

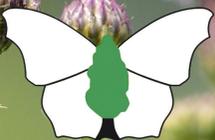
SUFFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

The

Suffolk Argus

Volume 79

Autumn 2020



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment





Top Left: Purple Hairstreak final instar larva by Mark Searle

Top Right: Painting by Elizabeth Merrigan aged 11



Bottom Left: Orange-tip larva on Honesty by Jane Leng

Bottom Right: Butterfly art by Valay Gada of Cobalt Designs, Delhi (photo courtesy of Toby Parr)



Purple Hairstreak



White-letter Hairstreak



Brown Hairstreak

Egg comparison by Mark Searle

Suffolk County Butterfly Recorder

The post of County Butterfly Recorder will become available at the end of 2020 when the present Recorder, Bill Stone, retires from the role.

The post is a Suffolk Naturalists' Society position, and anyone wishing to receive further details of the role should contact:

Martin Sanford, Chair, Suffolk Naturalists' Society
martin.sanford@suffolk.gov.uk

Or Peter Maddison, Chair, Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation
prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk 01473 736607

The Recorder's role is to encourage accurate recording of butterflies in Suffolk, to verify and keep county butterfly records and to produce an annual butterfly report for publication in the Suffolk Naturalists' Society Transactions and the Suffolk Branch of BC Suffolk Argus.

Thank you, Jillian..... Welcome Liz.

Jillian Macready has been our Membership Sec for the last couple of years and we thank her for all the work she has done for us during that time. We are delighted that Liz Cutting, already known to many of us for her interest in natural history and photography, has taken over the role and we welcome her to the Committee.

Peter Maddison

Suffolk Branch A.G.M & Members Event

The postponed 2020 AGM has been re-arranged for Saturday 20th March 2021 at
Stowupland Village Hall.

Grid Ref: TM 070600, Post Code: IP14 4BG Time: 2.30 pm.

Guest speaker - Martin Warren, Head of Development at Butterfly Conservation Europe and previously Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation.

The AGM will be followed by the guest speaker, members' slides, light refreshments and the annual photo competition. Further details will be announced in The Suffolk Argus and on the Branch website.

The most recent Covid-19 restrictions on meetings make this event, in its intended form, unlikely. If further alterations to the programme must be made, they will be announced on the website and in the Spring edition of the Suffolk Argus.

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Butterfly Conservation

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Editorial

Trevor Goodfellow

Lockdown easing assisted our recording and recreation in some small way since the Summer issue. Thankfully, I could rearrange some surveys and collect a few records and despite missing out on some early species things went ok.

Bill Stone is resigning from the County Butterfly Recorder role. His work has been thorough and enthusiastic and on behalf of fellow members, I thank him for his contribution and wish him well. Also, Liz Cutting is replacing Jillian Macready as Membership Secretary and they both will work side by side during the transition. Thanks for your hard work Jillian and welcome Liz.

I do not know if anyone else noticed anything unusual but at home, I saw only 1 Brown Argus and 2 Common Blues of first generation this year. Although, on the upside, 1 Green Hairstreak (a first) and 3 Small Heath (usually only 1!). Denise Mawhood emailed to report a good colony of second brood Brown Argus in her meadow and I was informed by other members of their first records of Green Hairstreak too.

Penny Child tipped me off to a colony of Brown Argus on waste ground next to a building site in Thurston where I counted 56! plus some Marbled Clover moths.

Other highs for me at home were records of adult Knapweed case-bearer, Six-belted clearwing, Hornet moth, and Leopard moth plus Hairy dragonfly and Long-eared owl.

Earlier this Summer I remember thinking 'no butterflies about' then a few days later it seemed that all the Meadow Browns hatched together in record numbers alongside some Large Skippers, followed by Small and Essex Skippers. Gatekeepers were a little later than previous

years and not overlapping with Large Skippers. One large clump of Nettles beside our bonfire hosted hundreds of Peacock caterpillars which I only noticed after eventually getting the bonfire lit. I kept the flames low and all was well, as only days later, after ravaging the Nettles, they migrated to pupate, some to quite a distance. It was not until July that fresh Peacocks joined a few Red Admirals and thankfully several Small Tortoiseshells, from late June, still on the wing.

Moth trapping was strange too as I caught nothing until well into May. Several interesting species recorded with an unusually high amount Buff-tip noted. After some experimenting, I have now made a lightweight portable UV LED Skinner trap (see page 12).

More than 6 wasp nests in and around the garden and lots of Crab apples about for food made moth trapping hazardous as hundreds of wasps vastly outnumbered the trapped moths.

In this edition we have lots of members lockdown stories, wildflower seed pack results, photographs, and other information, some of which were originally destined for the summer issue which was then devoted to the 2019 butterfly report. As this unusual year draws to a close, we might reflect on our observations and continuing wonder at our Suffolk lepidoptera.

Thanks to all those contributors who help make The Suffolk Argus interesting and informative.

Copy date for next issue: January 31st, 2021

Cover image of a Small Tortoiseshell by Mark Brewster

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Your lock-down observations

Rushmere St Andrew

David Gill

Our first Comma appeared in our garden on 4 April, and for the next three months I walked round the block (C. 3 km) as part of my daily exercise, usually in the early afternoon: largely suburban but with woodland behind. One particular location almost always guaranteed a Speckled Wood. Brimstones were present from 5–22nd April, Orange-tips from 10th April–18th May, Holly Blue from 26th April–3rd June, Meadow browns from 13th June, Red Admirals from 13th June, Commas re-appeared on 21 June.

The range of observations, both in the garden and on the circuit, can be found at:

<http://carolinegillwildlife.blogspot.com/2020/07/butterflies-in-garden-in-june-2020.html>

Moths Mating

Trevor Goodfellow

During the summer I contacted a keen local Lepidopterist, Helen Bye, who told me that she discovered a mating pair of Poplar Hawks (photo page 31) beneath a Willow tree in her garden in Kingshall Street, Rougham. “They remained like this from early a.m. to dusk and had disappeared in the morning” said Helen. Helen added: “I found them while gardening, initially thinking my day lilies were flowering strangely, then I realised that they were moths”.

Helen also sent me an interesting video of a White ermine laying eggs in her kitchen, she explained: “After limping around the kitchen for a couple of days in April, struggling to fly. I found her one morning very still and I thought she had died, then on closer look saw the tail end moving and tiny pearl like eggs being laid.

She died in that spot after laying and although we transferred the eggs to the garden, nothing became of them after 2 weeks”.

Nettle Nibblers

Debbie Broom

This comes from south of the Suffolk border as I live in Essex although a lot of my butterfly hunting is in Suffolk.

