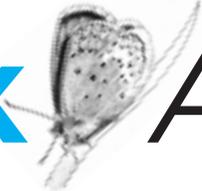




Butterfly
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

The Suffolk Argus



The Newsletter of the **Suffolk** Branch of Butterfly Conservation

Balancing the Scales by Marie Stewart



Spring 2011

Volume 50



Small Eggar larva



Lackey larva



Brown-tail larval nest (page 9)
Photos by Tony Prichard



A male Silver-washed Fritillary in a Suffolk wood – July 2010 (page 10) Photo by Rob Parker



A Flavour of Rhodes – Large Wall Brown and Lesser Fiery Copper (page 25)
Photos by Matt Berry

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New Members

We welcome the following new members who have joined the Branch and we look forward to meeting them at our events this year.

Mrs D Berry	Ipswich
Mrs I Dalziel	Saxmundham
Mr R and Mrs C Fay	Beccles
Miss FS Jones	Bishop's Stortford
Professor M Kendall	Bury St Edmunds
Mr MD Nowers	Ipswich
Mrs VJ Palmer	Beccles
Mr S and Mrs A Parnell & Family	Eye
Dr M and Mrs B Payne	Helston, Cornwall
Ms CB Raven	Halesworth
Miss O Simpson	Bury St Edmunds
Mr J and Mrs R Walker	Beccles
Mr N and Mrs J Wilcox & Family	Ipswich

Balancing the Scales

The wing of a Pearl-bordered Fritillary is portrayed in an art quilt by Marie Stewart. The quilt, measuring 84cms by 127cms, was exhibited at the International Festival of Quilts, NEC, Birmingham in August 2009 and the Suffolk Craft Society Exhibition at Aldeburgh in Summer 2010.

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The Suffolk Argus is published by the Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Butterfly Conservation or the Branch.

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Butterfly Conservation

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Editorial

Peter Maddison

This has been a particularly cold and dreary winter - a time in which our thoughts might have turned from butterflies and moths to fleeces, scarves and snow shovels. But Matt Berry and Julian Dowding, in particular, have been thinking about butterflies - Silver-studded Blues and thick winter fleeces too!

In this newsletter Julian writes about the Purdis Heath Restoration Project in which he and Matt have immersed themselves throughout the planning and the practical stages. This has been a colossal undertaking and together with help from numerous individuals and organisations the winter's work has been completed. It is with huge enthusiasm that we look to a butterfly-filled future.

Rob Parker writes about the surprising dispersal across the county of the Silver-washed Fritillary, but in his monograph of the Wall we can only shudder when he notes the dramatically reduced distribution of this once common species. Your recording of the Wall is requested in particular this year.

This is newsletter number 50, a significant number I tell myself and justification for opening the pages of *The Suffolk Argus* Volume 1. Published in January 1994, the front cover held the title 'Branch Launch' and in the article that followed, the occasion on the 30th October 1993 and the aims of the Branch were recorded. Topics such as 'Late Butterflies' and 'A Guide to Butterfly Watching' made interesting reading, but two headings in particular caught my eye, and the news within surprised me with their resonance for today. The first, written by Andrew Phillips (Chairman), concerned 'Purdis Heath scrub clearance'.

'Why would over thirty people turn out on a freezing Sunday morning in November [1993] to hack down birch saplings on a piece of apparent waste ground on the Eastern outskirts of

*Ipswich? Well they did, and they achieved far more than expected. In fact we cleared – and faggot bundled – well over an acre of land that used to be the favoured breeding area of what is now the strongest remaining colony of the Silver-studded Blue (*Plebejus argus*) left in Suffolk.*

This delicate little insect is fast disappearing from Suffolk and it would be no exaggeration to suggest that on present trends, it could be the twenty-second of the fifty species of butterfly that used to live and breed in our county to become locally extinct.'

The other article entitled 'The future of our woodland' explored the government's proposal to sell-off Forestry Commission land to private investors. One of the conclusions of the article was 'Markets must be regulated and at the very least private owners must be prevented from destroying known [wildlife] sites and encouraged to manage and create more wildlife-friendly areas.'

Oh yes....Hear, Hear to that!

In the news today Forestry Commission land sales, and the County Council's disposal of Country Parks have been proposed. In the east there is the planning application for a new town of 2000 homes to be built at Martlesham, and the prospect of an application for a massive industrial estate to be developed within the Suffolk Sandlings on the disused airfield at Bentwaters. Their hinterland will be affected hugely. Wildlife must not suffer. We must be concerned, we must be involved.

At the beginning of February, as I write this column, we are having a mild spell. Flower buds on hedgerow elms are swelling noticeably. Larvae of the White-letter Hairstreak will soon be active! Peacock, Orange-tip and Brimstone flicker through my mind's eye. Not ghosts, I hope, but images of an abundant season to come.

Purdis Heath Restoration Project

Julian Dowding

Purdis Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a fifteen hectare fragment of heathland lying on the eastern fringe of Ipswich. Since the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, this privately owned site has become an increasingly popular place to visit for many people, including dog walkers, hikers and naturalists.

During this time, the Silver-studded Blue *Plebeius argus* population at the site has undergone a dramatic decline in numbers. In the 1980's, over two thousand butterflies inhabited the greater part of the heath but last year, numbers could be counted on one hand. The extent of suitable habitat at the site also contracted through this period in spite of efforts by conservation groups to try and help. Such work focused on the removal of Gorse and Birch scrub, which were crowding out and shading the short vegetation and open ground needed by Silver-studded Blues for breeding. Furthermore, the butterfly has a highly developed relationship with black *Lasius* ants, and is dependent upon Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* as a nectar source at Purdis. However, the concentrations of both ant and plant have diminished. In light of this and following a report by Dr Neil Ravenscroft in 2009, to assess the status of the butterfly and its habitat at a suite of Suffolk sites, Butterfly Conservation called a meeting in October 2010, to try and address the problem that this priority Biodiversity Action Plan species is facing at Purdis. Interested parties were invited to formulate an emergency plan of action, with Butterfly Conservation leading the project under consent from Natural England. Those present were unanimous in agreeing to the following more radical management:

- Scrape off Gorse litter remaining from previous scrub clearance plots, back to the soil mineral layer, to encourage heather regeneration from the seed bank and reduce soil compaction and encrustation by turf and mosses.
- Increase areas of heather forage harvesting.
- Aim to increase areas of bare ground for ants which are needed by the butterfly.
- Continue scrub removal.
- Approach site owners with view to securing long-term management of the site by means of a DEFRA Higher Level Stewardship agreement.
- Increase population monitoring.

Before any of this could be done, the presence of Anglo Saxon remains nearby necessitated a professional archaeological evaluation to assess whether any ground works planned might turn up further relics. A T-shaped investigative trench was dug using a JCB under the close inspection of archaeologist John Newman, (see photos). All that was discovered were the remains of a presumed WW2 bonfire! Furthermore, because of the need to try and engage with the local community, BC volunteers throughout the winter period installed a series of site notices. These informed people of our proposals and the plight of the butterfly. To these ends, good use was also made of the social networking sites 'Twitter' and 'Facebook' and of local radio.

