

SUFFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

*The*

# Suffolk Argus

Volume 91

Autumn 2024



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



## The Suffolk Argus

---

*Male Purple Emperor at Theberton by  
Derrick Poole*



*Puss moth larva on Sallow  
by Derrick Poole*



*Pupa of the Emperor moth  
by Derrick Poole*



*Pupa of Brimstone disguised to look like a  
leaf by Derrick Poole*



# Suffolk Branch Contacts

*President*

Howard Mendel

*Chairman*

Peter Maddison

Barnmead, Fishpond Rd,

Waldringfield,

Woodbridge IP12 4QX

Tel: 01473 736607

email: prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

*Membership Secretary*

Liz Cutting

Tel: 01206 394184

Email: cutting.liz@yahoo.com

*Treasurer*

Kevin Ling

email: kevlng2013@aol.com

*Secretary*

Julian Dowding

84, Clapgate Lane,

Ipswich IP3 0RE

Tel: 01473 436096

email: julian.dowding@ntlworld.com

*County Butterfly Recorder*

James Corton

email: suffolkbutterflyrecorder@gmail.com

*Transect and WCBS Co-ordinator*

Twm Wade

email: twm.wade@yahoo.com

*Conservation Officer (Butterflies)*

To be appointed

*County Moth Recorder*

Neil Sherman

email: moth@sns.org.uk

*Committee Members*

David Dowding

Matt Berry

email: matt@greenwings.co.uk

Mark Brewster

Email: mark.ian.brewster@gmail.com

*Website*

Richard Perryman

email: richard.perryman@ntlworld.com

*Newsletter Editor*

Trevor Goodfellow

email: suffolkargus@gmail.com

*Regional Officer, Eastern England*

Sharon Hearle

Tel: 01638 484145

email: shearle@butterfly-conservation.org

*Associate Committee Members*

Nigel Hannay

The Suffolk Argus is published by the Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Butterfly Conservation or the Branch. © 2024 All rights reserved. For more information, see: [www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk](http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk)

Butterfly Conservation

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468) Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)

### Editorial

*Trevor Goodfellow*

‘Sigh!’ well, apart from moths, it’s all over for another year. After infilling blank butterfly days with birding, I now slip into winter depression becoming even more irritated by people who say ‘excetera’ instead of et cetera, and ‘expresso’ when they mean espresso. Those little things that start to grate. Even the sound of a coffee shop customer who asks for a white decaf Americano will get me muttering under my breath.

Anyway, a mixed bag this year based on my own observations, most species did poorly except ironically: Marbled White and Marsh Fritillary. Hopefully the small numbers of most species have maximum breeding success and spring back next year – although it feels like I said that last year. First brood Holly blue showed well but Orange-tip hardly any. Small Heath in record numbers for home and late July saw a good peak in numbers of Gatekeepers. Maybe the lack of wasps and hornets will assist larval survival (although Blue tits boomed in numbers). Dragonflies everywhere often away from water and widening range for some species may be another predator risk. I have been told that the Suffolk population of Silver-studded Blues has been impacted by dragonfly predation.

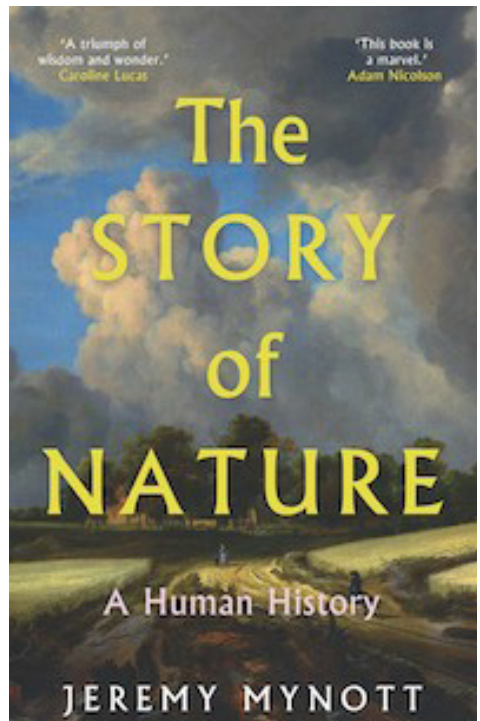
A record year for moth species for me and a few more ‘firsts’ for home like: Oak processionary moth, Cream-spot Tiger, Clouded Buff, Jersey Tiger, also Common Spotted Orchid, Scarce Chaser, and Southern Migrant Hawker dragonflies. It is always good to have something nice to remember.