I have a local park just down the road so that is where I went for some exercise during lockdown. Around the middle/latter part of June I came across a larval group of peacock caterpillars. I think there were probably more than one hundred. This is something I have never seen before, but have always wanted to, so it really made my day!

I watched them over the course of a few days, munching away on the nettles. As I hadn't spotted them until they were quite large (probably about the fourth instar stage) it wasn't long before they started to move away and then within a few days they had all disappeared (as had a large patch of nettles/cleavers) to begin the next part of their life cycle. I have included a couple of photos: one shows part of the large group, the other, one on the stem of a nettle plant (photos page 31). However, my 1939 copy of Edmund Sandars' book *A Butterfly Book for The Pocket* says, “They are, rarely, found on the stems of the nettles on which they feed.” Perhaps things have changed since 1939!! If somebody can comment on this, it would be good to know.

Nature has this amazing way of showing us that, even in these most difficult of times, there is something wonderful to behold in the life cycle of the natural world.

Moth Recording During Lockdown

Neil Sherman - County Moth Recorder
(moth@sns.org.uk)

During the lockdown period earlier this year, many people started looking for ways to see the wildlife that could be found close to home in their own gardens. One activity that was either started or resumed after a lapse of some years was moth trapping. After all, it is an easy way to see a good range of species and the moths come to you!

It was noticeable that there was a flurry of activity on social media relating to moths caught in Suffolk during this period, with people reporting their captures along with some excellent photos. This was all really great to see and very encouraging for the future of moth recording in the county. However, as the County Moth Recorder, to ensure these records are not lost, I would like to remind people to please submit their sightings through the appropriate channels to ensure that they may be entered into the official records. Unfortunately, due to the volume of data I must deal with I do not have the time to harvest records from social media and there often isn't the full amount of detail to create a record anyway. Your data has important scientific value and helps us to understand what is going on with the moths found in the county. So, in addition to having an attractive image that will generate favourable comments and 'likes', your data will also help with understanding species' dynamics and assist with conservation efforts.

It has never been easier for recorders to submit their records now. This can either be done through the online recorder system on the Suffolk Moths website (www.suffolkmoths.co.uk) or can be sent in at the end of the year as a spreadsheet to myself (guidelines for the

information needed on the spreadsheet also on the website). Just a note of caution if you are sending in records - please check the criteria for the moth you are recording as if it is a rare or hard to identify species then more evidence (e.g. a photo) may be required to clarify the record. These criteria are listed in the species accounts on the website. Thanks must go to all those recorders who have already entered their data online, excellent work!

Once the lockdown restrictions were eased and we were allowed to go out for longer exercise walks you may well have spotted day-flying moths. Again, these sightings can be logged on the website with ease and are particularly useful as day-fliers are extremely under-recorded. So please send them in - it only takes a few moments. Similarly, I am sure many people had a good sort out at home during the lockdown. If you recorded moths in the past and found your old notebooks or files on your computer that you know you didn't send in, it would be great to receive these via the web-site or as spreadsheets (any paper records will require to be converted to electronic if possible please). Another activity that many people increased their interest in during lockdown was gardening. I did receive several requests for details of plants that are good for attracting moths during that time, so I thought I would name some that can be easily grown in gardens. Almost all plants that are good for nectaring butterflies will also be good for moths, but a few that I have in my own garden that I have put in specifically for moth larvae include the following:

- Purple Toadflax (*Linaria purpurea*) - foodplant for the Toadflax Brocade moth. This species has increased rapidly in the county and has very colourful distinctive larvae that can

easily be found on the plant.

- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) - good for the hawkmoths and if you are very lucky you may get the Broad-bordered bee hawk moth laying its eggs on it.

- Campions (*Silene sp.*)- good nectar source for many species of moth and if you leave the seed heads on the plant, you will attract the *Lychnis* moth which lays its eggs on them, with the larvae feeding inside the pods.

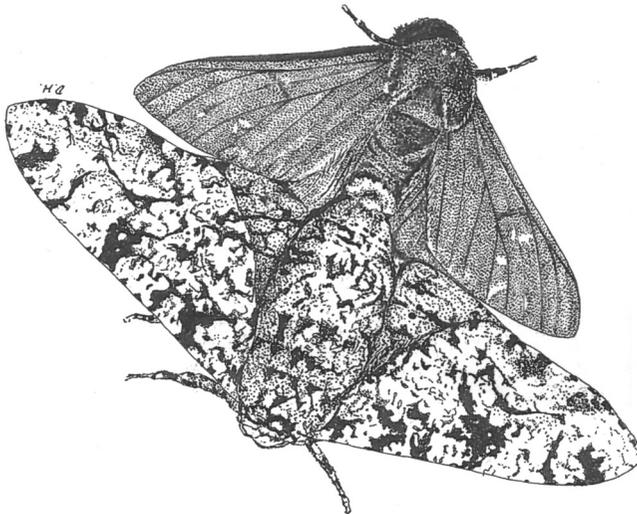
- Tobacco Plant (*Nicotiana sp.*) - will attract hawkmoths to feed from its deep flowers. Especially attractive to the large migrant *Convolvulus* Hawkmoth.

Broad-bordered bee-hawk

Mandy & Steve Beaumont

We have never seen them here before and understand they are relatively rare in the area we live in on the east-coast of Suffolk. Perhaps the Broad-bordered bee-hawk is more common here than we realised and in May, we happened to notice it because we've been out in the garden so much more during lockdown (although it has to be said we spend most of our time in the garden anyway!) - or perhaps they made it out here because everywhere was so quiet because of lockdown. I guess we will find out if we see them again next year.

See video capture here: <https://youtu.be/dLtSSpjpBrU>



Peppered Moths by Douglas Hammersley

Private Investigations

Mark Brewster

Having clambered through the fence, I stood for some minutes to watch the knapweed. Butterflies came and went, and I noted species and numbers. With my back to the sun, I then tapped the information into the iRecord app on my phone. From Google Maps, I worked out that I had some 8,000 square metres to check out, so I moved on to continue with my count. Following chance conversations in Northfield Wood, I had been invited to survey a large paddock. I had mentioned the apparent lack of Common Blues to the property owner, and it was this particular exchange that had led to the invitation.

The paddock in question is a short walk from my Onehouse home and I was keen to confirm and record the presence of Common Blues in particular. In this regard I was not disappointed, the number recorded on the day matching those of the Brown Argus.

An hour or so after I had started my survey, I had recorded nine species. I fed the information back to the owner with suggestions and advice regarding mowing and management of the paddock (thank you Peter and Julian). The news regarding the Common Blues then prompted a further invitation:

In the large front garden beside the paddock a few days later, I began a follow-up count. Standing beside an area of wildflowers I recorded more Common Blues. A similar variety of species were noted as, in the company of my gracious host, I made my way to a rockery area and into the back garden. An obliging Holly Blue fed at head height as we watched and chatted, and a short while after, I paused to record the Small Copper and Small Heath that had joined the blues on the rockery.