Ground works were carried out during winter and a desktop biological audit of the site was also undertaken. Suffolk Biological Records Centre, county recorders and specialists were invited to submit records and comment on the emergency plan. This was to ensure that the planned work would not be disadvantageous to any flora and fauna beyond the Silver-studded Blue, for whose benefit the habitat was being restored. Many people commented that the work should in fact be generally beneficial but it also became apparent that the site was a little under recorded and that it could benefit from further investigations. To address this, joint field trips have been arranged by Butterfly Conservation and Suffolk Naturalists' Society for May 8th and August 13th, and a moth night is also proposed for August 20th. During the May event there will be the chance to practise Silver-studded Blue recording skills in time for increased population monitoring later on in June and July (see our Events card or website for details).

The audit did reveal two new and rare species: a Liverwort, *Microlejeunea ulicina* and a moss, *Ullota coarctata*. Both of these were on an oak north of the track, which bisects the site.

Given the amount and nature of work to be done it is good to be able to report that practically all of the scheduled management has been completed, and all of this in less than 3 months. Much of the heavy work necessitated using a JCB whereas the forage harvesting of heather was completed with a Rytec mower towed by a tractor. Everything else was carried out by willing volunteers (see photos).

Throughout the project, BC has been

fortunate to work alongside a number of dedicated specialists and volunteers, not least among them, George Millins of Suffolk Amphibian and Reptile Group and zoologist Marc Woolnough. Their vigilance in attendance, particularly whilst heavy machinery was being used has helped minimise any negative impact upon hibernating reptiles such as Viviparous Lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*, both of which are BAP species and are known to inhabit Purdis. They have also worked tirelessly utilising material arising from ground clearance, such as Silver Birch brush and Gorse stumps, in the creation of habitat piles at the edges of the site (see photo). These will provide refuge and basking sites for reptiles, and shelter and nesting sites for mammals and birds, such as Hedgehogs -also BAP species - and Robins which are known to inhabit Purdis. Marc and George hope to be conducting further reptile surveys on site from March onwards.

Our work has also been supported by Neil Sherman from the Ipswich Golf Club. Neil has been able to help in the past with the forage harvesting of over mature heather areas and this year has helped with some Gorse stump removal. All of the heather 'arisings' have been utilised by his employers to re-seed new areas of the golf course, thus creating similar heathland habitat in the vicinity. This can only be a good thing.

Greenways Countryside Project under James Baker and Dave Fincham kindly hosted its annual Purdis 'Megabash' event on 22nd January. It was attended by around fifty volunteers who came from Greenways themselves, Ipswich Wildlife Group, Butterfly Conservation and Access to

Nature. Yet more volunteers were simply members of the public who had seen our Purdis posters or had heard about it on our Facebook and Twitter pages, or through the advertising campaign on BBC Radio Suffolk and Ipswich Community Radio. All of these worked tirelessly removing Gorse and scrub from the site, using hand tools such as bow saws and loppers.

Generous funding for the work came from money raised at two events: an open day at Scotland Place Farm, Stoke by Nayland, owned by Tracey Hayter and her family, and another at Priors Oak, Aldeburgh, owned by Trudie Willis.

Mention must also be given to the following individuals in appreciation of their work in consultation and site assessment: Nick Blacker the ant specialist, David Mason of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Monica O' Donnell from Natural England, Dr Neil Ravenscroft of Wildside Ecology, who wrote the 2009 report on the Silver-studded Blue butterfly on the Sandlings, Sarah Poppy, the conservation archaeologist from Suffolk County Council, Carrie Willis who helped plot the site of the trench and Graham Matheson, representing the site owners. Thanks are due to all those mentioned and to you, our members, for providing the incentive to keep going.

In spite of such goodwill and the amount of work done, we cannot afford to be blasé about the future given the critically low count of the butterfly last year. We are under no illusions that the work will supply a quick fix to the problems facing the butterfly at Purdis but we will be looking optimistically this year to see how the site develops and intensively monitoring the remaining population. Specifically we will

be hoping to find:

- Heather regeneration along the forage harvested link into the old flight areas
- Germination of seedling heathers (hopefully Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*) in the JCB scraped areas.
- Increase in ant activity
- Continued presence of butterflies

Additionally we will be casting an interested gaze over the archaeological trench to see how it develops ecologically.

Although the site is privately owned, it is hoped that the land can be brought into a 10 year DEFRA Higher Level Stewardship agreement. Failing this, some other solution will have to be sought. Without long-term security it is hard to see how the Silver-studded Blue butterfly and other rare species can survive here. Looking strategically and even more optimistically into the future, one wonders what could happen were the heathland sites of Martlesham, Purdis, Bixley, Ransomes and Pipers' Vale, linked up to provide contiguous habitat for the Silver-studded Blue and other characteristic Sandlings specialists. Birds like the Dartford Warbler, Woodlark and Nightjar would all surely benefit, as would butterflies like the Wall, Small Heath, Grayling and a myriad other creatures.

Please get in touch with us if you would like to find out more, or help us in this project.

The Brown-tail moth

Tony Prichard

The Brown-tail moth *Euproctis chrysorrhoea* is a rather innocent looking white moth and a common sight in moth traps across the county. The moth gets its name from being white all over apart from the tip of the abdomen, which is covered in brown hairs. The moth would remain largely unknown to the general populace if it were not for its hairy caterpillar having a habit of shedding its long hairs, which can cause irritation and rashes when they come in contact with skin. The species has had a largely coastal distribution in the past but over the last fifteen years has been establishing itself further inland. Its distribution was almost exclusively restricted to east Suffolk but now could be expected to appear in most areas of the county.

In the last few years I have received an increasing number of queries about the caterpillars of this moth as they experience local population explosions. The caterpillars are stripping their foodplant, wandering off in search to find new food and this can bring them into closer contact with their alarmed human neighbours. It is not officially classified as a pest species so I understand that local councils are not legally required to do anything about them. I did read about them on a few council web sites being described as voracious eaters of shrubs and a pest because of this, however I would say that they are no more voracious eaters than most caterpillars. They are more readily noticed because they live in a group and the feeding damage of many caterpillars is concentrated in one spot.

The moth is single-brooded with adults flying in July and August, although in Suffolk the vast majority of adult records are from July. The eggs are laid in a batch on a wide variety of trees and shrubs, particularly blackthorn, hawthorn, bramble, sallow, dog-rose and other rosaceous shrubs and trees. Hatching in September the young caterpillars create a small communal web and spend a short period feeding up before hibernating for the winter inside their tough silken web.

The Small Eggar *Eriogaster lanestris* and Lackey *Malacosoma neustria* are a couple of species that have hairy caterpillars, form similar larval webs and could be confused with Brown-tail larvae. They both appear to be currently in decline and may be at risk from being eradicated due to mis-identification as Brown-tail larvae. The larvae of the latter species are readily distinguished from the other two species by having two orange spots down their back about two-thirds along the body from the head. A further species that may arrive in the county at some stage is Oak Processionary *Thaumetopoea processionea* - a classified pest species whose communal larvae have hairs that can cause severe irritation. This species has established itself at sites in west London and currently appears to be resisting attempts to eradicate it.

I would be interested in receiving any records of Brown-tail larvae particularly from west Suffolk as I suspect the species is more widespread than our records currently suggest.

The Return of the Silver-washed Fritillary, *Argynnis paphia*.

