

SUFFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

The

# Suffolk Argus

Volume 82

Autumn 2021



Butterfly  
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



## The Suffolk Argus



Elephant Hawkmoths by Marion Wells



Intriguing Image found by Rob Parker



Six-Spot Burnet - *Zygaena filipendulae flava* by Trevor Goodfellow



Puss Moth Larva by Marion Wells

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Butterfly Conservation

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## **AGM and Members Meeting**

Saturday 30th Oct 2021

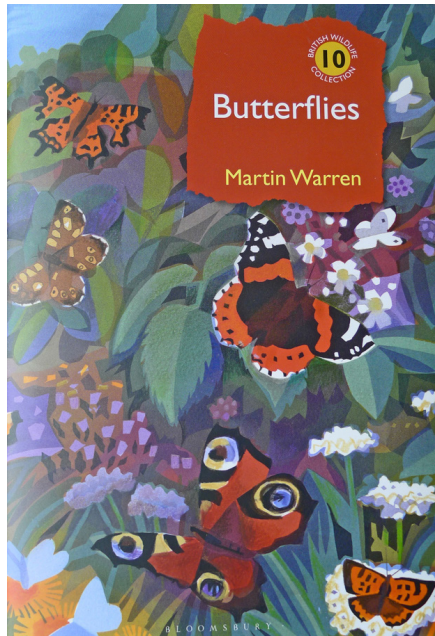
2.30pm

This will be a Zoom meeting.

Joining details will be available on the Branch website in early October.

The afternoon will start with a short AGM.

The Chair's Report for 2021 is printed within the Autumn Argus.



**Martin Warren** is our guest speaker.

He is a former CEO of Butterfly Conservation and is now Head of Development at Butterfly Conservation Europe.

Martin is the author of the recently published book

**‘Butterflies: A Natural History’**  
(British Wildlife Collection).

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## Editorial

Trevor Goodfellow

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the kind readers who sent me their praise of the new full colour summer edition of the Suffolk Argus, and I hope this issue is just as interesting to you.

After the stop-start weather, butterflies finally burst into life in late June and early July. Each species seemed to appear in bulk and 1 to 2 weeks later than normal.

My personal experience at home is that Brown Argus and Common Blue showed in single figures in 2 broods, but Holly Blues had a relatively good year in both broods.

Brimstone adult and caterpillars were scarce and Orange-tip also drastically down in numbers, not helped by the roadside verges being cut before Garlic mustard had flowered. A few weeks later, I noticed that another wide grass verge in the village had been cut, generously leaving two patches of wildflowers that were in bloom.

In July, well over a hundred Meadow Browns were eventually joined by Ringlets for a short while and Large Skippers followed by Small and Essex Skippers which seemed to last only about 3 weeks. Gatekeepers appeared around the 10th of July by which time the wild Privet blossom on which they normally fed was over and numbers soared to a peak at the end of July.

Still at home: I have also seen a few Small Heath, much more often than ever before but still only count 3 on any given day and with two broods showing.

Hornet moths were hatching in early July too, but I only found pupal shells to start with. My assumption is that these were males because on the 10th I found 3 mating pairs suggesting that

the females had only just hatched and lured their mates.

Peacock and Red Admiral hatches coincided nicely with the flowering Buddleia and presented a sentimental image of up to 15 of them feeding on the blooms together.

With 20 new species of moth to add to my list, and finding Emperor moth larvae for the first time, this Summer has turned out better than I expected. I also found a yellow spotted 6-Spot Burnet - *Zygaena filipendulae flava* (photo page2) and while surfing the net to establish how rare this version appears, I stumbled across a 'Hell moth'. Further investigation revealed that this beast is in fact a mythical character from 'Ogre Village' based in a role-playing game!

In the nicest way, I hope that many members have stiff necks from watching Emperors and Hairstreaks during those hot days of Summer, as I did myself. I have met several keen novice butterfly chasers often still learning how to identify even the common species. When I help them, I am always surprised when they refer to me as an expert, but as I always say 'expert – ex: a has-been and spert: a drip under pressure'.

I had many requests for the SBC moth traps and I was encouraged by the enthusiasm of these members who learnt to identify the moths and send in their records (see page 25-33).

Please keep sending me your observations and photos.

**Copy date for the next issue is January 23rd, 2022**

Cover photo: Silver-washed Fritillary at SWT Bradfield wood by Trevor Goodfellow

## Chair's Report

*Peter Maddison*

We made the most of the opportunities that the gradual easing of Covid restrictions afforded us, but clearly this has been a difficult year. The re-scheduled AGM and Members' Afternoon in March was postponed and re-planned for late October, but the resurgence of the pandemic and the understandable lack of confidence from our members in meeting together has caused the October meeting to become an internet AGM and talk by Michael Warren, which we hope will encourage more of our members to participate.

The general situation was too uncertain for us to initiate a major winter project, but we have plans for the coming winter period and for our members, Buckthorn plants for Brimstones are being sourced - more about that as the winter draws closer. Conservation work at Purdis Heath did not take place last winter and is not certain for the coming winter period but do keep an eye on the website as there may be a call to arms for conservation volunteers in the next month or two.

A full programme of events was planned in the hope that they would be possible, but those planned for the early season were stymied by Covid restrictions and later, people's natural reluctance to travel during a summer of indifferent, if not poor weather, meant that few events were well attended. Trudie's Open Garden Day was an exception, and we are enormously grateful to Trudie for donating £341 to the Branch, on top of which book sales of 'A Wildlife Garden at Aldeburgh' were high. We are delighted that our original outlay of £1000 towards printing costs has been recouped so further sales will be firmly in the black. Thanks to Richard Stewart for ensuring that local bookshops and other outlets had a steady supply of books during the period of Covid restrictions. The Open Day was made even more successful as Neil Sherman, CMR, was in attendance and

was able to show the contents of a couple of moth traps and talk moths and nothing to an eager audience.

A huge thanks is due to all who planned and led walks during the season. If members know of good butterfly walks in their areas, or land with butterfly potential for which permission may be sought for a butterfly survey, do please get in touch with the committee.

The annual photo competition was held online during the winter period and drew a larger number of entries than previous competitions. Thanks to Richard Perryman, Liz Cutting and Kevin Ling for their organisation of this successful event. We intend to run the competition again in early 2022. After eight years in the post of County Butterfly Recorder, Bill Stone resigned from the role at the end of the 2020 season. A presentation of a signed and annotated Richard Lewington butterfly print was made to Bill and recorded in the Summer Argus. James Corton has stepped into the role, and we wish him every success in this vital position.

We are keen to hear of conservation projects that we can assign to our Susie Mellor Legacy. The previously mentioned Brimstone and Buckthorn project will be financed by the legacy. In the west of the county at a private site we have a well-monitored colony of Chalk Hill Blue butterflies. Following on from Twm Wade's CHB project on the A14 embankment near Newmarket, he and Nigel Hannay have been working on improving habitat for the species in the locality. This is being financed by the legacy. Members are encouraged to suggest conservation projects in their areas that would benefit from being financed by the Branch.

Do get in touch if you have a project in mind.

In the early summer three moth traps were purchased, one of which has been loaned to the Suffolk Moth Group for survey work.

## *The Suffolk Argus*

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The other two have been made available for our members' short-term loan and the immediate take up of both traps was pleasing. Contact Trevor Goodfellow if you wish to borrow a trap.

We are grateful to all our members who are able to give some time to the Branch.

This might be in the form of recording, particular thanks to those who take on the regular recording of transects and WCBS squares.

There are transects in the county where we would like to build teams of recorders. If you think you

could become involved in this important form of recording, please get in touch with Twm Wade. We are always ready to welcome new people to help with committee matters.

If you have a particular skill to offer or would prefer to take part without a specific role your help would be much appreciated. Please get in touch.

Let us hope that 2022 will be a really good year for Lepidoptera and Lepidopterists!

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## **SITUATIONS VACANT - BURY ST EDMUNDS**

Around Bury St Edmunds there are three butterfly transects: Nowton Park, Lark Path and Spring Lane. Help is needed to spread the burden of weekly walks counting butterflies.

Pollard Walks more generally known as transects, use a scientifically acceptable method of monitoring butterflies. Using the same method along the same route year after year enables comparisons to be made over time both locally and nationally. The more volunteers the easier it is and you can share your experiences with others walking the same route on different days.