Photos page 31 and 32.



Sketch by Beryl Johnson

Green Hairstreak Observations

Kev Ling

With us all placed into lockdown, the imminent arrival of our first spring butterflies was at least something to look forward too. The challenge though would be to make our one hour of local exercise count. Butterflies can be temperamental at the best of times. Even blessed with nice weather, one is not always certain to see the intended target species.

One species that can be relied upon is the Green Hairstreak, once you know where to look. This butterfly chooses a varied selection of habitats including woodland rides and clearings, heathland, and hedgerows. It is also unique in the large number of larval foodplants that it relies upon. These include Birds Foot Trefoil, Gorse, Broom and Dogwood.

Widespread as it is throughout Suffolk, the Green Hairstreak can also be one of the trickiest species to find, as its superb colouration provides excellent camouflage against the bright new leaves where it perches. But once located, this enchanting butterfly becomes one of the easiest to observe and photograph at close quarters.

I have two sites that have become very reliable, with fresh adults choosing the very same spots year after year. My first lockdown walk to locate them this year was on 19th April at Kiln Meadow in Ipswich. Within 2 minutes of searching the Hawthorn, I had already bagged my first photograph (See photo page 16 (1)). This was my earliest ever sighting for this species.

Green Hairstreaks are territorial by nature and once disturbed, will nearly always return to the same branch. Once you have seen one, you are likely to enjoy an audience with them for some time. Another feature that makes them so enjoyable to observe is that they are one of our most tame species. This allows one to get very close. In fact, the accompanying photographs are all taken with my i-phone.

They always rest with their wings firmly closed. Their luminous green colours change depending on their angle to the sun, producing some stunning images. It is their positioning towards the sun that is also a particular behaviour of this species. In order to regulate their body temperature, the Green Hairstreak tilts its wings at an angle (See photo page 18 (2)).

My other reliable site for Green Hairstreak is Martlesham Common Nature Reserve. This is where I spend my lunch breaks during the spring and summer months. The habitat here is much different to that of Kiln Meadow. At my favoured spot, the Hawthorn is replaced by Gorse, with the butterflies flitting between them and bramble. Once again, the Hairstreaks were ever present each lunchtime and it was sometimes a wrench to leave them and return to work.

This really is a species that I have grown to love. Along with my other favourite, the Orange Tip, the Green Hairstreak kicks off the butterfly year in fine style.

DC Moth Trap

Trevor Goodfellow

In June, a Perspex fin on my home-made Robinson trap touched the MVB lamp which runs extremely hot and melted to it breaking the lamp, and the replacement lamp was faulty. I then needed to repair the faulty switch gear to run the MV lamp. I really wanted to keep this trap working after hearing the news that mercury lamps are no longer manufactured and increasingly difficult to obtain from suppliers' stock, so I decided to attempt to make a DIY LED trap.

I had discovered that UV LED (Ultraviolet light emitting diode) traps are available but very expensive so I first Googled UV LEDs and found that research into the ultraviolet spectrum output of the LEDs used in these traps has been extensive and I am sure that my version would not quite compete with the commercial traps.

After a lot of web searching, I concluded that I would not have the patience to construct the electrical kit from scratch to work the LEDs properly, so I considered commercially available options. Another key concern was that I wanted the trap to be easily portable so a DC power supply, preferable rechargeable would be favourable.

My web search continued until I found UV LED strips with switched leads and USB plugs on Ebay (photo below), although Amazon was equally good for about £12 each.

As these strips had USB plugs, before purchasing these, I searched for suitable rechargeable battery packs with USB power out sockets and found battery packs that were designed to recharge mobile phones etc. for about £25 (photo page 13). The joy of the

internet is being able to research and compare products for quality and compatibility before one's purchase.

Obviously, this would be a leap of faith as I had no idea that the finished trap would actually attract or even catch moths so I bought one LED strip (from China, doesn't everything!) and one battery pack then made a prototype trap to test the idea. Based on a plastic storage box with a funnel cut into the lid, it would at least give me some idea of functionality.

This caught some moths, so I purchased 3 more light strips to include a spare, this gave me the option of using all 3 outputs on the battery pack and individually switching each light.

I realised that the output rating limited the runtime but on a short summer night, set late in the evening, I could run 2 of the 3 lights, and possibly all three ok but 2 battery packs would be better for an average 5 - 6 hours. Longer nights might require connecting just one strip light to be sure of lasting till dawn.

For the original trap, I used an old bird feeder to house the 3 lighting strips, tidied up the wiring with spiral wrap and weather proofed it all. This unit was then used for my latest Skinner style trap which I built from the storage bin previously used for testing and various scraps of plastic (see photo page 13).

A plastic lunchbox was a perfect weather-proof housing for up to 2 battery packs and the small light switches.

One drawback is that the battery packs can take 3 days or more to fully charge from flat.

First test on 27/7/20, I set the trap at the edge of our cart lodge in case of rain and shelter from the wind at 22.00 hrs. (sunset 20.54 hrs) using 2 of the 3 LED strips powered by 1 battery pack.

After an unusual lay-in, I checked the trap the following morning at 08.00 hrs (sunrise 05.18 hrs) to find some success: *Agapeta zoegana*, *Carcina quercana*, *Chrysoteuchia culmella*, *Endotricha flamealis*, Engrailed, Scarce footman, Uncertain, and Willow beauty. Several Footman and *Crambids* plus a couple of unidentified escapees. A total of 20+ moths on a wet and windy night in sheltered position.

After a few minor modifications to help reduce escapees by slightly overlapping the bottom edges of the inclined plastic sheets, I tried a

second session a few days later, setting up at about 21.40 hrs on the 9/8/20 (sunset 20.29).

After sunrise, about 06.30 hrs the following morning, I checked to find the LED lights were still glowing, proving that the power is adequate to maintain a full night's trapping. This time I was using 2 battery packs: one powering 2 LED strips, the other powering the third strip. This test was equally successful, and captives included Poplar hawk, Straw dot, Scalloped oak, many Footman and *Crambids* and a few *Blastobasis adustella*.