Rob Parker

The Silver-washed Fritillary was present in Suffolk in the 1940s, but became scarce by 1959, and had not been seen until recently. In 2006 it had a very good year in the southern counties of UK, and dispersed widely. We had three sightings in Suffolk, one of which was at Theberton Wood, and it was believed that these may have spread from the re-introduction site near Coggeshall in Essex. Perhaps some of them may since have bred in Suffolk. In 2009, I was surprised to discover three in a private wood near Stowmarket.

On 20th July 2010 I re-visited that wood. To my delight I found no less than eleven and plenty of violet in what I had considered a rather small and unpromising site for breeding. Assuming no-one is releasing them (the owner says not) this is very encouraging for a spread of the species. The wood in question is small, but has plenty of violet. The same afternoon, I went on to Pakenham wood (TL9367) to check on *L. camilla* (just one very tatty one). In the same glade, I was amazed to find one male *A. paphia* on the thistle. Ten minutes later, another appeared, and some impressive sky climbing courting flights went on.

Since then, singles have been reported from sites spread widely around the county and the 2010 totals reached a minimum of twenty four Silver-washed Fritillary seen in ten Suffolk sites by more than thirteen dependable observers. Most of these were singletons and most were photographed. Six of the localities are woods with violets, where there is some chance of natural colonization. The sites are: Stowmarket (private wood), Pakenham Wood, Private wood north of Pakenham, Kettlebaston, Dunwich Forest, Theberton Wood (seen by

observers watching Purple Emperors), Beccles Common Wood, Minsmere, Cransford, Bradfield Woods

In the same timeframe, it has been found in fifteen locations in Norfolk, some close to Suffolk (co-incidentally, also a tally of over twenty Silver-washed Fritillary). Meanwhile, the re-introduced colony in Essex is flourishing, and appears to have spread, having reached RSPB's Stour Wood on the Suffolk border.

I am of the opinion that the very hot days in July triggered dispersal, and that these sightings are of a natural spread, in some ways similar to the dispersal of White Admiral, also in July. These sightings from Essex, across Suffolk and well into Norfolk, were identified early because they were so unusual. Later in the season, most counties where Silver-washed Fritillary is more commonplace noted that 2010 had been another good season for the species, with strong numbers at known sites and dispersal to new locations too.

Keeping tabs on the presence or otherwise of Silver-washed Fritillary becomes a priority for 2011, and observers everywhere should visit any suitable woods in July - particularly those where they were seen in 2010. They are powerful, majestic fliers and may be spotted from a distance, but they are also fond of thistles, so getting close enough for a photograph is not too difficult. Take a look at your reference books now, to make sure you can separate *A. paphia* from other fritillaries, and the males from the females - look for the scent scales along the veins on the males - if you are lucky enough to see the upper surface of the forewings. (See photo inside front cover.)

Butterfly Conservation Suffolk Branch Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2010

INCOME	2009/10		2008/09	
	Restricted	General	Restricted	General
Membership Subscriptions	1	£1,275.00		£1,524.07
Connect Fund		£1,200.00		
Natural England		£500.00	£1,000.00	
Bank Interest		£1.12		£6.71
Donations/General Fundraising Suffolk CC		£646.50 £500.00		£659.82
TOTAL INCOME	£0.00	£4,122.62	£1,000.00	£2,190.60
EXPENDITURE				
Donations		£50.00		£10.00
Newsletter/Programme		£1,373.90	£515.41	£896.59
AGM - hire of hall		£25.00		£25.00
Office Expenses/Petty Cash		£446.37		£150.00
Insurance	1	£102.69		£82.23
To BC HQ re: Sharon Hearle		£1,000.00		
SSB Translocation/Survey		£2,200.00	£1,000.00	
Depreciation				£150.00
Travel expenses		£103.90		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£0.00	£5,301.86	£1,515.41	£1,313.82
SURPLUS/DEFICIT FOR YEAR	£0.00	-£1,179.24	-£515.41	£876.78
1 Insurance costs of £102.69 (£82.23) deducted from subscriptions by head office				
Balance 1st April	£0.00	£2,586.26	£515.41	£1,709.48
Surplus (deficit) for yr	£0.00	-£1,179.24	-£515.41	£876.78
	£0.00	£1,407.02	£0.00	£2,586.26
Less Transfer to Head Office		£0.00		£0.00
BALANCE 31st MARCH	£0.00	£1,407.02	£0.00	£2,586.26

Suffolk branching out into social media

Matt Berry

Anyone familiar with the online social media websites Facebook and Twitter may be interested to know that we have recently set up our very own Suffolk Branch pages. Interestingly, we're the first Butterfly Conservation group to do this, thus making us a bit of a trailblazer where this technology is concerned, Lepidoptera-wise at least!

We decided to use the sites as they are another way of allowing us to communicate with members and the wider public (or potential members as I like to think of them!). The sites make it fairly easy to share news and information, or to engage in the simple act of socialising online. A key benefit is the speed with which news can be shared.

We've already had a positive experience from using the sites. Several volunteers came forward to help with conservation work at Purdis Heath after seeing our information online, and we've gained at least one new member after they saw the half price membership offer being promoted on our Twitter page. If you would like to visit the pages the addresses are:



www.facebook.com/BC.Suffolk



www.twitter.com/BC_Suffolk

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey

Future funding for the national survey has been confirmed and soon participants will be receiving details of this year's survey. Additional volunteers are most welcome to join the team of butterfly surveyors. Details can be obtained from our Branch co-ordinator, Peter Dare Tel: 01502 47801 or peterxema@aol.com.

In 2010 twelve Branch members and three BTO members took part in the surveying of 18 squares. Detailed species counts are not available yet but the first impression is of lower numbers than in 2009 - with August counts being especially poor.

Editorial copy date

Contributions for the Summer edition of our newsletter are very welcome and should be sent to the Editor, Peter Maddison, no later than Sunday 22nd May 2011.

Any piece of writing considered to be of interest will be published and we also welcome line drawings, prints and photographs.

Contributions (preferably electronic) can be sent to the address on page 4 or by email to: prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

Ano Paroia, Greece: Ten Haikai

Richard Stewart

Pull back the shutters
Fragrance of stephanotis
Scenting the air.

Sparrows are chirping
With what we scarce call a song
Subtle in their world.

Rough layers of brick
Gaps between the weathered tiles
Nesting birds rejoice.

Beneath the long grass
A fragmented green lizard
Just an eye flickers.

Above the mud patch
A cloud of bright butterflies
Blue sky comes to earth.

Dappled green sunlight
Silvered rush of clear water
A white horse grazing.

Seemingly lifeless
The high snow covered mountains
Then a raven croaks.

The clouded yellow
Lands on a bright buttercup
Bathed in summer's glow.

So obvious the nests
Of village storks on tall poles
No one will harm them.

And you remember
The mystery of nightingales
Everywhere unseen.



These haiku were written during the Branch holiday to Greece, last year.

Although butterflies and birds were the main focus it was an area rich in wildlife of many kinds. The title is that of the village where we stayed for the week.



Kerkini, Greece 6th to the 13th June 2010

Part II of the highlights from David Tomlinson's diary.