Anyway, we have the annual get together in October with the chance to meet members old and new to cheer us up after the challenging conditions in 2024. Please get those records in quickly to help our county recorder process them for the 2024 butterfly report.

Thanks to all this year’s Suffolk Argus contributors who help make the newsletter possible.

*Cover image of Wall Brown and Small Tortoiseshell by James Corton*

**Copy date for the next Suffolk Argus content is January 26th, 2025**



*Jeremy Mynott's new book  
(See page 17)*



## Contents

Branch Contacts		3
Editorial		4
Brimstone & Buckthorn	<i>Liz Cutting</i>	6
Power of Buckthorn	<i>Editor</i>	7
Smoke and Mirrors	<i>Trevor Goodfellow</i>	8
Heath Fritillary's Success in Essex	<i>Kev Ling</i>	10
In Love with Orange Butterflies	<i>Nick Amor</i>	12
Sunshine Please	<i>David Tomlinson</i>	15
Survival Scales	<i>Jeremy Mynott</i>	17
Top Twenty Garden Plants	<i>Richard Stewart</i>	18
Mercury Rising	<i>Editor</i>	18
Events Reports		19
Dingy Skipper Summary 2024	<i>Trevor Goodfellow</i>	24
Musings of a Butterfly Recorder	<i>James Corton</i>	26

---

### **Members' Afternoon 2024 Saturday 19th October, 2.15pm**

**Earl Stonham Village Hall**  
IP14 4BG

(please note this year's change of venue)

A short AGM will precede talks by BC Eastern  
Region Officer

Sharon Hearle

who will tell us about the work she has been  
doing in her geographically large area.  
and

Neil Sherman

Suffolk County Moths Recorder  
who will be telling us about the state of moths  
in the county - Winners and Losers

There will be refreshments, our annual  
Photographic Competition and a Raffle

(Pete Eeles is unable to join us for his talk this  
year.)

During the short AGM we will be electing  
members to the committee. At present we are  
few in number and we need help to cover the  
projects and tasks that we want to take part in. If  
you can spare some time to help with the running  
of the Branch, please get in touch with me prior  
to the meeting.

---

### **WANTED - more help with the running of the Branch.**

After 6 years in post, our treasurer is retiring. Might you become our treasurer?

Social media - We have an X account (formally Twitter) with regular updates, but we need someone to manage new Instagram and/or Facebook accounts.

An understudy required to help with the overseeing of butterfly Transects.

Each year we have several requests for our attendance at 'conservation' events. Can you volunteer a couple of hours to help run our stall?

Contact: Peter Maddison, Chair for more details.

## Brimstone and Buckthorn

*Liz Cutting*

Like many members of the Suffolk Branch, I was pleased to be able to take advantage of the offer of three Buckthorn whips in early 2022, part of the Brimstone and Buckthorn Project. Not having a garden large enough for even one Buckthorn, I arranged to plant them at a local farm in south-east Suffolk, a couple of miles up the road from me. The owner is very keen to promote wildlife on the farm and had recently planted a small area of woodland and several hundred metres of hedges. I spend a fair amount of time there watching, recording and photographing wildlife of all sorts.

You may remember that 2022 was a very dry Spring/Summer, with some scorching heat. Clearly the Buckthorns would need some nurturing. One was planted on the end of a row of the planted woodland. The other two were planted quite near a pond system, on a bank several metres away; both were partly shaded and in an area that is very popular with nettles! Much of the farm is very light soil, but all three Buckthorns were probably in richer and more moisture retentive soil. There were plenty of stakes/canes a tree guards available from the recent woodland and hedge planting. Because of the scorching dry conditions, the Buckthorns were watered regularly. The one on the end of the woodland was watered mechanically with the use of a tractor. For the other two, I took a bucket and carried water from the nearby ponds. Having a nearby source of water was a real bonus. All three Buckthorns survived the drought conditions and are now flourishing,

especially the two that share their space with nettles. Actually, the nettles are mown/strimmed where possible by the farmer and I sometimes pull some up where necessary.