I am happy to register this as a success, but I understand it will never be as good for attracting moths as the wider UV spectrum of a Mercury lamp trap. (*for further information please contact editor*)



Led Strip



LED Skinner Style Trap



Battery



DIY MV 'Robinson' style trap

Garden Nectar Plants - G is for Goldenrod

Richard Stewart

Our kitchen window overlooks an area of considerable wildlife activity including a small pond and Buddleias. Next to one Buddleia is a tall clump of Goldenrod, which needs little maintenance other than cutting back after its flowering period ends early in autumn. It is worth its place in the garden simply for the deep golden colour, but it also attracts many insects. We have noticed that leaf-cutter bees, using the nearby 'insect house', have cut out circular sections from Goldenrod, to wrap their eggs before inserting them in the different tubes. Margaret Vickery's many years of compiling the national garden survey produced an impressive twenty-one species of butterflies nectaring on Goldenrod, though it was the preferred nectar source of just one species, the Small Tortoiseshell. Our garden

total so far is just six, the Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Small Copper, Speckled Wood (surprisingly), Holly Blue and Comma. Each of these visitors gave a superb contrast of colour against the background of gold, especially a Small Copper which came for several days.

Incidentally, there is a taller American version of Goldenrod. A few years ago, at a Suffolk Naturalists' Society conference, a well-known television wildlife presenter said that Monarchs, overwintering in the Oyamel pines of the Mexican mountains, didn't feed at all. Marie and I have been to see them on two occasions and they most definitely do feed, visiting these tall Goldenrods which grow in sunlit glades within the forest.

Wildflower Seed Project

Kevin Ling

Earlier in 2020, Butterfly Conservation undertook a project to promote butterfly gardening, by distributing wildflower seeds to its branch members.

We hope everyone enjoyed the bonus present in their Argus and had success in sowing them, with a good show of flowers through the summer.

Some other plans for the branch sadly fell short of expectations due to the onset of Coronavirus. Kevin Ling and Julian Dowding had arranged a consultation with Clare Country Park, to further enhance their butterfly garden with wildflower seeding and the addition of larval and nectar foodplants. Unfortunately, with the park's volunteers forced into shielding, the opportunity did not present itself after all. This is a project that we hope to reignite in 2021.

However, there was success with a partnership between us and Greater Anglia to whom seed was sent for distribution amongst approximately 30 volunteer stations. Station adopters were

eventually able to plant seed and create wildflower patches for invertebrates at a number of stations including Melton. The volunteer at Westerfield station contacted us for a butterfly identification sheet and BCHQ gave permission to use our Big Butterfly Count leaflet. Greater Anglia have been impressed with this and want to use information on it for a permanent reversible sign, with bumblebees on the other side, financed by Greater Anglia. The people at Westerfield went ahead, but the press release indicates that the board/boards have yet to be installed.

There was more good news too, with wildflower verges planted along Valley Road, Ipswich (see photo page 16) This was overseen by David Dowding and Adrian Richards and our thanks go to them for adding a welcome burst of wildflowers to this area.

So even in these extreme times, BC Suffolk was still able to deliver some projects, whilst observing social distancing. Our thanks for everyone's efforts.



Corn cockle & Corn Marigold



Ox-eye daisies



Corn marigold

Wildflowers by Rosalind Amor



Musk mallow



Cornflower



Poppy

Green Hairstreak (1) by Kev Ling



THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY
SUFFOLK BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATION

<https://suffolkbutterflyconservation.org/>



*SBC Wildflower initiative
Valley road, Ipswich*



*Green Hairstreak (2)
by Kev Ling*



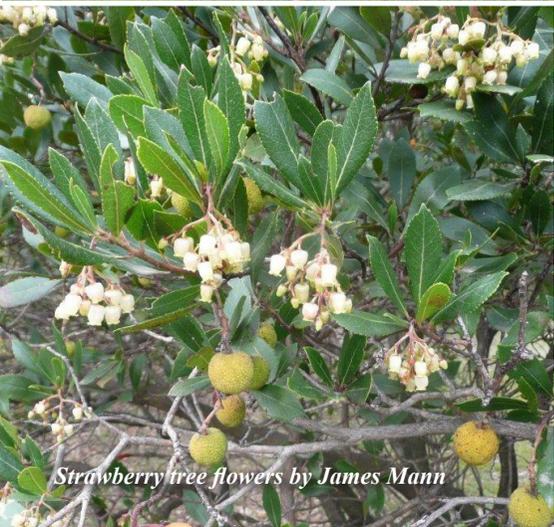
Strawberry tree fruits by James Mann



*Pond and Flower patch
by Rosalind Amor*



Wild flower patch by Rosalind Amor



Strawberry tree flowers by James Mann



Peter Maddison's display

Corn-Cockle by Jane Henderson



Hoverfly on Chamomile by Jane Henderson



Robert Quadling's display

Wildflower Seed-pack-feedback

Robert Quadling

The wildflower seeds have grown well, and I have Goldfinches attracted to some of the flowers taking the seeds, a few white butterflies

have visited the patch (photo page 18).

Peter Maddison sent a photo of his display (photo page 18)

Butterflies and Daisies

Rosalind Amor

At the beginning of this year I decided to build a pond to boost the biodiversity of wildlife in my back garden. With the use of the low nutrient soil that was dug out during the making of said pond I also decided to create a 'wildflower patch'. Thus, for a few weeks in high summer, a 4 x 7 ft patch of earth was turned into a vibrant, buzzing, tangled jungle of snaking poppies, yellow sun-disks, peeping flashes of blue cornflowers, bright eyed daisies, purple pentangles, delicate musk mallows and silvery grasses. The seeds I used were partly from the Kew seed bank, provided by my generous Uncle for Christmas, and partly from a native wildflower mix kindly provided for free by Suffolk Butterfly Conservation at the beginning of the year. I'd just like to note here that you don't necessarily need a space as big as 4 x 7 ft to grow wildflowers. I once grew some in pots made from recycled car tyres. Once the seeds had started to show shoots I set out, equipped with a copy of *Herbcraft* and my own intuition, to discover more about the new nature sprites that were now inhabiting my garden.

Corn Marigold (*Glebionis segetum*)

With their bright yellow petals and florets, it's easy to associate these flowers with the sun and with solar gods such as Lugh. Lugh is an ancient Irish solar god and it's from him

that we inherited the festival of Lughnasadh or 'Lammas' as it's more commonly known. (Basically, the beginning of the harvest.) In mythology Lugh decreed the 1st of August to be a festival day, in honour of his foster mother Tailtiu, who worked so hard to make the plains of Ireland fertile for crops that she died as a result. It's easy to see the work of Tailtiu in Corn Marigolds as they do indeed seem to be very attractive sources of nectar and pollen, especially for flies, bees and the occasional butterfly.

Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*)

The specific name of this flower, 'cyanus', comes from the distinctive colour of this flower, meaning blue. A common inhabitant of corn fields as its common name suggests, it has been the bane of farmers since ancient times due to its capacity to deplete the soil of valuable moisture which the corn requires. In the days of hand-reaping it would also blunt the sickles and stain them blue. Its flowers can be used to make a strong blue ink or dye.