Thursday 10th June

We had decided the night before on a 7.30 breakfast and 8.30 departure, so I had a busy morning washing the bus and shopping so that we could depart on time. We drove cross-country from Vironia to Serres, which was a time-waster, as we got slightly lost on the poorly signposted roads. The main road would have been quicker. We joined it at Sidirokastro, passing the quarry with its nesting rollers, one of which we saw perched on a wire as we drove past. Serres proved to be a big and busy town, and we made the mistake of driving right through the middle of it. However, it wasn't particularly slow, and we eventually emerged the other end and started our ascent to the ski resort at Liliass.

At our first stop we found a small but flower-rich meadow that was full of butterflies, from clouded yellows to an abundance of ilex hairstreaks. Geoff caught an interesting blue that (some hours later) was identified as a baton blue. A Balkan green lizard, posing on a tree trunk, made a good photograph.

We continued our ascent, and soon started to climb steeply, coming out of the pine tree zone into open, grazed country, with the juniper bushes pruned by the goats. As a few clouds were gathering we continued to the top car park, the last part of the drive passing through beech woods. We parked in the empty ski car park (we didn't see a single person while we were there), and then explored the grassy and flower-rich ski slope, with its abundance of violets. The first new butterfly was a small tortoiseshell, and there were also several painted ladies and

peacocks, plus our old friend the nettle-tree. Dull-looking coppers proved interesting: sooty copper. We also saw several small coppers. Woodland ringlets – a handsome, chocolate-brown butterfly – were common. There was a good selection of fritillaries, and pearl-bordered was added to the list, after being netted. Rob also captured one that was clearly slightly different, and this proved to be our first Glanville fritillary. Queen of Spain was probably the commonest fritillary. Birds were few. Coal tits sang from the pines, along with chaffinches and wrens and a cuckoo, while I also heard a firecrest. A black redstart was also new.

We had our lunch here, enjoying once again the luxury of running water next to our picnic site. The temperature was a cool 59degF. After lunch we dropped down a relatively short distance and explored a forestry road. This looked unpromising at first, but soon opened out into a flower-rich clearing, with mullein plants the dominant large species. I netted a pair of grizzled skippers, and we saw several northern wall browns, a species that had been new for us at the previous site. I saw a single black-veined white, while mountain small white and large white were common, along with a variety of fritillaries. Then Sheila gave a shout for a butterfly she thought looked different, and Rob duly managed to capture it: a clouded Apollo, and one of our main target species. Though we all admired it in the net, it was highly uncooperative when released, fluttering off and only stopping once, very briefly. It was never seen again. Its flight was much like a large white, and not a black-veined.

We continued down the mountain, enjoying the glorious scenery. Our next stop was in an open area. Here I saw a grayling land on the road, but took my eye off it. When I tried to find it for Rob I had lost sight of it, but it flushed, flew off rapidly and was never seen again. While I led most of the group away after a most impressive first-year golden eagle, Rob was busy with his net and eventually caught a fine tessellated skipper, a lifer for him. It was a very large and handsome skipper. When released it flew off some distance, but I managed to mark it down and so we found it again and Peter and I managed to photograph it successfully. The young golden eagle we watched was dive-bombed several times by a buzzard, giving an interesting comparison in size, as the eagle dwarfed its attacker. A singing hoopoe also gave great views, while other new birds for the trip included wheatear, stonechat, linnets and mistle thrush.

It was now time to go home, so we reluctantly climbed back into the bus and set off down the mountain, watching the temperature climb as sharply as we descended. We found a much better route around Serres, and I glimpsed another roller soon after we had left the town. As we drove north towards Bulgaria the car thermometer registered 90degF, but it was down to the low 80s when we arrived back at Viglitoras.

Friday 11 June

We started our day by driving up the hill behind the village, starting at the church. A herd of horses, many of the mares with foals, had just been moved off when we arrived. Though no new butterflies were found, there was a good variety of species to see, including several wall browns. Just below the church was a patch of rough ground popular with tortoises, and I counted seven

in view at once. We made a second stop on a piece of rough ground, dominated by dwarf elder, just outside the village. Again, no new species, but plenty of butterflies, while Rob netted a very pretty small elephant hawk moth, with its wonderful pink colouring. I enjoyed good views of pallid swifts racing overhead.

Our next stop was at the stream that runs into the lake south of Kerkinis village. It was now feeling very hot, with the temperature already in the low 80s. I found, as promised, penduline tits, with an adult male showing well, then two freshly fledged juveniles, one of which I photographed. We glimpsed a couple of times a fast-flying butterfly that may well have been Freyer's purple emperor – the willow habitat was just right – but the insect was so fast I failed to keep it in the binoculars for more than a fraction of a second, so no positive ID was made. A scarce swallowtail sauntered by and gave everyone great views, and we also saw a good variety of fritillaries, including silver-washed and marbled. A thermalling flock of white pelicans was pleasing to see, and a lesser spotted eagle also gave a good view.

We continued a mile or so south to the edge of the marshy area, and here walked along the track between the poplars and the fields of maize and rape. Before setting off we watched spoonbills, and saw both little and a single great white egret. A storks' nest with several well fledged chicks also held a thriving Spanish sparrow colony. Golden orioles called continually, and several were seen, while a very cooperative lesser grey shrike let everyone who wanted to admire him. Again, there were lots of butterflies, including southern white admiral, but nothing we hadn't seen before.

It was now approaching lunchtime, so we drove back north to the main road, then

along to Vironia, before turning up to the picnic site near the church. As soon as we stopped I spotted a soaring raptor that turned out to be a golden eagle. I made lunch under an elm tree, complete with white-letter hairstreaks. Here the numerous butterflies coming down to the stream were the chief interest, and several of us enjoyed some genuine butterfly watching, as opposed to butterfly hunting. Apart from the numerous nettle-tree butterflies both southern white admirals and silver-washed fritillaries were coming in, joining hundreds of thirsty bees at the water's edge. A friendly hound joined us for lunch, and without pestering us enjoyed the various goodies I threw his way, including the spam saved from lunch a couple of days before.

The temperature was now in the high 80s, but the nearby trough with its running cold water was a delight, and most refreshing. Before leaving I spotted a fine black-eared wheatear with black throat, looking very pied, high on the cliff, and we had good but distant views through the scope. The eastern race of black-eared wheatear often looks black and white.

After lunch we tried to drive up the mountain, but finding the right road proved difficult, as the maps are imprecise. We stopped at the roadside café to ask, and a chap called Pedro told us to follow him. We duly did, and he waved us on up the mountain, warning us to be careful of the bends. We drove past a derelict military camp, then climbed steeply on a dirt road. I stopped the bus probably half way up, as the road looked somewhat perilous, with steep unguarded drops. It wouldn't have been much fun to have met a vehicle coming the other way. We did see one lorry come down the track, but that was the only moving vehicle.

However, the butterflying was satisfactory at our stop. I was lucky to have a great view of a Cleopatra that flew round me for some time, attracted to thyme. Ilex hairstreaks were hugely abundant, and the population in these hills must be measured in millions. We also saw a swallowtail, lesser spotted and Queen of Spain fritillaries, and many painted ladies, the latter all fresh and smart. Rob caught a white butterfly which, after very careful examination, was pronounced to be Krueper's small white, a localised species in the Balkans and not easy to identify.