NOWTON PARK is on the eastern perimeter of Bury St Edmunds and a very pleasant place to walk. The transect was established in 2010 and takes about an hour to walk. There are mixed habitats of grassland and different woodland on the route. Over the years 22 species have been recorded.

Point of contact: [twm.wade@yahoo.com](mailto:twm.wade@yahoo.com)

LARK PATH is next to the rugby club. The transect follows a short section of the River Lark on both sides and was established in 2017. It takes an hour and a quarter to walk and the present volunteer finds it too much to do every week along with other commitments. In the short time the transect has been walked, 20 species have been recorded.

Point of contact: Jillian Macready, [jmacready@outlook.com](mailto:jmacready@outlook.com)

SPRING LANE is just west of the town centre. The site is some open space adjoining the railway. The transect was established in 2000 and takes about 40 minutes to walk. Over the years, 18 species have been recorded. Managed by the local council, the habitat changes with staff and contractors so makes a good comparison with other sites.

Point of contact: [twm.wade@yahoo.com](mailto:twm.wade@yahoo.com)

Please contact Twm Wade at [<twm.wade@btinternet.com>](mailto:twm.wade@btinternet.com) if you wish to become more involved with a transect or other work helping butterflies to flourish.

Twm Wade  
Transect Co-ordinator  
Suffolk Branch Butterfly Conservation

Every butterfly counts



## Newsround

### Dunwich Forest Transect Walks

*Peter Smith*

I have been involved with the Dunwich Forest butterfly survey since 2012. Initially there were about a dozen participants covering two transects. However, our numbers gradually dwindled, reducing coverage to a single transect. Over the last 5 or 6 years, there have been only two of us left and in fact, for various reasons, in two years I have surveyed alone.

From my own point of view, I am perfectly happy to continue my fortnightly involvement in the 26-week survey season and will continue to do so for my own interest. For me, the benefit of regular visits to a single transect has given me in-depth knowledge and expertise missing from the original system where I felt I was only dipping into the survey and gaining a superficial insight into the species and their patterns of emergence. But, if I put my feelings to one side, for the sake of the continuation of the survey, the branch needs to find new blood. None of us are immortal or likely to remain fully functional forever. We need to be able to pass on the baton so that the survey has long-term viability.

For those of you not familiar with the survey parameters, involvement lasts from April to September with, ideally, records in each of the 26 weeks. The survey follows a set route subdivided into 9 sections of roughly similar length. Numbers of each species are recorded in every section plus a basic record of the general weather conditions. The start and finish times are also included, with the walk taking about an hour (50 minutes when species are scarce, 70 minutes at peak times).

Although the walk is on Forestry Commission woodland, the range of species present is good, and the numbers can be extremely high. Conifer plantations are softened by the presence of

deciduous trees along the ride margins, where honeysuckle, brambles and in some places heather also occur. The transect is adjacent to heathland which draws in further, unexpected, species.

I have recorded 24 species. These include woodland specialties like White Admiral and a discrete population of White-letter Hairstreaks which are hanging on around some rather scrubby, sickly elms. Speckled Wood are recorded in most of the seasons and are widespread. Ringlets appear in spectacular numbers (200+) during their fairly short season with Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper good numbers. 2020 offered Purple Emperor and Silver Washed Fritillary for the first time, although I recorded neither this year. Holly Blue and Small Copper are present, as are, intermittently, Grayling and Common Blue. The proximity to the coast also produces periodic welcome concentrations of Painted Lady and Red Admiral.

Dunwich Forest – I like it. So could you.

My wife says that if even this is not enough don't forget Dingle Tea Rooms which is about a mile away from the survey site on the edge of Dunwich. (Want to know more without commitment please contact Twm at [twm.wade@yahoo.com](mailto:twm.wade@yahoo.com) or Peter Smith at [pjs1591@talktalk.net](mailto:pjs1591@talktalk.net))

#### **Smile!**

Butterfly Conservation recently received a quarterly donation of £375.29 (August 2021) from AmazonSmile, thanks to customers shopping at [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) or with AmazonSmile turned ON in the app.

To date, Amazon has donated a total of £2,111.42 to Butterfly Conservation and a total of £10,771,114.58 to UK charities.

## The Suffolk Argus

### Help or hinder?

Editor

Martin White died last year leaving a legacy of both successful and unsuccessful unofficial re-introductions of butterflies such as Adonis Blue, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, and many other species either designated as extinct or at risk.

A man passionate about butterflies and knowledgeable in the field of lepidoptera, he bred many species at home, filling his garden with potted and netted foodplants.

White travelled the country far and wide by train and cycle (he didn't drive) releasing larvae, eggs, and imago after locating suitable potential habitats.

### Giant Discovery!

Paraphrased from 'The Guardian' article

The discovery of the Madagascan Orchid *Angraecum sesquipedale* puzzled Darwin and early botanists as the nectar was so far, (30cm) deep in the narrow trumpet shaped flower, making it difficult for a pollinator to reach. Darwin predicted that a yet undiscovered moth might be the key.

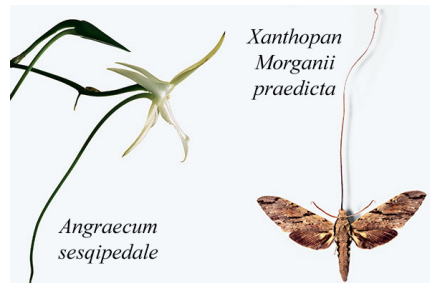
20 years after Darwin's death, the huge subspecies of moth found in the Congo: *Xanthopan Morganii praedicta* (see below) was discovered and it was confirmed that indeed it had the necessarily long

He has published various books and papers, and I recently found online, his thorough article: 'Of Lincolnshire High Skies, Hay Meadows and Mazarine Blues *Cyaniris semiargus*'.

Undoubtedly frustrating many recorders around the country, he had many cohorts both here and abroad who helped him source specimens. These like-minded people carry on their releasing to this day.

Readers will no doubt have different opinions of White's work, but who can deny the pleasure of that fleeting glimpse, a surprise sighting of a species that has reappeared after many years of absence?

proboscis which it used to feed on the Orchid and pollinate it. This moth was named after Morgan who discovered it and 'predicted' in honour of Darwin's theory.



### Events Report

You can keep up to date about the Theberton Wood thinning work by visiting the SBC website at [www.Suffolkbutterflies.org.uk](http://www.Suffolkbutterflies.org.uk)

#### 6/6/21 – Brampton Wood Walk for Black Hairstreaks

Peter Maddison

Cancelled due to the Hairstreak's not yet emerged.

#### 3/7/21 - Northfield Wood Event

Kev Ling

With Covid enforcing a long absence between events for Suffolk BC, it was great to be back amongst the action on 3rd July at Northfield Wood, Onehouse. This ancient woodland is over 400 years old and covers an area of over 80 acres. Managed by the Woodland Trust, they are continuing their work to restore its original native broadleaf cover, including the removal of conifers that were extensively planted there during the 1960s.

The wood now supports a wide biodiversity with a large range of flora and fauna to enjoy. Based on the previous year's sightings, the date for our event was selected to make the most of freshly emerged woodland species such as Silver Washed Fritillary and White Admiral.

However, 2021 was doing its best to challenge that theory with the emergence of most species delayed by up to two weeks. In the run up to the event I was receiving updates from fellow BC member Mark Brewster, a local resident and expert on the location. Both target species were yet to put in an appearance, and it was looking like Speckled Wood may be the highlight of the day. However, on the eve of the event, Mark confirmed that Silver Washed Fritillary had emerged. All we had to rely on now was the good old British weather. You can guess what's coming next, can't you?

Sunshine the day before, made way for lead grey skies and the threat of storms at the start of the walk. Unperturbed, a small group of us set out, with Mark enthusiastically providing us with a fascinating insight into his local wood. The advantage of some species is that they don't solely rely on sunshine to be active and almost immediately we had seen single examples of Red Admiral, Meadow Brown and Ringlet. As we explored the wood further, we identified areas that would produce Silver Washed Fritillary if the conditions were right. There were plenty of insects and flora to focus our attention too, including nice swathes of Common Spotted Orchid.