*Common Buckthorn*

This year I was delighted to find Brimstone larvae on two of the three Buckthorns. One evening I found four on one. They are beautifully camouflaged. Then I had



*Common Buckthorn eaten leaf*

the bright idea of putting on my reading glasses – my count doubled! Next evening, I tried a bit earlier when it was lighter and found a dozen on that one and three on another. I would love to find a chrysalis but have so far drawn a blank.

I hope the success of the Brimstone and Buckthorn Project at this site is one of many in the County.



*Brimstone Larva*

## Power of Buckthorn

*Editor*

Posted on sightings website: ‘Back in 2007 we spoke to Terry Peake regarding butterfly records. Terry and other volunteers planted and improved hedging in the Wickham Market area. He was particularly interested in improving Brimstone butterfly numbers. We’ve lived in the village for 47 years and this is the most sightings of Brimstone we’ve had

in the garden with 11 sightings so far this year. The latest was on the 26th May (see photo by Rob Reeve below). Credit should go to Terry, who is sadly no longer with us, and all the other volunteers.

Well done to all involved, and special thanks to Terry. (Rob and Kerry Reeve)



*Brimstone by Rob Reeve*



## Smoke and Mirrors

Trevor Goodfellow

Lepidoptera camouflage is important for their survival at all stages of their life cycle. To achieve this, they may blend with their background, or have a shape that tricks potential predators to think they are something inedible like a leaf for example or like the Chinese Character moth – *Cilix glaucata* which looks like a bird dropping, like some other micro moths.



*Chinese Character* by Trevor Goodfellow



*Brimstone* by Trevor Goodfellow

Eggs sometimes resemble galls or fungus but won't fool a snail or ladybird. Within a few days these eggs will hatch then the battle for survival heats up.

Early larval instars rarely resemble the final instar in either colour or shape, but to give daytime protection they often hide under a leaf or even rolling a leaf and sealing it with spun silk, then feeding at night.



*Brown Argus larva* by Graham Jackson



*Peppered moth larva* by Trevor Goodfellow

Final instars are sometimes spectacular: the Red Underwing - *Catocala nupta* caterpillar is hard to spot on a tree trunk, blending in with the bark, and the adult is almost invisible too (photo below) using the wing fringes and cryptic border colouring to diffuse its outline.



*Red Underwing by Trevor Goodfellow*

You might not think that the bright pink colours of the Elephant Hawk moth - *Deilephila elpenor* (and Small Elephant Hawk - *Deilephila porsellus*) would be helpful but resting on their larval foodplants: Fuchsia or Willowherb, one can see it is not so odd (see photo below).



*Small Elephant and Elephant Hawk moths by Joe Myers*

Many moths pupate below ground for protection from the winter and predation but the Purple Emperor butterfly - *Apatura iris* larvae have very good camouflage, and they need it, as they overwinter in this stage. When they pupate in their Sallow tree, they clearly look like a leaf! The photo below shows how good it is.



*Purple Emperor pupa by Trevor Goodfellow*

Most moths of course are nocturnal, so daytime resting requires extra good camouflage. But day flying butterflies need some help too. Although bright colours are their main strategy to repel predators, shocking a bird with the flash of wing spots resembling eyes like the Peacock, or folding wings to mimic a leaf like the Brimstone, may only work temporarily against birds, but it helps.

Grayling - *Hipparchia Semele* are well known for their camouflage, resting on tracks and bare ground, they can be challenging to see even close up. They will fly up from your feet at the last second then land again briefly showing their wing spots, then, like magic, they 'disappear'

## The Suffolk Argus

---

before your very eyes, leaning over to maximize the warmth of the sun's rays.



*Grayling by Trevor Goodfellow*

Hairstreaks have small 'tails' on their hind wings and an adjacent wing spot suggesting to a bird that this is the head. This tricks a bird into attacking the wing rather than the head, I am sure you have all seen Purple Hairstreaks or White-Letter Hairstreaks with a chunk out of their wing where the spot would have been usually indicating a bird strike.



*Merville du jour on lichen  
by Joe Myers*



*Buff Tip mimicking a broken twig  
by Joe Myers*

---

## Heath Fritillary's Success in Essex

*Kev Ling*

Although common in continental Europe, the Heath Fritillary is one of Britain's rarest and most endangered butterflies, with populations restricted to a small number of sites in England. Close to extinction in the early 1980s, helpful research by Butterfly Conservation's former Chief Executive Martin Warren, provided a more detailed understanding of the intricate requirements of this species and this helped galvanise conservation efforts in key areas.