That was the end of our butterfly hunting for the day. On the descent I dropped my Tilley hat out of the bus when I stopped to see a black-eared wheatear, and I wasted time by driving back to collect it, though Geoff and I did see the pair of wheatears again when we went back to fetch it.

We ate dinner – salad, then calamari risotto – in the garden.

Saturday 12 June

A great day to finish the holiday. After our usual 7.30 breakfast we left at 8.30, with our first stop Mandraki. As I had seen large coppers here in both previous years I thought that we might do so again, though I don't think that Rob shared my optimism. It was a little early for butterflies when we arrived, to be greeted by the usual chorus of great reed warblers and singing orioles. The first find was a small copper, but as we walked along the track behind the marsh Peter spotted a likely candidate. I caught it with the net and, yes, we had a large copper in the bag. It was admired by everyone before being released, but then behaved impeccably by perching and even opening its (slightly tatty) wings.

Rob complemented this triumph by

capturing our first Lang's short-tailed blue. The tail is indeed very short, but noticeable if you look hard enough. Two or possibly three lesser spotted woodpeckers also showed well, feeding close to us on almost bare branches, while the last memorable sighting here was of two juvenile penduline tits.

We then climbed back in the bus, pausing briefly in Vironia to buy bananas. At Sidirokastro we turned off the main road towards the hills, passing our picnic site from Wednesday, and the area where we had found the first yellow-banded skipper. We spotted a likely looking meadow – really a patch of untilled ground, filled with thistles and flowers – which I thought worth turning back to inspect. It proved to be the most productive patch we worked all week, producing around 35 species. A number of blues were puddling on a damp, bare patch of ground close to the road. Most were Chapman's blues, but Marie spotted a brighter individual among them that was soon identified as a turquoise blue, a quite stunning little butterfly. We later saw two together at the same site. Another new butterfly was the unremarkable Hungarian grizzled skipper, while both common grizzled and yellow-banded were also noted here. Numerous banded demoiselles flew above the river.

Several species of fritillaries were flying here, including silver-washed along the road, where the riverside vegetation was lush. I had a comma perch on me several times, while the only red admiral seen here landed on the driver's seat of the bus. Eastern Bath whites were common, while Balkan marbled white, ilex and white-letter hairstreak were also noted. The pleasure came not only from the variety of butterflies, but their sheer abundance. However, it was

now very hot, so even walking in the baking sun was hard work. Birds were few. A buzzard flew over, cirl buntings sang along with the inevitable nightingales.

We had one more stop before lunch, again by the side of the road. An interesting capture here was a Croatian hummingbird hawk, while the butterflies included a couple of species we hadn't seen earlier, including marbled white. I made the mistake of venturing off-road and getting my socks filled with the dagger-like grass seeds that are difficult to remove and can be quite painful. I saw a woodlark, while nightingales serenaded us, as usual. A pair of ravens also flew over. Geoff saw some sizeable-looking blues flying here: large blues? He didn't have a net.

It was now lunchtime, and we wanted both shade and water. The tiny village of Karidochori provided both, and we ate in the village square under the shade of a pair of plain trees, with the constant chirruping of Spanish, house and tree sparrows. Rob did a quick recce after we had eaten and found a promising track, leading away from the village, descending sharply to a damp streambed with tall poplars, then a dry hillside behind with lots of thyme. There were fritillaries, hairstreaks and blues to look at on the first part of the walk, and I saw a brimstone fly by. Shortly after we had crossed out of the shade of the poplars I saw a big blue butterfly that I was convinced was a large blue. Richard and I watched it racing around, but it was very active and we soon lost it from sight. Fortunately it came back again a few minutes later and was skilfully netted by Rob: it was indeed a fine, fresh male large blue. After being admired by everyone it was released, but despite Rob's best efforts to persuade it to perch it flew off furiously, so wasn't photographed.

A little while later Richard and Marie saw a female large blue egg-laying, but no others were found, despite an extensive search. Another new butterfly here was large wall, again captured by Rob. This completed our hat trick of European wall butterflies. I caught a fine male silver-studded blue, while mallow and marbled skippers were also noted, along with both swallowtails. It was hot work with the thermometer nudging the upper 80s, but most rewarding, while it was an attractive landscape in which to look for butterflies. A handsome Balkan lizard orchid (*Himantoglossum caprinum*) was admired and photographed.

As we walked back to the square a juvenile golden eagle (possibly the same bird as on Thursday) gave great views as it soared overhead, mobbed at one stage by a kestrel that looked tiny in comparison. Back in the village square a grayling was seen, but it was one of a duo that are almost impossible to separate. Quite what the locals made of this group of English (and one Scottish) people looking at butterflies will remain a mystery.

With our day's butterfly total up to 50 species we turned for home, stopping in Sidirokastro for a well earned ice cream. Unfortunately the ice cream shop failed to open, though we did get good views of crag martins as compensation. We stopped instead in Vironia, and enjoyed our ice creams here, a treat to the group from Geoff. It had been a bad day for snakes, and we saw about 10 squashed in the road. All looked as if they were the rather plain large whip snake, the commonest species here. Apparently Greek drivers will go out of their way to try and run snakes over, so the mortality rate of snakes on roads is very high.

Or final stop was back at Mandraki. With the temperature still close to 90 it was very hot. We failed to find any snakes, or more large copper butterflies, but a trio of juvenile

Dalmatian pelicans was tame and approachable and interesting to see. I saw a single drake pochard that was new for the list – in the winter 20,000 winter here. As we unloaded the bus back at the hotel a Levant sparrowhawk flew low overhead, chased by numerous outraged swallows and martins. It was a much better view than our previous sighting.

We had our last dinner in the garden once again. The mousaka was excellent, while a couple of bottle of rosé went down very well after such a hot day.

Sunday 13 June

We had an 8am breakfast and aimed at a 9.30 departure. It was a hot and humid morning, so I packed all the bags and then had a shower, as the sweat was dripping off my brow. After saying farewell to Stelios it was about 9.50 when we finally left, travelling first down the west side of the lake, past pygmy cormorants, herons, egrets and grebes, and then west towards Thessalonica. The road was quiet all the way until we hit the ring road, which was packed with cars heading for the coast. This probably added 10 minutes to the journey time, but we arrived at noon. I dropped everyone off, then filled the bus up with fuel and returned it to Hertz. Only one bird of note seen on our journey: a black stork soaring over the forest on the first part of the motorway. It was a hot drive (86degF at the airport) and the air conditioning struggled to keep the vehicle cool.

Our bird total for the trip was 117 species, while the final butterfly tally was 75. I was a little disappointed we didn't find more species of butterflies, but I don't think that we missed much, and it's impossible to find butterflies that aren't flying. My highlights were the fritillaries, the large blue and the large copper and the exquisite southern white admirals.

Walberswick area 21st August 2010

Alan Johnson

This was the last outdoor meeting of our 2010 programme, it seemed only five minutes since our first one in April. On checking my 'archives' I was surprised to find it was five years since our last walk here, in September 2005.

Having listened to a rather pessimistic weather forecast the previous evening, I was pleased to see a total of ten people (plus a dog) meet at the Newdelight Walks car park, between Westleton and Blythburgh. This area forms part of the Walberswick National Nature Reserve and is managed by Natural England.