After an hour and a half of exploring, the weather gods looked down on us, the clouds parted, and a brief spell of sunshine flooded into the woodland rides. We headed to our favoured spot and were immediately treated to the appearance of two Silver Washed Fritillary, observing them at close quarters as they nectared on bramble. There was also a fleeting glimpse of a Purple Hairstreak ascending into the Oak. With the appearance of the sun, the rides quickly became a hive of

activity with over twenty Ringlet and Meadow Brown taking to the wing. They were joined by further Red Admirals, Large Skipper, Speckled Wood, Small White and Large White. From what looked like an unpromising start, we had amassed a modest nine species. Our only absentee on the day was White Admiral. Their flight season in Suffolk was only just getting underway, albeit a little late by normal standards.

On reflection, it wasn't just what we saw that made the walk so enjoyable. It was the company I shared it with and the knowledge I gained from them during the walk.

My special thanks to Mark for being such a great co-host.

I returned to Northfield Wood with Mark on the 17th July on a hot sunny day. The count of Silver Washed Fritillary had risen to 44 (including a pair in copulation) and 4 White Admiral were seen, along with the emergence of several Purple Hairstreak. With good numbers of other expected species seen too, it made for quite a follow up visit.

### **8/7/21 - Cavenham Heath**

*Sharon Hearle*

It was great for a small group of Suffolk members to be back out on site for a leisurely stroll at Cavenham Heath looking for day flying moths and butterflies on a mostly cloudy day with intermittent sunshine. Cavenham Heath is a large National Nature Reserve in West Suffolk managed by Natural England and a classic Breckland site with dry acidic sandy soil, heather, and dry grassland plus areas of birch woodland. Forester Moth was our target as it is a priority species in Suffolk, and we managed to find several. All the Forester moths were recorded along the margins of the main track through the site where disturbance has encouraged flowers including Creeping Thistle, Vipers bugloss, Ragwort, Yarrow and Knapweed all known to attract Forester moth and we managed to find 4 on Vipers Bugloss blue flowers and 1 on Ragwort.

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Forester moths are shiny, emerald green in colour and are very difficult to spot flying over grassy vegetation, the caterpillars feed on Common Sorrel on open heathland and dry grassland in the Brecks.

There were numerous Small Heath and Small Copper plus occasional Small Skipper, Meadow Brown a single Painted Lady and a few Large White butterflies seen. It was too cloudy and cool for any Silver Washed Fritillary in the woodland parts of this walk, but we did see Red Admiral and dozens of Ringlets.

An adult Fox moth found at rest on the heath. The Fox moth is common across Breckland, also found along the Suffolk Coast and often encountered as a distinctive large hairy black and brown caterpillar sunbathing in late autumn or early spring.

A single Pearl Grass Veneer *Catoptria pinella* was spotted and is a striking micro moth with bold white marks. It is fairly common and widely distributed in Suffolk. We also saw several Straw-barred Pearl *Pyruasta despicata* a tiny day flying micro moth commonly encountered in the Brecks and along the Suffolk Coast heathlands and dry grasslands.

The Ragwort was covered in Cinnabar larvae, and we also saw a Cinnabar moth adult and Silver Y.



*Forester Moth by Sharon Hearle*

### **10/7/21 - SBBC Event Dunwich Forest**

*Peter Maddison*

Dense cloud and very light rain throughout the morning, but that didn't stop newly emerged Ringlets (50+) from being on the wing on the open rides. 15 Meadow Brown, 3 Small Skipper, 3 Speckled Wood, and 1 Red Admiral.

At the end of the walk and within 100m of the car park a White Admiral put in a brief appearance on a bramble patch - target species achieved!

### **31/7/21 – Pakenham Wood Butterfly Walk**

*Trevor Goodfellow*

I took the place of Rob Parker to lead the walk with Jillian Macready on a potentially dingy day. We met David and Mark in the church car park with the prior approval of Rev. Katherine Valentine. As I was only aware of one person 'signed up' we started walking at the arranged 10.00 hrs. within a few minutes Twm arrived and caught us up (sorry Twm). I had thought that the dull weather may have prevented us seeing the targeted Silver-washed Fritillaries (SWF) and White Admirals but after a stroll along the sunlit southern edge of Pakenham wood to a concrete apron at the end, we found SWF, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Comma and Large Skipper on bramble and teasel. We then doubled back to the woodland glade access and passed Bramble and Honeysuckle leading to the open glade where we hoped to see White Admiral. Twm magically summoned up some bright sunshine

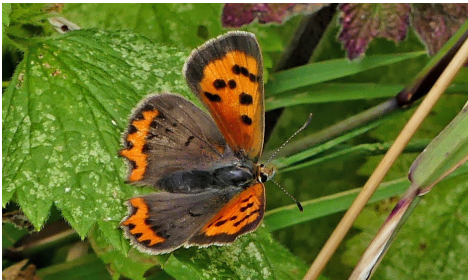


*David - Jillian - Twm - Trevor watching Purple Hairstreaks by Mark Brewster*

and butterflies rose from the undergrowth, and we were treated with a pleasing display of several SWF, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Red Admiral, and a fleeting glimpse of a White Admiral. As the sunlight persisted, we spotted a Purple Hairstreak active in an oak tree and on the return walk between paddocks, Mark spotted a Small Copper. David was especially delighted that his trip from Cambridge to see the SWF and White Admiral was a success and we all felt uplifted by the sight of 17 species in total not counting a possible sighting of a Purple Emperor in the canopy of a large oak. I updated Rev. Katherine who was delighted with our success, and she now wants to come on our next walk.



*Purple Hairstreak by Mark Brewster*



*Small Copper at Pakenham by Mark Brewster*

### **1/8/21 - Open Garden Day at Priors Oak Aldeburgh**

*Richard Stewart*

My book about Trudie's garden was unfortunately published just before the first lockdown so it was decided that visitors should be invited to make

a donation of £10 to include the book priced £7-50. The remainder would go to our branch. The result was that by the end of the day, adding other money Trudie had collected, the sales of the book had led to an actual profit above the cost of publication of £76-19. A total of £729 was collected at the main entrance with thanks to Anne-Marie Stewart who was on duty there most of the day, supported by Alan Johnson.

Those just visiting in the morning didn't see many butterflies- just Gatekeeper, Essex skipper and Grayling on my guided walk with other visitors adding Small Copper, Red Admiral and Meadow Brown. However, Swallows were nesting in the shed near the car park and there were repeated calls from Buzzard and Green Woodpecker. A Tortoise that had escaped from its compound caused some excitement.

Thankfully Neil Sherman, the County Moth Recorder, had a selection of moths to be inspected which included the beautiful Large Emerald and the Pepper moth, which I explained had changed its colours to give more effective camouflage as pollution levels changed. Fortunately, a small Elephant Hawkmoth was also there, and I was able to point out its larval food plant, Rosebay Willowherb, growing along the edge of the nearby pond. It was good to see Neil encouraging children to gently hold the larger moths.

Ivan and Val Lockwood added fifty per cent to the existing butterfly total with Large White, Small White and Speckled Wood but it was still disappointing weather after all the organisation by Trudie and Peter Maddison. Then at about 1.30pm the sun came out and so did the butterflies, especially along the Buddleia Avenue where five Red Admirals were counted on one bush and a similar number for Painted Lady. Val and Ivan respectively found Brown Argus and a Hummingbird Hawkmoth while Grayling were even landing on parked cars. Hornet and Common Darter dragonfly complemented Green-veined White, Peacock, Comma, Small



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Heath, Ringlet and Purple Hairstreak, bringing a day total of seventeen species.

Once again, we are indebted to Trudie for her generosity and, given the delight of visitors particularly along the butterfly thronged Buddleia Avenue, I couldn't resist relating one of Trudie's stories in the book. This was on a day when, literally, there were too many butterflies to count on some Buddleias. She was behind two visitors, one remarking to the other about the butterfly abundance. The second replied that Trudie had probably released them just before the visitors came!

### **7/8/21 - SWT Carlton Marshes**

*Peter Maddison*

This was an event postponed from August 2020. There was a limited number of participants on this breezy day, but guided by Robert Quadling, we did manage to see a Wall Brown. Also, between the showers, we saw Red Admirals, Peacocks, Painted Lady, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, all of which were keeping their heads down along the more sheltered paths.

Many thanks to Robert Quadling for showing us around and for finding us a female Fen Raft spider.