Corn Cockle (*Agrostemma githago*)

With its purple flowers and blade-like sepals forming the shape of a pentagram (five-pointed star), this flower gives the fierce impression of being a witch's flower, at least

to me! An ancient inhabitant of corn fields, it is now become increasingly scarce due to modern agricultural practices.

Musk Mallow (*Malva maschata*)

With its delicate perfume and pale pink petals, this flower is very reminiscent of Venus and of love. Indeed, it is used in folk magic to attract love. In reality, this flower is particularly good at attracting the bees!

Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)

In the language of flowers this flower can be given to represent an obstacle and is a symbol of patience – something any gardener who has had to deal with daisies can probably empathise with!

With its faintly silvery appearance it is easy to see this flower's lunar qualities. It is also particularly associated with women. It has been used for a variety of women's complaints in country medicine and is particularly useful for women going through the menopause. It can be taken in the form of a tea, bathing herb or incense.

Corn Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)

This flower is a well-known symbol of remembrance due to its capacity to easily colonise recently disturbed ground including battle fields. Its seeds can germinate within twenty-four hours. During and just after the First World War, the battle fields were apparently thick with them.

On the commemoration of the Armistice day fake poppies are still sold to raise money for

those in the armed services.

With its three distinctive flowering stages this flower also reminds me of the triple goddess. The snaking bud as maiden; the flaring red flower as mother; and the rattling seed head as crone. This association of the poppy with the triple goddess can also be found in Ancient Greek myth. The myth features Demeter, the Greek goddess of the harvest. Demeter's daughter Persephone is abducted by the Greek god, Hades, to his realm of the underworld. Demeter then roams the land, overcome with grief at the loss of her daughter, and eventually the land around her begins to wither and die. At last Demeter ceased her roaming and sat down for nine days and nights. During this time the deities caused poppies to spring up around her feet. Breathing in their soporific scent she falls asleep. Meanwhile Persephone's father Zeus, concerned by the withering of the land, sends his messenger, Hermes, to visit Hades to ask for his daughter back to console Demeter. Hades agrees so long as Persephone hasn't eaten anything during her time in the underworld. Unfortunately, however, Persephone has eaten some pomegranate seeds. Therefore, from then on, it's agreed upon for Persephone to spend part of the year in the world above with Demeter but Persephone is also forced to spend part of the year in the underworld.

Robert Graves later expanded on the character of Demeter, stipulating that she is in fact composed of three goddesses: Kore, the maiden, symbolised as the green wheat seed; Persephone as mother, the ripened wheat; and, finally, Hecate as crone, the harvested wheat.

Acknowledgements to *Herbcraft: A guide to the shamanic and ritual use of herbs* by Anna Franklin and Susan Lavender, 1996, Capall Bann publishing.

When to Mow the Meadow?

Rob Parker

An enquiry from a member, received in February, asked for guidance on when it would be safe to make the first cut of the grass on a piece of land intended to become a private nature reserve mainly for butterflies.

It seemed curious that no-one had ever asked me that specific question before.

My basic position has always been to advise gardeners to put their mowers in the garden shed and throw away the key, as mowing is so destructive! But on this occasion, I sought to consider the basics of the situation and offer rational advice. Here is how it came out:

The species you want to protect are those that use grass as the larval hostplant, or a plant growing amongst the grass. Most of them are vulnerable because they have passed the winter as caterpillars amongst grass and they start eating grass when it gets warm enough for the grass to start growing; mostly they remain vulnerable as pupae on grass stems. Only when they fly off, have they escaped the lawnmower.

I have listed some handy details below.

Skippers:

Large Skipper feeds on grass until early May, still vulnerable as a pupa until late June.

Small and Essex Skippers likewise.

Lycaenids:

Small Copper feeds on sorrel/sheep's sorrel until the beginning of April

Brown Argus feeds on cranesbill & storksbill through to mid-April, doing better amongst unmown grass.

Common Blue feeds on bird's-foot trefoil through April, pupating and flying by May.

Browns:

Speckled Wood feeds as a larva until early March. It pupates amongst dense vegetation, flying in April.

Gatekeeper feeds as a larva until the end of May

Meadow Brown larvae feed at night, climbing to the top of grass stems until late May

Small Heath feeds to early April and pupae are vulnerable up to late May

Arguably the best solution is to hold back from mowing until the butterflies are flying, but you can anticipate the likely flight date as the season progresses. Cutting in March would slaughter plenty of larvae and waiting until late May would allow most species to survive to breed. Setting the blades to make a high cut (about 4 inches) will materially improve the prospects for larvae or pupae.

An alternative approach is to let grassland grow as nature intended, and to cut just once a year. To benefit your wildflowers, wait until September to ensure that they have had time to set seed. Think of the tedious cutting task that can be avoided by making that choice!

Approximate flight periods

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHALKHILL BLUE							X					
BRIMSTONE			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
SMALL TORTOISESHELL			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
RED ADMIRAL			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
PEACOCK			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
COMMA			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
SMALL WHITE					X	X	X					
LARGE WHITE						X	X	X				
GREEN VIENED WHITE						X	X	X				
ORANGE TIP				X	X							
GATEKEEPER							X	X				
RINGLET							X	X				
SMALL HEATH					X	X	X					
MEADOW BROWN						X	X	X	X			
GRAYLING						X	X					
BROWN ARGUS					X	X	X	X	X			
COMMON BLUE						X	X					
SILVER STUDDED BLUE							X					
HOLLY BLUE					X							
PURPLE HAIRSTREK						X	X					
GREEN HAIRSTREAK					X							
WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK							X	X				
SMALL SKIPPER						X	X	X				
ESSEX SKIPPER							X	X				
LARGE SKIPPER						X	X	X				
DINGY SKIPPER					X							
WALL						X	X	X				
SPECKLED WOOD					X	X	X	X				
SMALL COPPER					X	X	X	X				
SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY						X	X	X				
WHITE ADMIRAL						X	X					
PURPLE EMPEROR							X					
PAINTED LADY			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
CLOUDED YELLOW		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

Searching for Purple Hairstreak larvae

Mark Searle

I am an East Midlands BC Member but also subscribe to three or four other groups including the European Butterflies Group. For successfully locating Purple Hairstreak (PH) larvae, it is a case of spending some time trying to find the right location on good size Oak buds essentially in a sheltered south facing spot, and perseverance! Over the winter I identified about 20 in a local nature reserve, some in places where I had never even seen the butterfly.

The buds have to be large and healthy and quite often you don't find these on the lower branches of large mature Oak trees. All the ova I have found have, obviously, been at or below head height, often on quite young trees amongst other more mature trees.

Predation rates are quite high for the PH ova (and larvae). Of the twenty I labelled only 3 or 4 seem to have successfully hatched, with many disappearing, presumably eaten!