The plan for the morning was to walk along the sandy track leading from the car park towards Westwood Lodge. On a small area of heather at the start a Gatekeeper, Small Copper and Grayling were noted, also a Silver Y moth, Migrant Hawker dragonfly and a lizard.

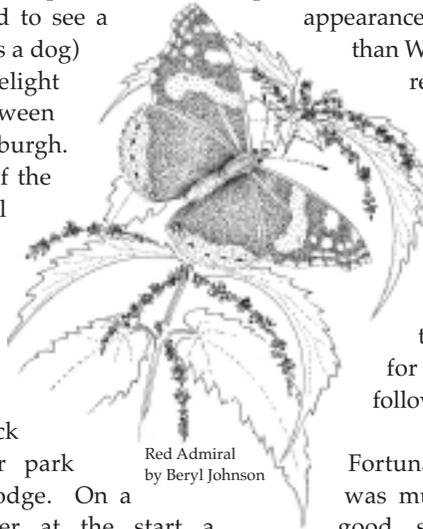
It soon became obvious that due to the mostly cloudy conditions combined with a fresh S.W. wind, we were not going to see a great deal, only Gatekeeper and Small Copper were observed. Ten days previously when Beryl and I were checking out this walk, we had seen two White Admiral, one Red Admiral, one Grayling, one Speckled

Wood, one Large Skipper and two Green-veined White, all nectaring on the flowers of a single Privet bush. No luck this time!

Probably the most interesting item, brought to our attention by Gill Perkins, was that of a Thorn Apple, a plant which I personally had not seen before. *Simpson's Flora of Suffolk* quotes it as widespread but sporadic in appearance and more common in East

than West Suffolk. The seeds may remain dormant in the soil for a number of years – this plant was growing adjacent to a recently installed timber post. We duly returned to our cars to then drive on to Hoist Covert car park, on the outskirts of Walberswick, for picnic lunches, to be followed by our afternoon walk.

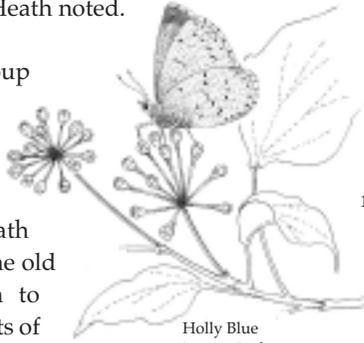
Fortunately by now the weather was much improved with some good spells of sunshine and generally well broken cloud, quite warm and humid in spite of the fresh and blustery S.W. wind. Initially our route followed the western edge of Hoist Covert, the path then turned to take us across East Sheep Walk with its patches of heather. Here Small Copper were the most numerous butterflies with approximately 8 – 10 noted, also seen were single Small Tortoiseshell, Gatekeeper, Holly Blue and two Small Heath. We now crossed the B1387 road to enter, and then cross, Walberswick



Red Admiral
by Beryl Johnson

Common, with only Small Heath noted.

At this point most of the group opted to return via a 'short cut' to their cars, leaving just two of us (plus the dog) to continue on the final stretch of the walk. This path took us along the route of the old narrow gauge Halesworth to Southwold railway line, parts of which support a colourful display of heather and gorse, although since our last visit in 2005 the gorse has smothered much of the heather. This section produced Red Admiral, Gatekeeper, Small Copper and Large White.



Holly Blue
by Beryl Johnson

Station, our route turned in a southerly direction to follow the edge of the common back to the village. Here, areas of invading bracken had been removed to allow the heather to grow back and several Common Blue and Small Heath were seen. Returning along the road to the Hoist

Covert car park our final sighting was of a single Holly Blue. The total number of species recorded during the day was ten but none in any great numbers, this compares with fifteen species recorded on 4th September 2005.

On reaching the site of the old Walberswick

Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths

The reprint of the *Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths* is available now. The first print run sold out in a matter of weeks during the autumn of last year. This exciting publication (the first of its kind for almost 30 years) can be yours for £20 (plus £5.00 post and packaging).

The British and Irish moths: an illustrated guide to selected difficult species

The Guide, written for the Moths Count project by Martin Townsend, Jon Clifton and Brian Goodey, has 91 spiral bound pages and contains over 130 colour illustrations. The aim of the Guide is to make available information on the identification of difficult macro-moths, beyond what is currently available in the field. 72 larger moth species (plus their subspecies and forms) are included. The Guide provides the next step for those wishing to make definitive determinations of difficult moths such as ear moths, dark/grey daggers, copper underwings and the November Moth group. As such, much of the Guide is focussed on genitalia characteristics, although there are discussions of other characteristics such as wing markings. The recommended retail price is £20, but it is available at a special initial offer price of £15 plus £2 post and packaging to UK addresses.

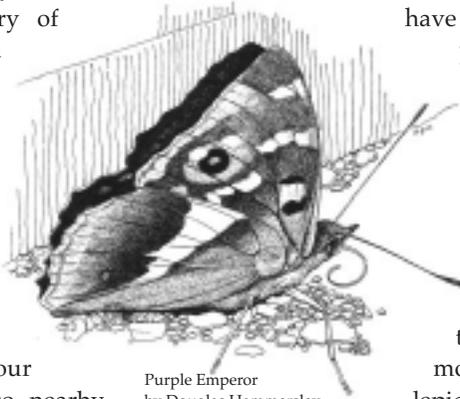
Both books are available from Butterfly Conservation: (<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/text/27/shop.html> or 01929 400209) and from specialist retailers. All proceeds received by Butterfly Conservation will be used towards ongoing moth recording.

Butterflies: A Very British Obsession

A review by Richard Stewart

This one hour television programme in December 2010 was a rare treat. A variety of film techniques, including multiple imagery, time lapse and slow motion, portrayed the beauty, freedom, elegance and history of what narrator Imelda Staunton described as 'powerful symbols of hope and transformation'. The commentary was largely accurate though saying we had 'an incredible variety of over fifty species' ignored our paucity compared to nearby continental nations. I particularly enjoyed several flight sequences and metamorphic time-lapse studies, the incredible life history of the Large Blue and the delight of our next generation in watching hand held butterflies slowly opening their wings. The programme did not, however, differentiate between our native species and exotics inside butterfly houses.

Another plus was looking at behaviour in individual species, from Mountain Ringlet threatened by global warming to Grayling courtship in a railway yard at Wakefield and the Purple Emperor's grisly ground feeding habits, narrated by Matthew Oates with his usual successful mix of humour and deep knowledge. The main weakness, to me, was trying to cover too much. For example there was butterfly dancing, the Notting Hill



Purple Emperor
by Douglas Hammersley

carnival, butterfly tattoos and a butterfly street artist, all interesting but taking time better used to extend the short coverage of butterfly gardening, and no mention of transect walking. One section could have been deleted, since it purported to tell us where Painted Ladies come from, something known for many decades. The inclusion of Martin White, from Worksop, a multiple butterfly introducer, was I suppose justified, though he was portrayed more as 'the people's lepidoptera champion' rather than looking at unanswered concerns about his stock, knowledge of species, knowledge of habitats where releases were made and if he had the landowner's permission. There was no mention of the many well researched official reintroductions, in fact the words 'butterfly conservation' only occurred twice in one hour, neither referring to the actual organisation. Can you imagine a similar programme, about the current health of British birds, without mention of the RSPB?