### **7/8/21 – Pakenham Water Mill Wildlife Day**

*Trevor Goodfellow*

Yet another dreary start to the day with heavy showers and a stiff breeze, it was not looking very good for the 'Big Butterfly Count' today. Very few visitors but the first to show interest in butterflies were a lady and her 7-year-old grandson who quickly got the hang of identifying Meadow brown and Gatekeeper after the sun broke through revealing blue skies. We took a leisurely stroll through scrub and wildlife garden which included a few butterfly bushes. This walk revealed 8 species: Peacock, Red Admiral, Meadow brown, Gatekeeper, Large/Small and Green Veined whites, and a Comma. Before leaving I did see a Painted Lady, confirming my suspicion when earlier something flashed by.

Very poor turn out probably due to the weather. Highlight for me was the sight of a Slow worm under a sheet of tin in the wildlife garden.

### **8/8/21 – Summer Scythe Experience**

*Julian Dowding*

An excellent Sunday event with 5 attendees. Weather was kind to us with just one light shower which everyone worked through (you can cut when it's raining or wet). We cut two sections of rough grassland and a wildflower meadow. With all trainees showing aptitude and having learned the basics of mowing, we hope they will continue with the tool in their own areas. Indeed, 2 trainees have already purchased their own scythes from Emorsgate, and we gained another BC member from the event. Among the sightings during the event were: Brown Argus, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Pantalooned Bee (*Dasypoda hirtipes*), Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*), Grass Snake and Slow worm.



*Scything team by Steph*



Steph's selfie at the Scything Experience

### 11/8/21 – Grayling survey (unscheduled)

*Trevor Goodfellow*

I volunteered to assist Sharon Hearle with a Grayling hunt on the 12th of August after she had news of some spotted by a birder in the King's Forest. When the time came Sharon was unavailable, so, fearing that the weather might change, I grabbed the opportunity of a sunny morning preceding the 12th and ventured to a patch of ground in the forest which Sharon had organised to be managed for the Grayling. Despite the breeze, it was a pleasant sunny 20 degrees centigrade and I felt that if they were there, I would find them. I combed the area back and forth over bare ground, short heather and dry short grass and counted 12 in total. More than I have seen there before.

They were scattered but mostly nectaring on the heather flowers, sometimes in twos. Other sightings: many Small heath, Small copper, Brimstone, a few Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, Large white, Green-veined white, Small white, and adjacent to the site where scabious and

other flowers were in a sunny position there were 20+ Peacocks, 6-spot Burnet and more Browns. A very good morning but as with any butterfly count, more pairs of eyes always help. As the Grayling were not very active until disturbed, I could be reasonably sure I wasn't counting the same ones more than once.

### 14/8/21 - Langham Walled Garden

*Trevor Goodfellow*

Not in our calendar but being local I accepted a request for a 'butterfly man' as an added interest for the visiting public. Catherine (botanist) and Steve (woodsman) who run the garden are both passionate conservationists and they have a 'moth man' who recorded 100 species recently including most of the hawk moths and thrilling sightings of Purple Emperor and Silver-Washed Fritillaries were not surprising judging by the garden's location near known sites of these species. Steve said 'I was in the poly-tunnel and caught sight of a large butterfly, seemingly quite docile, it (Purple Emperor) crawled onto my finger when I helped it outside. It looked like it was feeding on my perspiration'. Steve also told me that a birder had watched a Purple Emperor in the treetops and remarked 'oh, a dragonfly too – ooh! A Hobby, oops no more Emperor or dragonfly'.

I was made very welcome and given a preview of the ancient 4 acre walled garden. Hosting many heritage and traditional vegetables, and a wide variety of ornamental plants and flowers with accents of wildflowers all grown organically and ethically.

Just a few people through the gate including those buying produce, made for a quiet day in the sun.

Species seen were: Large white, Small white, Green veined white, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Comma, Gatekeeper, Meadow brown, and Brimstone. *Verbena bonariensis*, *Buddleia* and *Rudbeckia* being favoured for nectaring. Migrant Hawker, Common darter, Mint moth – *Pyrausta aurata* also noted.

## The Suffolk Argus



*Painted Lady at Langham Walled Garden by Trevor Goodfellow*



*Langham Walled Garden by Trevor Goodfellow*

## Loose Change

*Trevor Goodfellow*

I recently found an eggshell on our drive which left me wondering what nest it came from.

I have a host of 'Observer books' mostly from the 1960's, so I consulted my Observer's Book of Bird's Eggs 11th reprint – 1969.

The egg closely resembled the picture under the heading of Red-Legged Partridge, so I read on and to my amazement it said: 'they are not so common as the Grey Partridges and have a restricted distribution in the British Isles'. How times have changed, then I looked at Red Kite (Kite in the book) which read 'Now restricted to a few wild districts in Wales'.

Here near Bury St. Edmunds I have watched 25

## Recording at Somerleyton

*Peter Maddison*

Members will know that much of the Somerleyton Estate is to be re-wilded.

A wildlife audit is underway, and we have been asked if some of our members might be interested in surveying butterflies.

This could be either on a one-off basis, or throughout the summer months of 2022.

If you are interested in helping in this project - and exploring the estate - please get in touch with Peter Maddison



*Adonis Blue at Devil's Dyke by Trevor Goodfellow*

Red Kites on occasions.

I then looked at Common Buzzard, 'once scarce, have increased in recent years and are now locally common in south-west England, Wales, the Lake District and parts of Scotland'. Buzzards are now far more common than the Grey Partridge.

Interesting how some species boom while others bust, it seems, mostly with human intervention either way in just a few decades.

I also have a book of Butterflies dating back to the 1940's of similar note, this includes details of the Large Copper introduction to Woodwalton Fen Huntingdonshire, from Dutch stock.

While I was at Devil's Dyke near Newmarket to

see the Adonis Blues that ‘magically’ appeared there, I couldn’t help noticing the lack of spectators, in fact I was one of three spotters the first time, two the second time and on the third visit I only met Rob Parker (our conservation officer) and his wife Alex.

I imagined that if a bird as rare as the Adonis Blue had been seen there, birders would have driven from all corners of the country and one would have been unable to park anywhere, and the lenses and tripods would have outnumbered the

subject by many-fold. Indeed, when a European Roller was spotted at Icklingham, hundreds of spotters lined the roadside for two weeks!

I realise that Devil’s Dyke is not in Suffolk, but take the recent Marsh Fritillary sighting plus, Clouded Yellow, Large Tortoiseshell etc. do they get their justified widespread admiration?

Perhaps the Purple Emperors are an exception and even Swallowtail, though nothing like birders who travel 100 miles to see a ‘little brown job’ (LBJ) that looks just like many others.

## WALKERS WANTED

to help out at  
Dunwich Forest  
counting butterflies

There is a well established butterfly transect through Dunwich Forest currently walked by two gentlemen who invite others to join them and be part of a citizen-science project. The walk takes about an hour through woodland managed by the Forestry Commission and is near Newdelight Walks. The transect was established in 2010 and since then 27 species have been recorded.

Want to know more without commitment contact Peter Smith at [pjs1591@talktalk.net](mailto:pjs1591@talktalk.net)

Twm Wade  
Butterfly Conservation Transect Co-ordinator for Suffolk  
Every butterfly counts

## Orange-tip Experiment

*Sandra Holmes*

During lockdown in June 2020, whilst weeding my soft fruit patch, I came upon a number of caterpillars of the Orange Tip butterfly. Rather than dump them with the compost, I took them indoors for closer observation.

I housed them individually on a sprig of their food plant in used white plastic baking spread boxes with a sheet of glass over the top, by a north facing window. I also kept a detailed record (see the chart below)

Disappointed with the 40% parasitised rate, I asked myself a number of questions: why two parasites appeared 12 days after the caterpillar had pupated and two 10 months later at the time that the butterflies were emerging.

I am in the process of repeating the experiment in 2021, this time with the help of Peter Vincent - the County Diptera Recorder.