Once you have your eye-in, the ova are quite

easy to find. I tagged the branches with some red wool and then went back to keep an eye on them every few weeks until they finally hatched. The first instar for the PH is tiny only 1.5 mm and exceedingly difficult to spot. As they grow, they become easier to find with practice. Fortunately, I managed to find a couple of 2nd instar larvae on buds I had tagged. I have simply been keeping an eye on these since mid-April. The photo on page 2 is the stunning final instar, and this should pupate in the next couple of weeks. Finding the pupa will be a lot more difficult.

I hope this gives you some insights into the process. I have done the same with White-letter Hairstreak ova on Elm but soon lost the larvae as they grew. For egg comparison see photo on page 2. I also got involved in the Otmoor New Year's Day egg count this year for Brown Hairstreak ova (on Blackthorn) organised with the Thames BC group.

Flickr - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/135189540@N07/>

Hornet Moths

Trevor Goodfellow

I have noted the nationally scarce Hornet moths (*Sesia apiformis*) in the garden Lombardy Poplars since 2012 and over the years and noticed that they hatch every two years and normally over just a few days in late June or early July. This year I was keen to see that they were still resident, and I surveyed the base of all thirteen trees most mornings. After missing a day, I was annoyed to subsequently find a couple of hatched pupae in fresh 10mm exit holes a few inches above ground. It was good as evidence, but I wanted to see the adults and photograph them as I would have

to wait another two years for the next chance.

On the 30th June I was standing a few metres from the Poplars discussing work with a fencing contractor when I noticed a mating pair of Hornet moths on the fence post beside me. I dashed for my camera and got some shots (see page 31). I then studied the line of trees from ground level to chest height and found three more, two of which were mating. Mating appeared to take an hour or two then the male would fly away leaving the plump, much bigger female behind. I have not yet seen egg laying in action, but the books say they are glued

to the tree at the base.

I suggest that the larvae have synchronised their two-year cycle (*Waring/Townsend Field Guide to Moths* states 3-4 years at larval stage), feeding on the wood beneath the bark of the

Poplars, but whether this is a useful adaptation to maximise the success of a small colony, or just incidental I am not sure. The stability of small, and even mature, trees is probably affected in the long term.

Small Heath Conundrum

Andrew Leng

Does one butterfly constitute a sustainable colony? - Yes, if you are a Small Heath (SH).

Since 2014 every year for long periods (except possibly 2017 when maybe I did not record it) I have seen 1 SH in the same area of the field. About 20m x 50m but usually patrolling an area smaller than this. In 2014 I recorded 2 SH and this year I saw 3 but later that day only one and only one since. None anywhere else in the field. It has been there for a week now missing on the very windy days.

I know Red Admirals use regular patrol glades, I can often see one every year, but this is just a clear field and Small Heaths are not as common as Red Admirals. I cannot think that

one is finding and settling on this area every year. I think in this period we have seen one in our large garden meadow lawn and one along a trackside. When I saw the three there did not seem to be any territorial behaviour.

In August I counted 4 in close proximity which remained for a few days – maybe I had more opportunities to look this year.

So “one butterfly DOES constitute a sustainable colony if you are a Small Heath.”

(Similarly I noticed at home that the annual sighting of one SH became 2 this summer, then 3 in a second brood all very localised in a small patch of a meadow rich in fine grasses [Larval food plant] – Ed.).

The Strawberry Tree – an important nectar source

Richard Stewart

A friend living in Nacton has for many years, commented on late butterflies feeding on her Strawberry tree. Not having ever grown one, I didn't appreciate the importance until my wife Anne-Marie came home from a meeting on the 6th November 2019 and said that she passed a large tree in Kingsfield Avenue, North Ipswich (TM 166459). The sound of bees made her look up and she saw one Painted Lady and two Red Admirals nectaring. Subsequent visits produced four Red Admirals on the 9th November and a further nine on the same day

in another front garden at the corner of Henley road and Onehouse Lane (TM 161465). A third front garden specimen was also found along Constable Road (TM 169456).

The Strawberry tree has clusters of flowers like tiny urns (photo page 18) and the fruits resemble small round Strawberries (photo page 17), hence the name. it can grow to a height of over thirty feet and all three specimens mentioned were mature in both height and width.

Often the red fruits and flowers fallen to the ground are the first indication of its presence. This is obviously an important late nectar

source, still available after most Ivy flower umbels.

Wall Browns at Somerleyton

Lilian Pitt

We first became interested in butterflies seven years ago and now know some of the places to go to look for particular species at certain times of the year. The very helpful Sightings Page, updated regularly by Richard Perryman, being a great source of information.

We live at the very north of Suffolk, so we tend to move in an area about half an hour from home. We became interested in Wall Brown butterflies and discovered that apart from Carlton Marshes, where they are seen regularly, there was another place close to the River Waveney that we could investigate – Somerleyton.

There are several places in Somerleyton that can be visited that do have small colonies of Walls but having read about a sighting in Somerleyton churchyard in 2014 we set off to have a look. We found 6 Walls at the end of July that year some of them just by edges of the car park. The church stands by itself surrounded by Suffolk countryside and the graveyard is all around the church.

When we returned at the end of May 2015, we found that the edges of the car park had been cleared with the grass cut very short. No Walls and none that we could find at the beginning of August that year too.

We continued to return for the first and second brood times every year and by May 2018

we found 4 Walls including a mating pair. However, in August 2019, we visited at a time when the Community Payback team were strimming the graveyard with the result that bare earth was exposed. We saw one Wall and came home very concerned.

I wrote to the Church Warden to explain that Wall Brown butterflies are very uncommon in Suffolk and perhaps it was possible NOT to scalp the graveyard. I had a very positive response and when we returned in May this year, the graveyard looked different. The graves at the front were neat, as usual, but behind the church the grass had been allowed to grow around the gravestones. We found one Wall that time.

Our last visit, at the end of July this year, was a triumph. We found a wide variety of butterflies including 4 Wall Browns. One male had made his territory the tomb of the 3rd Lord Somerleyton.

I wrote to the Church Warden again to express my thanks and she has now asked for advice about when and how to cut the grass. Suffolk Conservation Officer, Rob Parker, has been happy to help with this one.

Let's hope that the Wall Browns of Somerleyton Churchyard will continue to thrive now.

Variation of *Aricia agestis* in Suffolk

Rob Parker

David Newland's article on the variation of *Aricia agestis* in South Cambridgeshire and Essex (Ent Gaz Vol 65 p.26-29) caught my eye at once, as we have had a few white-spotted *Aricia agestis* sightings in Suffolk lately, notably from Trevor Goodfellow (TG), seen where he lives at Green Farm, just outside Thurston near Bury St Edmunds. David asked for further information on the presence of an unusual form of our resident Brown Argus that exhibits a vestigial white surround to the black discoidal spot on the forewing, and which therefore looks more like *Aricia artaxerxes salmacis* than the regular *Aricia agestis*. Similar specimens have been named as form *snelleni* ter Haar, 1899 and as form *albiannulata* Harrison, 1906.