I still enjoyed it, marvelling at the agility of frogs catching feeding Painted Ladies and the winter wood mouse, after a tasty meal but dissuaded first by the hibernating Peacock's hissing then its owl-imitating flashing of its large eye spots. The wood mouse literally turned tail and raced away.

Too Late to Decide

Richard Stewart

When my poem 'Decisions', about what to do if you found a rare butterfly in a spider's web, was published last year, I did not expect such a quick and personal sequel. On the 10th August 2010 the only Painted Lady in our garden suddenly came out of a conifer, where it had been sheltering from the rain, and flew into a spider's web which hung outside my upstairs study window. I had watched the garden spider, impressed at how it bundled up small flies and how expertly it mended the web. While we were debating what to do, the spider decided for us. By the time I was back in the study the butterfly had stopped struggling and was being quickly wrapped in sticky threads, resembling a cocoon, with the spider

eventually being seen behind it. Then the connecting threads of the web under and to both sides of the web were snipped off, the prey at one point literally hanging by a single thread. The gap in the web strained from circle to tight oval but held as the spider slowly hauled its prey higher up, eventually disappearing from view in the soffit above the window. The whole process took about ten minutes.

Later I measured the damage: four inches across, eight inches high to mend. This was done within forty-eight hours. It probably would have been completed more quickly, but no doubt the garden spider was enjoying a much larger meal than usual.

Earthwatch

Bruce Halls writes about a butterfly project in Vietnam

Earthwatch is a worldwide conservation charity that specialises in taking up local research projects. Volunteers are recruited to work at information gathering with scientists who are already preparing evidence of important wildlife areas, to obtain or reinforce government protection.

I have been on nine of these expeditions as a volunteer over the last seven years, all of which have been immensely enjoyable and worthwhile, and in some cases have produced very specific results.

In October 2007 I was lucky enough to secure a place on the 'Butterflies of Vietnam' expedition, in Tam Dao valley north of Hanoi. Earthwatch always supplies copious details of the conditions to be met on any expedition, including climate, diet and accommodation,

which varies greatly from simple tents to houses. In this case we had a spacious, comfortable out of season guest house for our mixed age and sex group of ten plus staff and scientists.

Every day of our nine days there, except one day of horrendous thunderstorms, we were out walking the surrounding mountain tracks to identify and count the literally hundreds of butterflies present and their caterpillars and pupae. Working with English speaking local scientists was very useful and informative and I feel I made a small contribution to the real conservation of an important group of insects whose distribution is indicative of our changing world.

Earthwatch details can be found at www.earthwatch.org/europe

Silver-studded Blue update

Pyrénées-Orientales

James Mann

On Monday 8th March 2010, when the air was freezing cold, we decided to go to the baths at Saint Thomas to have a warm soak. During Sunday evening Claude rang to say that the randonnée was cancelled because snow was forecast. As it was raining at the time I thought no way will it snow, but it would not be pleasant in the rain. I looked out in the middle of the night and Claude was right, large flakes were drifting down. In the morning we had 50 centimetres and I was just able to get out for our bread, thanks to a four-wheel drive. It snowed all day and by evening we had a good metre on the track to the road. We were not able to get out the next day until the vineron had cleared the way with his J.C.B.

We eventually managed our Saint Thomas trip on the 19th of April, it was cold but bright and sunny. We parked at the baths and as we climbed above them we looked back to see the steam rising from the warm water. When we got up to the place where we had seen the Silver-studded Blues last year it looked completely bare, not a sprig of heather in sight, so I wondered what would happen to the butterflies later in the year. As S.N.C.F. were having a day or two of strike we were able to stand on the line to take photos of the bridges. We had a three hours walk up to the farming village of Planés and had our lunch on a sunny bank out of the wind. After a gentle walk of just over an hour we spent a relaxing hour in the water easing our muscles, rounded off by a quick beer before the drive home.

On the 28th of June we set off to repeat our Little Yellow Train randonnée of last year but one week later. This year the weather did not look too good but we set off in good heart. We saw several freshly emerged Apollos in somewhat wooded areas on our way up to Saint Thomas. Climbing up above the baths we soon started to see Apollos, they were in much greater numbers than last year and much more active, chasing each other around instead of as the books say 'drifting gently above the flower meadows'. There was no chance of any photos this year. When we reached the Silver-studded Blue area it was covered by very short flowering bell heather. Apollos were still chasing about above our heads but just above the heather there were lots of male Silver-studded Blues. I walked around the heather looking for females and I saw several fast moving brown butterflies flying around, but all turned out to be Grizzled Skippers. I rejoined the males in search for a female until just as I was about to leave I spotted a very fresh, lovely brown female, the ants had most likely only just left. From these observations it seems that both Apollos and Silver-studded Blues were at least two weeks later than last year.

We moved off with thoughts of eating lunch whilst sitting in the sunshine on the Roman Bridge. When we got there the cloud had blotted out the sun. By the time I had poured out my birthday Banyols it was spitting with rain and by the time they had sung Happy Birthday it was beginning to

pour down, so we ate our lunch under the bridge, with rain streaming down on either side. Within an hour the rain had diminished to odd spots so we set off again under a threatening sky and with no more butterflies to be seen. My hopes of seeing a Queen of Spain Fritillary and taking a photo had vanished in the rain. The rain held off and we were able to enjoy another aspect of the mountains. Today there were no open waggons on the train for our return journey but the ride in and out of the tunnels was just as exciting. I still felt sad about not seeing a Queen of Spain.

On the 30th of August we decided that our randonnée would be to the Rock de France, which is on the Spanish border and sports the aerial for Spanish Television in the border area. It was rather windy on the French side so we went just over into Spain

for our lunch. After eating I was partaking in a siesta when Gehart gave me a nudge awake and said to look at this as he put his camera under my nose. When I got my eyes into focus I could see a brown butterfly on a yellow flower and when I asked where it was he pointed to a spot about five metres away. I got out my camera, crossed my fingers and crept to where Gehart had pointed, and there, still basking in the sun, was a Queen of Spain Fritillary waiting for me to photograph it in its homeland. So, despite my disappointment in June I have managed to photograph a Queen of Spain. During the summer we have found several other areas of bell heather but not at the right time of the year. These areas will be monitored in hopes of finding further Silver-studded Blue sites.

A Flavour of Rhodes

Matt Berry

Rhodes, Greece, is the largest island of the archipelago called Dodecanese. It is much closer to Turkey than mainland Greece and is in fact the most south-easterly part of Greece. I am lucky enough to visit quite often and would like to share a little of what I know about, and have seen, of this beautiful place.

The majority of the island's population (approximately 100,000) reside in the town of Rhodes, at the northern most tip of this spearhead shaped land mass. The rest of the island is scattered with small towns and villages and is sparsely populated. I would imagine that the two things people will most likely associate with Rhodes are the bronze

statue of Colossus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World which was built there, and the island's renown as a tourist hotspot. Colossus has long since gone, destroyed by an earthquake in 226 BC, but the bronze connection continues thanks to the tourists who try to emulate his bronzed looks by basking on one of Rhodes' many warm sunny days, of which there are typically 300 or more a year! If the lovely climate, great food and warm friendly people aren't enough to entice a visit, then read on as I hope to reveal a little more about what this island has to offer, especially in terms of natural history.