*Images on next page.*



# The Suffolk Argus



*Fresh Chrysalis by Steve Holmes*



*Recently laid egg by Steve Holmes*



*Mature chrysalis by Steve Holmes*



*Young caterpillar by Steve Holmes*



*Preparing to pupate by Steve Holmes*



*Mature Caterpillar by Steve Holmes*



| Caterpillar No | Date of Collection | Food Plant     | Pupation date | What Happened Next   | Butterfly      |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|--|----------------|
| 1              | 03/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard | 13/06/2020    | Overwintered in garage.<br>Taken indoors 20/3/21   | Female 08/4/21 |
| 2              | 03/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard | 10/06/2020    | Parasite fly pupa 22/06/20, 12 days after pupation. Destroyed                                |                |
| 3              | 03/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard | 18/06/2020    | Overwintered in garage.<br>Taken indoors 20/3/21   | Female 10/4/21 |
| 4              | 03/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard | 14/06/2020    | Never looked right. Pupa fell from side of box. Overwintered, but never hatched              |                |
| 5              | 08/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard |               | Disappeared 14/06  |                |
| 6              | 11/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard | 15/06/2020    | Parasite fly pupa 27/06/2020, 12 days after pupation. Destroyed                              |                |
| 7              | 12/06/2020         | Honesty        | 17/06/2020    | Overwintered in garage.<br>Taken indoors 20/3/21   | Female 10/4/21 |
| 8              | 12/06/2020         | Honesty        | 17/06/2020    | Overwintered in garage.<br>Taken indoors 20/3/21.<br>Parasite fly pupa April 2021, 10 months |                |
| 9              | 15/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard | 20/06/2020    | Overwintered in garage.<br>Taken indoors 20/3/21.<br>Parasite fly pupa April 2021, 10 months |                |
| 10             | 15/06/2020         | Garlic Mustard | 22/06/2020    | Overwintered in garage.<br>Taken indoors 20/03/21  | Male 07/04/21  |

## Fab Ab Editor



*Silver-studded blue Plebejus argus ab. glomerata + costo-retrojuncta by Andrew Neild*

Some readers may have seen Andrew Neild's photos (see above) of a Silver-studded blue – *Plebejus argus* on the SBC sightings page. Andrew's visit to Westleton Common was rewarded with the sighting of this female specimen featuring examples of three named



*Silver-studded blue Plebejus argus ab. glomerata + costo-retrojuncta by Andrew Neild*

aberrations: *glomerata* on the forewing underside, *costo-retrojuncta* on the hindwing underside and *caerulescens* on the upper side (source: [www.Britishbutterflyaberrations.co.uk](http://www.Britishbutterflyaberrations.co.uk) ).

## The Suffolk Argus

### Give Us a Sign

*Trevor Goodfellow*

The plight of our lepidoptera (and other wildlife) deserves our utmost concern.

As thousands of species of insects are becoming extinct or in severe decline, we must not forget that this is a sign of both natural climate change and due to our impact on our environment that could ultimately bring the end to us humans.

Diseases and hunger thrive in many overpopulated species, and viruses are nature's way of addressing the balance as we are now well aware. Many species around the world that are not able to adapt are at immediate risk.

As mankind extracts Earth's remaining resources, leaving barren land or monoculture in its wake, and housing developments eroding the countryside, we should all be doing our bit to help put things right.

Whether it is recycling or just cycling, 'lots of littles make a lot' as I often say.

Recent Covid lockdowns have highlighted how important the natural world around is for our well-being, so maybe something good will come out of this mess if we can all remember this after we are released back into our old jobs and routines and dreaming of holidays abroad.

While some creatures seem to be on the incline, it must be said that the overall direction we are heading does not fare well for us; who wants to be 'the last man standing' in a sterile world? Not me.

Maybe the current generation are key? If we could get more young people inspired, get them all, maybe even 'trending' on 'Chitter' and 'Friendface'?

## Garden Nectar Sources Sources for Butterflies - L is for Laurel and Lavender

*Richard Stewart*

The next two alphabetical nectar sources have not performed well in our garden. Summer Jasmine is scented and with a multitude of flowers as it climbs up our dining room wall-but it has only attracted a Large White.

Knapweed has had a similar lack of interest with just a Small White and this is a nectar source seemingly visited more often in the wider countryside.

However, Margaret Vickery in her list of the top two hundred nectar plants for gardens lists Knapweed as visited by twenty-three species and 21st in her list.

Onto Laurel, an evergreen shrub which has masses of creamy white flowers in the spring and the one in our back garden has been visited by Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma, Small White and Green Hairstreak.

Returning to that top two hundred list, Lavender



*Large Skipper on Lavender by Trevor Goodfellow*

is third best, with thirty recorded species. Its scent is one attraction, more pronounced in some varieties than others, with the best one for butterflies being *Lavandula angustiflora*.

We have this plant in containers, along a sunny border and close to our pond where it usually flowers just after nearby Thyme and Marjoram.

The three white species are particularly attracted to it, and we have also recorded Holly Blue,

## Spring Nectar Sources for Garden Butterflies and Bees

*Kev Ling*

When mother nature loosens her wintery grip and the sun starts to warm the early spring days, butterflies, moths and other insects such as bees and hoverflies awake from their hibernation and take to the wing, looking to kick start their year.

Many of them will have last flown in the Autumn and most important to them at this early stage of the year is an immediate source of nectar, giving them the energy, they need to go about their business.

Creating space in your garden for spring flowering plants will not only be welcomed by insects, but also provide an enjoyable splash of early colour to any garden.

The following is a suggested planting guide.

Adding a little height at the back of the display, I like to start with Wallflower (*Erysium*). The variety 'Bowles Mauve' is a good one).

They are a great source of nectar and pollen and popular with bees and butterflies alike, as will the early flying Dark Edged Bee Fly.

They enjoy a long-lasting flowering season too. Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) is also a nice additional with its attractive pink flowers proving popular with a wide range of insects and bees.

Honesty (*Lunaria*) and Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*) are planted with one thing in mind, to

Common Blue, Painted Lady, Meadow Brown, and Gatekeeper.

In a previous garden we also recorded Wall brown, but I doubt if many Suffolk gardens include this species nowadays. There are impressive displays of Lavender in two of the Christchurch Park, Ipswich gardens: both near Christchurch Mansion and within the actual Butterfly Garden.

entice Orange Tips into the garden.

Both plants are used as their larval foodplant.

Honesty provides a great display of white and purple flowers and showy translucent seedpods afterwards. Garlic Mustard has slightly less significant flowers, however, this plant has never failed in attracting egg laying females to my garden, making observation of the early stages of this butterfly both easy and enjoyable.

Moving to the front of the bed, Grape Hyacinths (*muscaria*), Forget me Nots, Aubrieta and Cowslips (*primula veris*) all offer valuable nectar for Peacocks, Red Admirals and early whites. The bees love them too.

Even if you have a small garden or just a patio area, there is still much you can do to provide nectar to these early flying species.

All of the above plants will do well in pots and a strawberry planter is also a great way to mix lots of nectar rich plants together, especially Aubrieta, Cowslip and Birds Foot Trefoil.

In addition to this, herbs such as Marjoram, Mint and Thyme will not only provide culinary options to your garden, but also encourage Mint Moths as early as April.

With minimal effort, your garden can soon become a spring haven for insects.

## SBC Wildflower Seed Pack Update

Jane Henderson

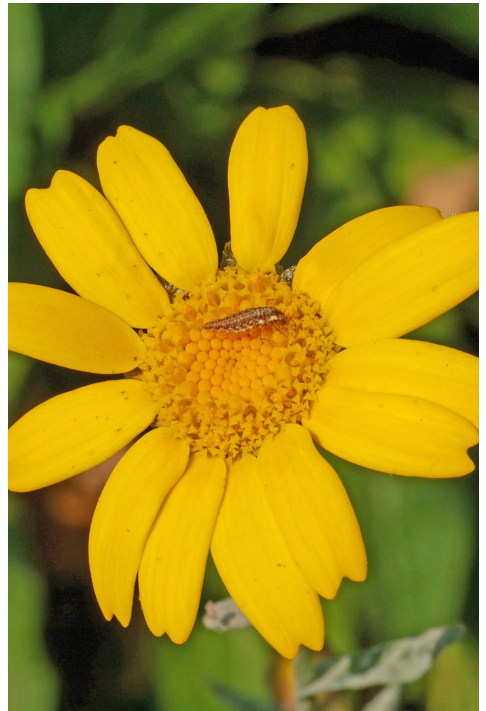


*Crab Spider on Clover*

The plants which germinated last year were:

Red Clover, Salad Burnet, Chamomile, Corn Marigold, Knapweed, Fleabane, Poppy, Corn Cockle and Cornflower. The Corn Cockle and Cornflower didn't reappear this year, but all the rest survived and flowered.