On 3 Sep 2012, TG photographed a female exhibiting the white surround and drew it to my attention. I gave him some background information, and told him to look out for more in 2013. He duly photographed a first generation specimen on 16 June 2013, and then a second generation example on 6 Aug 2013. This latter specimen is a male, whereas the preponderance of this form appears to be found in females. [Photo page 31] Interestingly, Green Farm hosts a healthy population of *A. agestis*, but the specimens showing the white halo were found only in one small patch of meadow; the remainder of the grassland has produced only the normal form.

An article was published in the "Suffolk Argus", the appropriately-named newsletter of the Suffolk Branch of BC, urging observers to report any further sightings. One reality, however, is that the butterfly generally sits wings closed, and needs to be seen close-up whilst basking before the white halo can be seen. Good digital photography now opens the way to discovering more about the distribution of this form. See David Newland's original article for further thoughts on the origin of this subspecies, form or aberration.

It is worth adding that the definitive work on the butterflies of Suffolk (Mendel & Piotrowski, 1986) contains a photograph of such a female, along with a historic note on 3 specimens taken at Lakenheath Warren in the 1860s. They had been attributed to "ab. *artaxerxes*" in 1918, but this possibility was discounted. Clearly, specimens with white halos have been around for some time, but as a small minority. Perhaps it is a normal variation within the *A. agestis* populations everywhere. After all, one of Richard Lewington's paintings in Thomas & Lewington 2010 does show this form.

References:

- Mendel & Piotrowski, 1986. The Butterflies of Suffolk, Suffolk Naturalists' Society
Newland. D., 2014. Variation of *Aricia agestis* (Linnaeus, 1761). Ent Gaz Vol 65, p.26-29.
Thomas & Lewington, 2010. The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland. BWP. p.125.

News round

Ashes to Ashes

Source: *Woodland Trust*

The Ash is foodplant of many moths including Privet Hawk, Poplar Hawk, Goat Moth and Leopard moth. But despite Ash die-back disease, there is hope.

Ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus Fraxineus*) originated in Asia (*like other things. Ed.*) and was first recorded in the UK in 2012 and it was expected that 95% of our Ash trees would be wiped out by the fungus, but recent studies have suggested that trees amongst closed canopies were more affected than those which stand alone perhaps driven by microclimates. Global warming may assist in the Ash's recovery as the fungus does not survive at 35 degrees C. and above.

Purging Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)

Source: *Internet*

Prickly and with the ability to purge. This plant's common name harks back its use as a laxative. It is an invasive species in North America. Both Purging Buckthorn and Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) are prime foodplants for Brimstone. Whenever you see some, check the buds in Spring and leaves in Summer for pointed shaped eggs (see Simon Water's photo page X).

Large Tortoiseshell

Source: *'The Times'*

Extinct in Britain since the 1960s, the Large Tortoiseshell could make a comeback. As Elm trees are their favoured foodplant, it seems unlikely, but this year's record 44 sightings might raise our hopes. These sightings are mainly Sussex and Kent but also Yorkshire, Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk.

BC's Richard Fox is requesting people to record

sightings via the BC website.

Feeling the Heat

Source: *'The Guardian'*

Scientists captured 4,000 butterflies by hand netting and measured their temperature. It was found that lighter coloured butterflies such as Whites and Brimstones were able to control their body temperature more successfully than darker species like the Brown Argus leading to suspicion that some species will struggle to cope with climate change more than others.

Monarchs

Source: *National News*

Homero Gómez worked hard in Mexico's Michoacán forest sanctuary to protect the winter hibernation habitat of millions of migrating Monarch butterflies. He was found dead in a well in Mexico recently. A second Monarch guardian was also found dead a few days later. It is thought that these passionate conservationists lost their lives due to conflict with illegal loggers in the region.

The Butterfly Brothers

Source: *Internet*

Released on 2nd April, Joel and Jim Ashton's book draws on the brothers' 15 years of wildlife gardening experience. "We are both thrilled to announce that our new book 'Wild Your Garden' is now available for anyone looking for inspiration on how to create their own wildlife garden".

Opal essence

Source: *Quest TV channel*

Opal hunters got excited when mining for the rich gemstone: Opal. After the death of his

father, a miner spotted a large black and white butterfly landing on a rock. Believing this to be an omen linked to his late father's spirit, he called out to his mining partner remarking 'Dad come to help us'. Indeed, the basketball sized ironstone boulder yielded a significant amount of 'Queensland boulder opal'. At 135,000 dollars per ounce the opal was a splendid revelation for the prospectors, the butterfly was indeed magical!

Heart to heart

Source: *BBC Springwatch*

Once thought to be made up of dead tissue like hair or nails, scientists discovered that each wing is 'not just a pretty face', it has a beating heart that pumps *hemolymph* (insect blood) at 12bpm to assist in temperature regulation.

Verge of destruction

Source: *Bury Free Press (Trevor Goodfellow)*
June 12th, 2020

'I have a life-long passion for butterflies and moths, in fact most insects. My daily walk about includes searching for caterpillars, which often gives evidence of a species' existence even if the adult has not been seen. This week, I was pleased to see several well camouflaged Orange-tip butterfly caterpillars feeding on roadside Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*) their main foodplant. Today, to my astonishment, the verges had been cut both sides of the road! This road is a single-track road seldom used, only by locals. Now several hundred metres of valuable wildlife real estate has been lost together with a whole generation of Orange tip butterflies. Other wildflowers like nettles, dock and grasses all support some of our ever-declining butterflies and moths. Why do the Highways/Council waste their money on doing this when there is no reason? Safety? That should be in the hands of those that use the road. In the village we have already had to come to terms with an incredible 1200 new homes proposed, doubling the size of the village

and consuming field margins, hedgerows, and trees on the way. Even the current developments have outraged residents by removing mature oak trees to make way for a footpath, plus my personal involvement in trying to save a row of Elm trees ended in failure when the developer removed 50m of Elms that hosted a colony of the endangered White-letter hairstreak butterflies which are solely reliant on Elms. The developer in this case agreed to mitigate this by including disease resistant Elms in the planting scheme, a bit too late some might say, but helpful. The natural world is becoming ever more attractive to people and they are now aware of the benefits of a diverse environment, so if they have to build houses on agricultural land, then use nature as a selling point and do more for the environment to achieve this.'

Winged wonders

Source: '*Country Life*'

In a Cheshire workshop, there is a designer who works with sustainable sourced butterfly wings to create masterpieces in a Victorian fashion. Cigar humidors, jewelry boxes and even wrist watches are exquisitely decorated using beautiful veneers and the iridescent wings of exotic butterflies such as Blue Morphos.

