership from Fifteen thousand to One hundred thousand is a key target, as is education. Regarding the latter, an officer is to be appointed for the South West region, who will liaise with schools and garden centres etc. A spin-off from this will be aids and publications that can be used by local Branches.

Hello! Who are you? Do you recognise me?



This wonderful photograph of a Yellow Horned Moth was taken by Peter Webb on 24 March 2011.

### Photographic Competition Winners for 2010

Once again, the standard of photographs entered for the competition was incredibly high. Unfortunately, the response, in terms of the number of entrants, was bitterly disappointing. Only four members entered the competition, submitting twenty-seven photographs in all. This has led the Committee to revise the plan to extend the competition further. Instead, we would urge everyone who takes photographs of butterflies, moths and their immature stages to send them for inclusion on the Web Site. This would enable us all to see them in colour, and not to feel pressured into feeling shy about our photographic abilities. Mine are very modest, and I would be happier to have them published on the Web Site than in competition.

So – The Winners are:

Rob Mawson.  
Adult British Butterfly and  
Overall Winner:

Small Tortoiseshell



Rob Mawson  
Adult British Moth  
Bordered White

Rob Mawson  
Immature Stages

Orange Tip Caterpillar

Rob called this “Out of my skin”



Congratulations Rob – A well deserved clean sweep.  
See All the entries – in colour – on the Web Site.

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

## National Moth Night: A Statement From Atropos & BC

National Moth Night has become a national institution since it started in 1999. It has proved hugely successful with over one thousand sites returning records annually, hundreds of public events introducing newcomers to the wonders of moth recording, and massive media coverage raising awareness of the much-maligned moth. Many thanks to all those who have taken part and helped achieve this success.

Now the event has reached a crossroads. The cycle of repeated NMN events in different months of the year has been completed and, as the event has grown, so have the resources required to manage NMN, to the point that it is not sustainable in its current format. Atropos and Butterfly Conservation have agreed that there will be no National Moth Night in 2011. The time will be used instead to regroup, reconfigure and reinvigorate NMN in preparation for the 2012 event.

If you have suggestions for the future of NMN, we would be very glad to receive them via

[views@nationalmothnight.info](mailto:views@nationalmothnight.info). Please be assured that your views will be considered, but we regret that we will not be able to respond individually to such emails. In the meantime, please remember to submit your records for NMN2010 before 1st December (see [www.nationalmothnight.info](http://www.nationalmothnight.info)). National Moth Night will return in 2012 and a date will be announced in due course.

### **Moths Count Contacts**

**General enquiries** [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org) 01929 400209

**Richard Fox** Project Manager [rfox@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:rfox@butterfly-conservation.org) 01626 368385

**Les Hill** Database Manager [lhill@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:lhill@butterfly-conservation.org) 01929 406008

**Zoë Randle** Moth Recording Co-ordinator [zrandle@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:zrandle@butterfly-conservation.org) 01929 406006

[www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org)

## 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 2011

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 2010 there will be two ways of sending your records in. For those without a home computer, the existing yellow paper casual record sheets will continue unchanged. However, if you have a PC, the Branch would strongly urge you to send in your records using a spreadsheet such as Microsoft Excel. Each record should occupy one line and the format of the spreadsheet should look something like the following example:

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

**Column A** – Recorder/s names.

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

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

**Column D** – Date (please try to follow the format shown) **This is really important**

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

**Column F** – Please give the actual number seen if possible, **We no longer use letters for abundance.** (A, B, C etc.) For larva (L), ova (O), pupa (P) or mating (M) records, please use the code letter provided, optionally adding numbers seen.

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




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

A blank spreadsheet, with the date formatted, is available by contacting the recorders. Electronic records are most easily sent as an email attachment. However, you can also send them in by post on CD, Floppy disc or Memory stick. The deadline for records to be included, and credited, in the 2010 Annual Report is 30 November 2010. Depending on where you live, please send records to:

### DURHAM

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

### NORTHUMBERLAND

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

## North East England Branch Serving Committee Members for 2011

### **Branch Organiser, Secretary and Treasurer**

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

### **Moth Recorder**

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

### **Butterfly Recorder Northumberland**

Roger Norman, Tel: 0191 285 831  
Email: [roger@norman784.plus.com](mailto:roger@norman784.plus.com)

### **Butterfly Recorder Durham**

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

### **Transect Co-ordinator**

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

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

### **Chairman**

Cliff Evans Tel: 01325 466471  
Email: [cgevans@talktalk.net](mailto:cgevans@talktalk.net)

### **Membership Secretary &**

### **Newsletter Editor**

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

### **Conservation Officer (Northumberland)**

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

### **Conservation Officer (Durham)**

Michael Harris, Tel: 0191 522 016  
Email: [michaelharris@talktalk.net](mailto:michaelharris@talktalk.net)

### **Web Master**

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

### **Committee Members**

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

Robert Woods

Email: [rwoods1163@aol.com](mailto:rwoods1163@aol.com)

### **Butterfly Conservation Regional Office (Northern England)**

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

## **Website**

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

### **Butterfly Conservation**

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468)  
Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP  
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