By looking closely at the flowers, it has been interesting to discovering both a lacewing larva and a tiny baby crab spider of about 2mm length, this was a new experience for me.



*Lacewing Larva on Corn Marigold by Jane Henderson*



*Baby Common Crab Spider on Fleabane by Jane Henderson*



## Pointless Gadget?

Trevor Goodfellow

A while ago, when I had some cash, I purchased a thermal imaging device. After already buying a bat detector which plugs in to my i-phone, I thought how convenient it would be to have a thermal imaging device working in a similar way. I then convinced myself I had a use for it as I am sure some of you can relate to this, ‘putting the cart before the horse’ saying sprang to mind.

After lengthy ‘Googling’ and reading user’s testimonies, I thought better of an i-phone device and got a small, self-contained device made by Seek. Without too many buttons, it is easy to use and can be a handy safety device as it can highlight high resistance faults on fuse-boards and other electrical connections.

It has a rechargeable internal battery and a memory card to store images recorded by the press of a single button. No scrolling through menus. These images can be transferred to a computer by using the included USB lead.

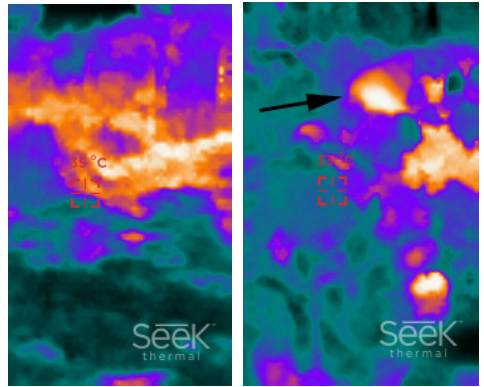
Many thermal imagers are hundreds and often thousands of pounds, the latter would be overkill for me.

In the field, it is interesting to use for finding where warm pockets of ground are and microclimates that may help in tracking butterfly or moth larvae.

The images below show what can be seen.

There are several settings which allow different appearances of the hot/cold range.

The central ‘gun-sight’ has an adjacent spot temperature reading. i-phone types are about £200 – 300 and handheld ones are £250 - £2K+. So, not a totally pointless gadget, but useful if you have a ‘few bob’ to spare.



*Thermal Image showing bright hot spots and dark areas of cool shade*

*Thermal Image showing Red Admiral on Buddleia*



*The “Seek” Thermal Imaging Camera*

## Time

Pink Floyd

‘Every year is getting shorter; never seem to find the time.

Plans that either come to naught or half a page of scribbled lines.

Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way

The time is gone, the song is over

Thought I’d something more to say’.



## The Suffolk Argus

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### Moth-er Nature

The following moth trapping feedback is from some members who borrowed the SBC moth traps.

#### 'Beautiful creatures'

Sue Martin

I have always found butterflies fascinating, amazed at the metamorphosis from egg to caterpillar to pupa to butterfly. I love to just sit in the garden watching them flit from plant to plant or spotting them when out walking.

Then when I had the chance to borrow a moth trap for a month I jumped at it, and what an experience it was. Over the month of June, I caught 40 different species and was amazed at the different shapes, patterns, and colours there were in this night-time world that I had never seen before. In that month I feel I have learnt so much about these beautiful little creatures.

I was lucky enough to catch 4 different species of hawk moth: Lime, Eyed, Elephant, and Small Elephant hawk moths. My grand-daughter was with me one morning and was fascinated to be able to have it sit on her finger, and since then she has sent me photos of moths, she has found in her garden asking me to identify them for her!

I followed the clear instructions for releasing them and was careful not to step on any that might be near the trap on the floor. And not to trap every night.

I feel honoured to have such a lovely experience. Thank you.

### Winging it

Editor

Marion Wells sent me photos taken by her friend. She noticed lots of moth wings grouped on a tree trunk and wherever they would rest after falling from higher up the tree.

We suspect that bats are using this tree as a feeding perch, or even a roost where they devour the tasty moth bodies leaving the wings to fall towards the ground.

Perhaps someone reading this may have a better clue as to what is happening?



Alder Moth - *Acronicta alni* by Sue Martin



Moth Wings

## Elephant in the garden

David Tomlinson

Wow, what a beauty... It's impossible not to be impressed by an adult Elephant hawk moth (*Deilephila elpenor*; see photo, right) - it's the Beau Brummel of the moth world, a wonderful confection of pink and golden beige.

There's an improbability about the stripes on the wings and the dots on the thorax: it's almost enough to convince you about the theory of intelligent design, for how could a mere moth have evolved to look quite as smart as this? Even the rose-pink underside of the thorax has an improbability about it, suggesting it might have been dipped in a child's paint box (see photo to the right).

Last July I borrowed the branch's moth trap, and it was thanks to this that I came face to forewing with the elephant in my garden. My first night's trapping was a disappointment, but the night was cool, and not one when any self-respecting moth would fly far.

I gave up trapping for a week, waiting for the weather to improve. It didn't, or not until I slipped over the border to Norfolk for a few days to stay with friends.

While I was away the temperature peaked at 29degC, but the heat had dissipated by the time I came home. Had I missed the best mothing nights of the summer? I might well have done, but the night of 24/25th July was cloudy and warm, so I gave the trap another go.

I was up early in the morning to see what I had caught. There were scores of tiny brown moths that it takes an expert and a microscope to identify, but then my eye was suddenly drawn to the elephant in the trap – how could I have missed it before?

Though I reckon that I'm pretty good at butterfly ID, moths are another thing entirely, but this was one I knew instantly.

I did, of course, look it up in my moth books.



They all confirmed that *Deilephila elpenor* is a common resident, widely and well distributed throughout England and Wales. It was such a beauty that I really wanted to read how rare it was, and what a special prize it was for any moth trapper. Never mind, I was satisfied by the fact that it's a nocturnal species, and not often seen unless you make an effort to look for it or set a trap.

Despite unfamiliarity with adult Elephant hawks, I know the caterpillars well, for if you have a reputation as a bit of a naturalist, it won't be long before a friend or neighbour brings you one to identify. They used to come in jam jars, but these days it's usually a photograph, snapped on an iPhone. The impressive size of the larvae and their large and dominating eyes (fake, of course), make these possibly the easiest caterpillars of all to identify. (The runner-up is the larvae of the Mullein.)

I can see why some moth-ers get hooked on the Smerinthinae, for it's a fascinating family. My first encounter with a hawkmoth took place at a campsite at Sitges on the Costa Brava. I was 13 or 14 at the time, and a keen butterfly collector. Rumour reached me that a giant moth had been

## The Suffolk Argus

seen loitering in the gentlemen's washrooms, so I went, armed with my net, to investigate.

I soon found the moth, which was intimidating in its size. I would have left it there if it wasn't for a fellow camper, a German who had been washing his socks, spotted me eyeing the moth.

He came over and stuffed it into my net. I didn't know how to kill it, so shot it with fly spray (forgive me - this was over 50 years ago) which did the trick.

I took it home and sold it to a friend for five shillings. It was, as you might have guessed, a *Convolvulus* hawkmoth, the second largest species to be found in Europe.

Having seen the No. 2 hawkmoth, I naturally wanted to see the No. 1, the Death's head, but it was many years before I did so. This time I was on the Swedish island of Oland, enjoying the autumn bird migration.

This was spectacular, and memorable for the virtually non-stop passage of eiders and Barnacle geese heading south from the arctic.

## Actinic Skinner

Patricia Gondris

We borrowed the actinic Skinner trap on the August 21st, there were about 30 moths amongst the eggboxes, excluding those tiny moths that flit amongst long grasses looking like elongated clothes moths (Genus: *Crambus*).

Amongst the others, we thought we identified Yellow Underwing, Riband Wave, Maiden's Blush and Alder moth.

On 22nd August we saw: Brimstone, Yellow-barred Brindle (green), True Lover's Knot, Pebble Hook-tip (photo to the right), the migrant Tree-lichen Beauty (photo below) |Coronet, a Long-horned flat-body (*Carcina quercana*), and Flounced Rustic to name a few.