Further afield in Cornwall and Devon, the Heath Fritillary is found at a small number of grassland and heathland locations. As we come closer to home, it is woodland sites that support this species: Blean Wood in Kent and Pound Wood, Hockley Wood and Hadleigh Great Wood in Essex. The Essex sites are on the outskirts of Southend, close enough for a Butterfly excursion from Suffolk.



In 2012 I paid my first visit to Essex for Heath Fritillary. This was to Starvelarks Wood (now managed as part of Essex Wildlife Trust's Little Havens Nature Reserve). I had read reports of high numbers at this site, which was no larger than a football pitch in size.

Given that the Heath Fritillary rarely strays away from its breeding ground, the importance of woodland management and strategic coppicing is key to its survival. As is the presence of their larval food plant, Common Cow Wheat, which flourishes in the clearings created by successful coppicing.

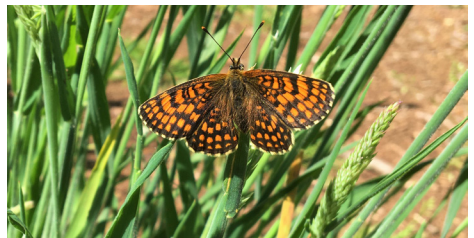
As I arrived at Starvelarks Wood, it was not long before the first butterflies were seen. Their gentle gliding motion close to the ground being a particular characteristic. The adults feed on a number of plants including Bramble, Ajuga (Bugle) and Knapweed. I observed them basking on ground cover vegetation too in close to one another. In fact, as I took a photograph of a mating pair, (see photo below) two more settled on my camera lens. Where habitat is managed to its optimum level, the large numbers of Heath Fritillary in a concentrated area can



*Heath Fritillary by Kev Ling*

be very high, sometimes surprising given its rarity as a species. Numbers peak in mid-June and are usually in a single brood, as opposed to the continent, where second broods are common.

Following mating, the female will glide slowly above ground level in search of a suitable place to lay her eggs (in excess of 100) essentially in a warm sunny position. This is not always on the larval food plant and will mostly be on vegetation close to it. After hatching, the first instar larva eats their egg cases and move on to Common Cow Wheat to continue their development. At the fourth instar stage, typically late August/early September, the larva will select a suitable location to overwinter. Using a silk web, it will create a hibernaculum and encase itself within a leaf. In early spring the fifth instar larva appears and continues to feed. Unlike some species, the Heath Fritillary will generally have seven instars prior to pupating. A freshly emerged adult is a sight to behold with vibrant orange and brown markings on the forewing. The underwings are equally stunning with white, cream and orange markings. I was fortunate enough to see a good number of freshly emerged adults on my visit with over 100 examples seen in total.



*Heath Fritillary by Kev Ling*

To demonstrate how impactful a slowing in habitat management can be, I re-visited Starvelarks Wood two years later and the juxtaposition between each visit could not have been more noticeable. The open sunlit clearings had closed in with overgrown shrubs and small trees taking hold. Common Cow Wheat was struggling to get sunlight, and a shortage of this larval food plant decimated the population. I found just a handful of adults.

However, less than a kilometre away is Pound Wood. Conservation efforts at this location over the past decade have been ongoing and the Heath Fritillary has benefited immensely. In 2019, a total of 148 adults were recorded. This has increased to 218 in 2024.

By far the most popular location in the area, and in close to the others mentioned in

the article, is Hockley Wood. Managed by Rochford District Council, this is the largest remaining area of wild wood in Essex, covering over 130 hectares. Home to a vast array of wildlife, it is particularly known as a stronghold of the Heath Fritillary. An ongoing coppicing plan has been present for many years, with the butterflies using corridors from previous areas to newly managed ones. These corridors are short in distance, as this species will not venture far from its existing site, with even the merest obstacle preventing its dispersal to new areas. I have enjoyed observing this butterfly in several different areas of the site and have never been disappointed. 2024 seems to have been a bumper year at this location with hundreds on the wing at their peak. So, the Heath Fritillary seems to be going from strength to strength in Essex and long may it remain so.