Much of the natural landscape of Rhodes is made up of pine forest and garrigue, which

is a type of low, soft-leaved scrub and plant community in the Mediterranean. A lot of the island's wildlife reflects its geographical position southwest of Turkey in the eastern Aegean Sea, with quite a few eastern or Turkish species present. There are also a number of endemic species. These include several plants such a rare white peony 'rhodia' which is a subspecies of *Paeonia clusii*, or a yellowish-green Fritillary *Fritillaria rhodia*. Interestingly, there's a unique population of Fallow Deer on the island that was proven genetically distinct less than 10 years ago. Sadly they are a rare sight in the wild and have suffered due to pressure from hunting. The local population are unaware of their value, showing that there is a need to raise awareness and understanding of conservation on the island.

There is also an interesting form of the white-banded Grayling; in fact it's a subspecies, known as *Pseudochazara anthelea anthelea*. So far it has eluded me but I aim to track it down this year with a hike to one of the island's mountains where it is said to be found. It's possible to see several other butterfly species without a special trek though and there are in fact a number of species in and around the town and villages that can be seen whilst taking a leisurely stroll. These include Lesser Fiery Copper, Large Wall Brown, Lattice Brown, Scarce Swallowtail, European Swallowtail, Long-tailed Blue, Clouded Yellow, Eastern Dappled White, Aegean Meadow Brown, Black-veined White, Mallow Skipper, Two-tailed Pasha, Painted Lady and Red Admiral.

The medieval old town which is the largest inhabited one in Europe is a World Heritage Site. It is a 'must see' destination and home to the Grand Master's Palace, the Street of

the Knights, a labyrinth of atmospheric cobbled streets, and much more. I've never forgotten my first visit; it was so evocative of the past and of the famous Knights of St. John that continued there for 213 years that I quite expected to stumble upon The Grand Master or one of his knights around almost every corner! Wildlife can also be seen here; a ramble around the dry moat surrounding the town's fortified walls reveals butterflies such as Scarce Swallowtail and several different Whites, and various kinds of Lizards can be observed scurrying around the walls themselves.

One of my favourite butterflies found on the island is the Lesser Fiery Copper *Lycaena thersamon*. At one of the small sites I visit, I can often enjoy seeing peak numbers of up to 40 or 50 of these in the meadows. At the same spot, it's possible to see some special birds too - Sardinian Warbler, Black Redstart, Golden Oriole and Bee-eater, to name but a few of the highlights!

If you've never been to Rhodes or are tempted to visit and enjoy a relaxing holiday that mixes wildlife with culture, then you may like to know that I hope to lead a week long guided tour there later this year in May. As a competent wildlife photographer I would also run workshops - for example photographing butterflies.

Please get in touch with me if you would like to find out more. I can be reached via email at matt.berry1@sky.com or on 07599243026.

Also, to see a few photos from Rhodes, follow the link and then open the 'Rhodes' folder.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/matt-berry/sets>

The fifth in a series of monographs on Suffolk's seven BAP butterflies

Wall

Lasiommata megera

Status

The Wall, or Wall Brown, has been allocated to the BAP category of "Research Only", in recognition of the inadequately understood decline of this formerly common resident. Over the past 30 years, it has lost 38% of its UK distribution, following a similar pattern to the Grayling, and becoming more coastal. In Suffolk, it is no longer found as a garden butterfly in the centre of the county.

Distribution

The Wall has become lost from central Suffolk in the same way as the Grayling. It still flourishes on coastal wilderness sites like Orfordness, and is still found in small numbers in the northwest of the county, along embankments beside the Lark and Little Ouse, for example. However, it is now becoming an unusual sight for most people. The maps below contrast the 5 years of the Millennium survey with the most recent 5-year period (in which 997 squares were surveyed).

Ecology

The Wall is becoming rather choosy in its habitat preference, and is now unlikely to breed on areas of scruffy grass along fence lines and in unkempt gardens. Its favoured larval host grasses include Tor grass, False Brome and Wavy Hair-grass, species that grow in the wild, open places where it lives. It will not tolerate mown lawns or fertilized pasture. The adult butterflies bask on bare soil embankments in the sun, and individuals

are short-lived, typically just a week or ten days. It has two generations, flying in May and again in August. The progeny of this second generation pass the winter as tiny larvae.

Monitoring

The Wall has all but disappeared from the transects at Minsmere and the Fynn Valley, so only North Warren remains as a regular measure of the health of our populations. Sadly, the omens do not look good, as the recent decline has been abrupt. Counts of casual and garden sightings merely serve to confirm the deteriorating situation. The 2010 distribution map shows Wall in only 4% of the tetrads surveyed. The Suffolk Naturalists' Society is running a single species survey in 2011. Selected tetrads will be checked at the margins of where the Wall has been fading away.

Conservation

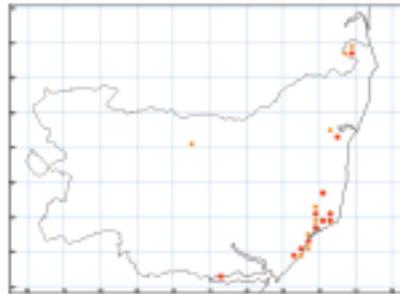
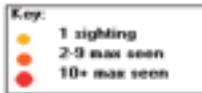
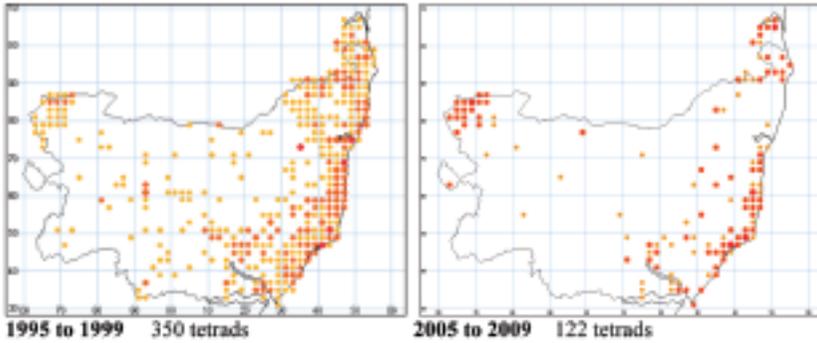
Butterfly Conservation has sponsored a postgraduate study of the causes of the decline of the Wall. No practical conservation measures are being taken in Suffolk, but safeguarding the sites where it is still found seems important. Given the progressive declines at protected sites like Minsmere and North Warren, it is clear that effective measures will not be easy.

Tailpiece

The Wall is a sun-loving butterfly that likes to bask on rocks or south-facing walls. Thus it often lives up to its name.

Rob Parker Conservation Officer (Butterflies) and County Recorder

Distribution of Wall *Lasiommata megera* in Suffolk



2010 Recorded from 21 tetrads
Note that none was seen in TL (West Suffolk)



The Wall from an unusual angle by Douglas Hammersley

Purdis Heath Restoration Project



Archaeologist's trench



Forage harvesting heather



George Millins builds an animal refuge