In the South American rainforests, local impoverished people are employed to feed and look after these beauties and after they naturally fall dead, they are carefully collected, packed and under international license shipped to the Cheshire workshop of 'Khamama' (Native Indian for butterfly).

The butterfly farms are already established for supplying zoos around the world so the use of the surplus dead bodies for vanity seems acceptable and ethical if their sale helps sustain these species. Many of the butterfly species used have a limited life-span of a few days, so at least we are able to admire their beauty after their natural death.

Micro-chasm

NHBS (books)

For those keen lepidopterists who want to expand their knowledge of British moths, there is an excellent book: *Micro-moth Field Tips (Ben Smart)*. A wonderful 2018 edition of the guide assists finding the early stages of these

illusive moths. Although it features Lancashire and Cheshire species, it is well worth getting, being laid out in a chronological order, and with a foodplant index, it is easy to follow. The extensive detailed colour photos of mines and feeding patterns, larvae, and adults too, assist the reader in identifying at least some of the 1,033 UK micro-moth species.

Ask Iris

Rose Budd asks: Why are some species of butterfly scarce or localized when their foodplant is common and widespread?

Iris replies: Good question Rose. Life cycles are sometimes reliant on other factors such as symbiosis and microclimates. As you know, the Large Blue's life cycle relies on the support of a specific species of ant which is lured by the caterpillar to take them to their nest and raise them as it would an ant grub. However, Black and Brown Hairstreaks use Blackthorn so you might think they would be common too. In the case of the Brown Hairstreak it is believed that historically, widespread annual hedge trimming has severely hampered their cycle as their eggs are laid on the current year's growth and at low level as opposed to White-letter and Purple Hairstreaks which are at a higher level in treetops. Marbled White, Grayling, Wall, and some Fritillaries should be seen more in Suffolk but in their case, it could be a legacy of extensive pesticide use and intensive farming. Maybe predation plays a part e.g. birds or insects and particularly spiders which may have some overwhelming control of the habitat that the butterfly cannot sustain. Around 85% predation is suspected in many butterfly species at all stages, including

hibernating adults in these less harsh winters, which puts a strain on them maintaining a colony.

Allan Quay asks: If it is illegal to introduce non-native species into the wild, how is it that game-keepers release thousands of French Partridge and Pheasants every year?

Iris replies: I agree Allan, it is odd but there is an exception for these species classified as game. Seems wrong as non-native species such as Mink, Signal Crayfish, Zander and unlicensed Catfish or Grass Carp are creatures that, if you catch them it is illegal to release them again. We should be releasing Grey Partridge instead, but they are a protected species so could not be shot for sport.

Helen Back asks: How long is a piece of string?

Iris replies: I have just measured it and it is forty-five inches long (it is a very old piece of string).

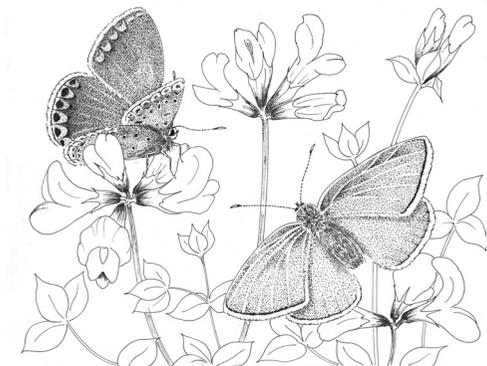
Any questions for Iris? Send them in to askiris@greenfarm.org.uk

Wordsearch

T	S	N	W	O	R	B	K	W	G
E	L	K	H	H	O	S	A	G	T
L	W	E	I	M	E	L	E	J	C
G	O	A	T	P	L	A	R	I	F
N	D	B	E	X	P	R	T	W	A
I	A	Z	M	U	E	E	S	H	E
R	E	D	A	D	M	I	R	A	L
S	M	A	L	L	W	H	I	T	E
J	O	A	K	C	O	C	A	E	P
T	E	N	R	U	B	T	H	A	T

1	Alder
2	Argus
3	Brown
4	Burnet
5	Egg
6	Goat
7	Hairstreak
8	Heath
9	Leaf
10	Meadow
11	Peacock
12	Red admiral
13	Ringlet
14	Skipper
15	Small white
16	SWF
17	Wall
18	White

Words appear in all directions:
down, up, left, right and diagonally.
One of the listed words does not
appear on the grid. Have fun.



Common Blue by Beryl Johnson



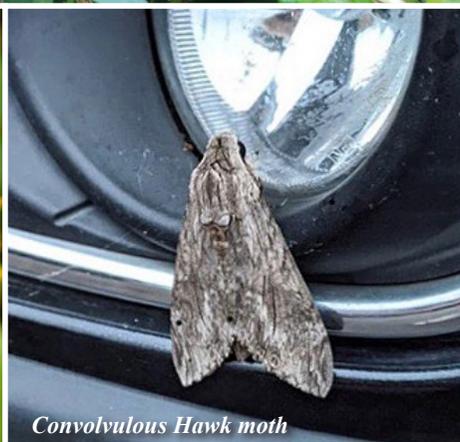
*Mating Hornet moths
by Trevor Goodfellow*



Comma by David Gill



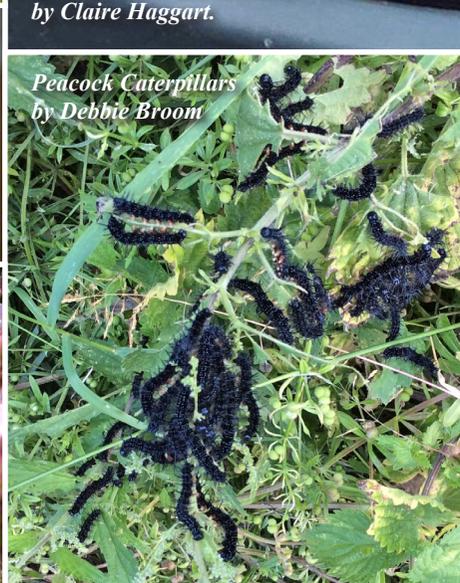
Brown Argus - ab snelleni ter Haar by Trevor Goodfellow



*Convolvulus Hawk moth
by Claire Haggart.*



*Leopard Moth by
Trevor Goodfellow*



*Peacock Caterpillars
by Debbie Broom*



*Small Copper by
Mark Brewster*



Poplar Hawks
by Helen Bye



Wrong mate
by Mark Gosbee



Small Heath
by Mark Brewster



Speckled wood
by David Gill



Brown Argus
by Denise Mawhood



Purple Emperor SWT
Bradfield wood
by Trevor Goodfellow