I must admit in shame that in years past I never bothered with smaller moths as there were so many middle-sized and large moths like the often seen, fantastic Privet and Elephant hawks, Oak Eggars and so on.

Not an impressive catch but we all had fun and my daughter can't wait to try out a similar quest in her own garden.

There's a bird observatory at Ottenby, on the southern tip of Oland, and it's a great place for rare birds. It was here, looking for a Pallas's warbler, that I met up with one of the wardens.

"We have caught a very rare butterfly from North Africa" I was informed, in perfect but deliberate English. "Would you like to see it?" You bet I would, wondering what the rare butterfly could possibly be.

A box was produced, the lid was lifted, and inside was a magnificent death's head, his skull shining. What's more, he (or it could have been she), even uttered a squeak, the only member of the Lepidoptera I've ever heard speak. Fascinating.

I'm not sure that I will ever become hooked on the Arches, Brindles, Minors and Rustics, but the hawkmoths are something else.

I'm assured that there's a good chance of trapping plenty of other species of hawkmoths in my garden, ranging from a Lime to a Poplar. I might just have to buy my own moth trap.



Tree-lichen beauty by  
Patricia Gondris



Pebble hook-tip by  
Patricia Gondris

## Moth Watching

Marion Wells

I first became enchanted with moths when this fabulous and quite large *Convolvulus Hawkmoth* (photo below) spent a day by my front door. I was impressed by its patterns and delighted that it stayed still for a whole day so I could study it. I thought this was a great advantage over butterfly or bird watching which tend to fly away as soon as they have been spotted.

I then saw an opportunity in the Suffolk Argus to borrow a moth trap from Suffolk Butterfly Conservation for a month this summer, so I applied and then had the use of an Actinic Skinner trap in July. Trevor Goodfellow provided me with plenty of instructions, guidebook and advice and I set the trap up in our garden in Aldeburgh that evening.

The next morning, I was very excited to find about 40 moths in the trap mostly hidden under the empty egg boxes inside the trap but a few on the outside. The stars of the show were the five Elephant hawkmoths (photo page 2) and one Poplar hawkmoth.

What extraordinary creatures and they all stayed still while I stared and stared at them. Trevor had warned me that, rather like birds, there are an awful lot of little (and not so little) brown moths (of the *Noctuid* Family mostly) in the trap which all look similar.

I was able to identify some and then sent photos of others to Trevor for Id.

There were about 12 Heart & Dart, 6 Heart & Club, 3 Large Yellow Underwing, one Smoky Wainscot, a Grey/Dark Dagger, a Treble Line. Thanks to Trevor's Id there were also recorded one Uncertain and one Dark Arches.

I love the names of these creatures and I try to make sense of the name given the patterning on the moth. I entered the moths on the website and was pleased to see what other people had been seeing as well.

A few days later I set up the moth trap again and



*Convolvulus Hawkmoth* by Marion Wells

amongst the plethora of Noctuids was what I first thought was a piece of silver birch twig.

But no! It was a Buff Tip, such a curious creature, so unlike a moth. Also in the catch were a White Satin, a slightly shaggy Swallow-Tailed Moth and a Common Pug plus 4 Elephant Hawkmoths. About this time, I also visited an exhibition of mezzotints of moths at Castle Howard in N Yorkshire. The artist (Sarah Gillespie) had been so inspired by moths that she had made large (A4 or A3 sized) prints of about 26 different moths. Very beautiful and exceptional detail.

(photo below)



## The Suffolk Argus

I was becoming a moth addict! I used the borrowed moth trap a further 3 or 4 times and then had one for my birthday present so I can now moth watch whenever the mood takes me providing it is not a wet or very windy night.

This interest has made me more aware of things around me including caterpillars.

For instance, I happened to notice the leaves of my willow bush were being stripped by two very fine large green caterpillars. I later identified them as Puss Moth caterpillars and read up about them (photo page 2).

I'll leave you to read about the caterpillars, but I shall be looking out for Puss Moths in the moth trap in May next year.



*Buff-tip by Marion Wells*



*Swallowtail Moth Artwork by Sarah Gillespie*

## Running a Moth Trap for the First Time

*Richard Perryman*

I took advantage of the offer from Suffolk Butterfly Conservation to borrow a moth trap. This was not actually the first time I had run a moth trap. I have been interested in butterflies and moths for many years and my first experience of a moth trap was in the late 1950s. This was in a town garden in the middle of a largely agricultural area in the Fens of Cambridgeshire, maybe not the most promising of habitats. I knew there must be many species of moths in the garden because it was easy to find the caterpillars, such as the Swallowtail moth on the Privet hedge. I was only about eleven years old and could not afford to buy a moth trap; I think the Robinson may have been the only style available then.

So I made my own from an old orange box and



*Canary-shouldered Thorn by Richard Perryman*

some pieces of hardboard for the funnel.

One side could be removed to examine the moths. I used an ordinary 100W incandescent bulb, quickly discovered that rain and hot bulbs



*Green Silver-lines by Richard Perryman*

do not mix. I was pleasantly surprised by the results. Over a period of time, I captured five species of Hawkmoth, Puss Moth, the melanic form of Peppered Moth and many Garden Tiger Moths. In those days there were large numbers of both butterflies and moths, so many that it is difficult to describe to today's children just how many butterflies flew around in the countryside. A few removed from these huge numbers made no difference to the population, so you were still encouraged to preserve the catch. I had "Collecting and Breeding Butterflies and Moths" by Brian



*Pippa potting a moth*

Worthington-Stuart" to guide me. Some time ago I photographed the collection and looking now there are 61 species of night flying moth which I had caught with my home-made trap. I haven't opened the boxes since so they could all be dust by now.

Identification was relatively easy using "The Moths of the British Isles" by Richard South. Initially these were photographs but later editions had hand drawn pictures by Mr. H. D. Swain FRES.

Now there seem to be fewer caterpillars and moths than even 20 years ago. Only a few caterpillars are found in my current garden and not many moths attracted to the external lights. The only caterpillars in any numbers are our Toadflax



*Lucas and Robert indentifying moths*

Brocade colony on the Linaria with over 100 caterpillars counted this year. So, when there was the opportunity to borrow a moth trap, I was keen to find out if there were more moths and species than was obvious.

Still a town garden (in South-west Ipswich) but fairly close to countryside in a less heavily farmed area. The trap I borrowed was a Skinner with a 20W actinic bulb, less bright than the Robinson so kinder for the neighbours. I had it from the middle of July until the middle of August so missed the main Hawkmoth season. Although the Skinner had a rain guard for the bulb, I decided to run the trap only when the forecast was for a dry night.

## The Suffolk Argus

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That proved more difficult than expected with this year's weather, but I did manage seven nights by the time I passed the trap to the next person.

The method of preparing the trap is different to a Robinson. The Perspex sheets that form the funnel have tabs which have to be inserted into slots. The bulb support is attached in a similar way. The trap came with egg boxes in which the moths could hide and a timer so it could switch on and off automatically at dusk and dawn. I placed the trap on a sheet of thick plywood on the grass so surrounding vegetation would shade the light from the immediate neighbours. Nobody ever asked why we had a light in the garden all night. When turned on, although the light was bright, it did not seem to illuminate the surrounding buildings too much. The bulb produces UV light so a pair of UV absorbing glasses is provided if you want to watch for moths flying around the trap.

The next morning, I went to look at the trap at 7.00 am. I could see several moths sitting on the outside and in the surrounding grass. I carefully manoeuvred these into some of the plastic pots which had been provided. I then unplugged the trap and carried it steadily to the garden table. Looking through the Perspex I could see more moths than I had expected. Two Box Moths were flying against the Perspex disturbing many of the others. A few managed to fly out of the trap via the funnel. There were not enough pots for all the moths, so I decided to photograph as many as possible before they flew away. Removing the bulb support from the slots shook the trap and several more escaped. The moths that were left were reasonably immobile, so I was able to remove the Perspex and photograph the moths sitting on the inside of the trap. My wife then carefully lifted the egg boxes, so I was able to photograph the ones hiding underneath although one or two did fly away. Many of the moths were the same species and after identification they were Dark Arches. We then potted as many different species as possible in the hope of taking better photographs later. Some small glass jars were also used when all the supplied pots were occupied.

The boxes with the moths were returned to the trap which was covered in a cloth so the moths could

be released at dusk. The advice is not to run the trap on two consecutive nights, so the moths have a chance to fly some distance. They probably then will not be caught again, and they can continue with egg-laying.

Photographing through the side of a plastic pot was not easy as reflections obscured the moth and the camera sometimes focussed on the side of the pot rather than the moth inside. The glass jars produced a lot of distortion. With some practice the results improved so that the photographs could be used for identification. With the trap came a copy of "Concise Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland" illustrated by Richard Lewington. The concise guide is easier to use for identification than the full version as the pages will stay flat. It took some time to identify them all although two are still very doubtful. I think they are one of the many Rustic species. There were also many of the micro moths. There is no identification guide supplied but I already had a copy of "Field Guide to the Micro Moths of Great Britain and Ireland". Micro moths are in general more difficult to identify although *Anania coronata* and *Endotricha falmealis* were two of the easy ones.

The final total was 40 species with about 80 moths. Far more than I had anticipated would be in the garden. There were many Dark Arches which is interesting as my collection from 60 years before also has many Dark Arches. The most striking from the first night was the bright green Small Emerald, probably the rarest was the rather insignificant Festoon. Also there, as 60 years ago, was a Peppered Moth but this time the normal peppered version.

The second night produced two Elephant Hawkmoths. We knew they were in the garden as the caterpillars had been feeding on Evening Primrose but we had never seen the moth. There was also several Tree Lichen Beauty and Small Phoenix – green moths are easy to identify. This time I cut a piece of cardboard that fitted over the funnel in the morning so no moths could escape while they settled down.

The weather then became slightly cooler and windier, so subsequent nights produced fewer

moths. The Toadflax Brocade never made an appearance. Each night produced some moths that had not been present on previous nights, so there was always something new to identify. The final total over seven nights was about 100 species, I do not have an exact total because some remain to be identified. Some of those identified quickly were Scorched Carpet, Ruby Tiger Moth, Clouded Border, many Straw Underwing, Iron Prominent, and Orange Swift. The most difficult are the various Rustics. Just look at the two photographs of the Common Rustic on the Suffolk Moth Group's website to see how varied they can be. Sometimes moth identification is a challenge. Taking photographs proved essential to being able to identify them all. After the first night I placed the pots on a grey card to get the colour balance correct. I now realise I should have had some sort of ruler as it is now difficult to judge the size of the moth from the photograph.

The moth trap proved very interesting to our grandchildren. This meant there were two more gardens in which to run the trap on the nights when we did not. My grand-daughter (aged 11) has always had an interest in wildlife and she was very keen to run the trap in their garden in North-east Ipswich. They ran it for three nights during the month. Pippa used the guide and also the photographs on the Butterfly Conservation website to identify the moths. I think their favourite was the Green Silver-lines, but Pippa said "We also have a Common Footman, a Festoon, a Scalloped Oak, and a Brown-tail also found out the cool looking black and white one is a Box-tree moth. My two grandsons were in Suffolk on holiday. They saw the results of running the trap in our garden and spent a long time with the books identifying the moths. They wondered what they could catch in the garden of the cottage in which they were staying in Woodbridge. They ran the trap for two nights catching quite a number of species, but the highlight was a Poplar Hawkmoth. As identification continues, I will add the records to the Suffolk Moth Group database. Each species has an Express Recorder section, so it is easy to do (see [www.suffolkmoths.co.uk](http://www.suffolkmoths.co.uk)).

I wonder how many more and different species

I would have caught 60 years ago if I had had a proper moth trap in my garden. This year, I am not sure I had the best of the weather, and it would be more satisfactory to have a moth trap to put out throughout the year when the weather is promising. So next year I might have my own and not be borrowing a trap. If you want to find out what is flying around your garden at night contact Trevor Goodfellow at [trevor@greenfarm.org.uk](mailto:trevor@greenfarm.org.uk) to borrow a trap for a month.

## Star rated

### Butterfly related items spotted recently.

Ross Bentley's excellent article in 'Suffolk Magazine' should entice new members to BC.

His passion for butterflies is clear and several quality photos enhanced the inspiring four-page item.

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'Which Gardening' magazine had a great four-page article headed 'Butterflies in the Garden' informing readers of beneficial nectar planting and showing good photos of larvae and eggs to illustrate the 'Larval foodplants' and 'Raising butterflies' paragraphs.

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Lev Parikian was promoting his book 'Light Rain Sometimes Fall' in the summer edition of The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) magazine 'Countryside Voice'.

He delights in describing lepidoptera seen in his garden and an eye-catching Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*) photo heads the item with the day flying Mint moth, (*Pyrausta aurata*) also included.

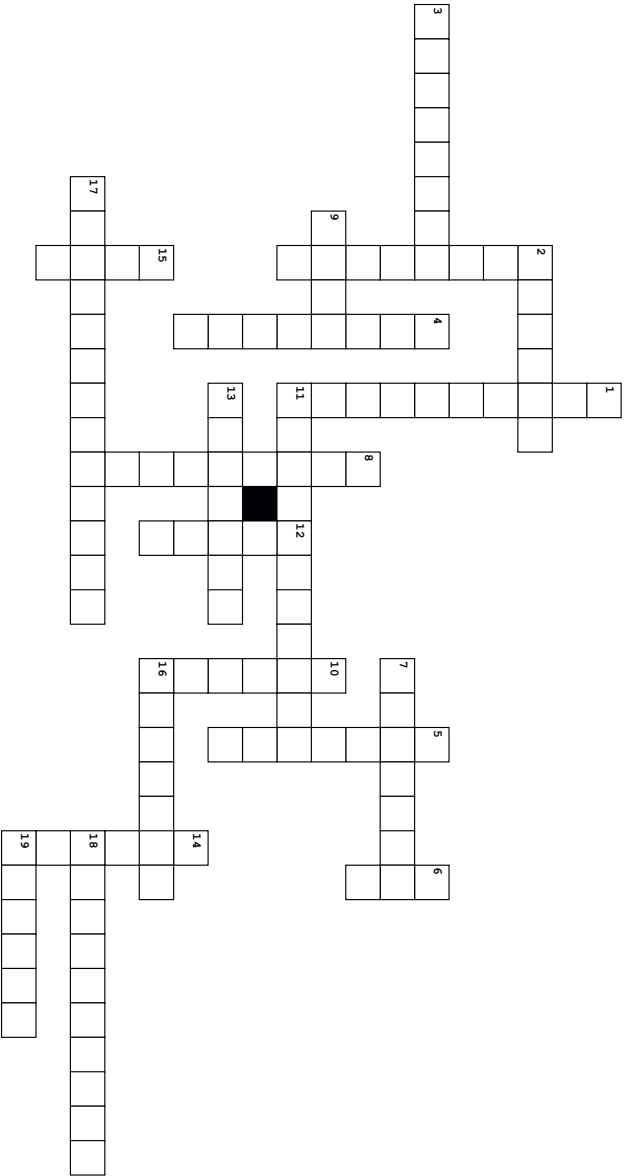
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Country Life Magazine – July 28th had a short feature with accompanying photo of blue Morphos and a six-page spread feature of Robin Page's search for all our British species.

Many photos of most of these UK species although a puzzling description 'a rare Ringlet' maybe should have been a 'Mountain Ringlet'. Flight times for these butterflies are shown and the eye-catching front cover is a gem, asking us to 'Join the great British butterfly safari'

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**Across**

- 2. Small ..... (orange coloured butterfly)
- 3. hatching of a pupa
- 7. yellow flowering foodplant
- 9. main predator of moths at trapping time
- 11. name of a butterfly and a moth
- 13. could be white or red
- 16. UKs only silk moth
- 17. family of 109 species of moth
- 18. large moth which can squeak
- 19. rich food for Lepidoptera

**Down**

- 1. Raspberry, Hornet or Red-tipped e.g.
- 2. red and black day flying moth
- 4. moth whose larva can squirt formic acid and flick its droppings
- 5. popular foodplant for yamessids
- 6. foodplant of the White letter hairstreak
- 8. tiny micro moth
- 10. two caterpillars
- 12. tortoiseshell rarely seen, migrant
- 14. group name often used for skippers
- 15. peak flight time of the Purple Emperor