---

## **In Love with Orange Butterflies**

*Nick Amor*

My butterfly year began on a bright morning in February in Ranworth churchyard, Norfolk with the cheering sight of a Brimstone waking early from winter hibernation. Had it known of the grim weather that was to follow for months on end, it might not have been so perky! On return from Norfolk, I enjoyed gorse-clearing at Purdis Heath with Julian Dowding and friends to prepare the ground for the Silver-Studded Blue. Having gone out of a sense of duty, I was surprised by

how much I enjoyed the activity and would recommend it to anyone with a good pair of gardening gloves.

In April, for the first time, I ventured abroad on an organised butterfly holiday to North and Central Spain where we stayed in the delightful mountain township of Albarracin. The expedition was led by Simon Spencer and the author Peter Eeles, and an enthusiastic party included several spotters with far sharper eyesight than

me. As we all know, spending time with people who share a passion for nature and a knowledge of butterflies is such a rewarding experience. Among many species seen was the Knapweed Fritillary (see photo below).



*Knapweed Fritillary*

If Spain had suffered months of drought, our return to England reminded us that we had endured and would continue to endure months of rain. Nevertheless, I had seven targets on my list which I wanted to see this year, so set off in mid-May with great enthusiasm. My efforts were well rewarded by a rare sunny morning at Incombe Hole in Bedfordshire. This must number among the most magical butterfly sites in the country. There, I met my first Duke of Burgundy, a butterfly that that evaded me last year because I began my search too late. Climate change means that, quite often, the rarer habitat specialists emerge and decline earlier in the year than older texts suggest. For all the grandeur of its name, the Duke is surprisingly small, but as exquisite as any

mineral gem (see photo below). Keeping it company were Green Hairstreaks, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and a Comma.



*Duke of Burgundy*

Two days later, under an overcast sky at Park Corner Heath in Sussex, patience was rewarded with sight of a pristine Pearl Bordered Fritillary (see photo below).



*Pearl Bordered Fritillary*

On my return to the Heath a month later, in search of the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, the fern had grown by a metre and the butterfly remained well hidden beneath it until half an hour after I had left the site. I had joined two other enthusiasts for 3 hours before abandoning what seemed like a fruitless hunt, only for one to contact me later in the day to tell me that he had finally



## The Suffolk Argus

---

spotted the Small Pearl. A lesson learnt is that perseverance, and an extra half hour's effort can pay dividends. On my next trip in search of the Small Pearl, to Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest, I sought advice from local experts (a big thank you to Dave and Gary), invested a further hour in the late afternoon and was rewarded with some pristine specimens who not only came out to play, but settled with wings open and closed (see photo below).



*Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary*

After a long day in the field, it is marvellous how much a flash of orange can raise the spirits. Another find this year was at Hutchinson's Bank in Surrey where I came across a Glanville Fritillary, a species which once ventured no further north than the Isle of Wight (see photograph).



*Glanville Fritillary*

The Glanville has been adopted by Surrey Butterfly Conservation who are working hard to protect its habitat.

Nearer to home I visited Ride 204 in the King's Forest where I was blessed with sight of three Dingy Skippers battling for control of territory. Our editor tells me that I was lucky because, owing to the weather, it has not been a good year for them in Suffolk. Then my daughter Rosalind and I saw a Small Heath for the first time in our garden, a sighting that we celebrated together. I can still get identification wrong. A splash of orange on the upper side of the wings of a White Admiral in Bradfield Woods convinced me that I finally had my image of a female Purple Emperor, only to discover, on close inspection at home, that the wing tips were the wrong shape for an Emperor. One sees what one wants to see! On my nth visit to Bradfield Woods the Emperor and my camera lens finally made acquaintance, although he still did not deign to descend from the treetop.

I doubt whether 2024 will go down as a vintage year for English butterflies, and I wonder what longer-term damage the weather may have done. Nevertheless, I did manage to see four of the seven new British species that I had hoped for, bringing my total to fifty-three, including all the Fritillaries and a few of Peter Eeles' rarities. The pursuit continues to bring me great joy and, rather late in life, to teach me lessons about natural history that had previously passed me by. (*all photos by Nick Amor*)

## Sunshine, please!

*David Tomlinson*

There's one problem with butterfly watching that doesn't affect birdwatchers in quite the same way: weather. When I planned a bird- and butterfly-watching trip to Northern Spain in June, I envisaged sunlit meadows, rich in wildflowers, with vultures soaring above and butterflies flying below. The reality was somewhat different. The variety of wildflowers was astonishing (especially on the limestone above the Ebro gorges), and the vultures did soar overhead, but the sun shone all too rarely, so in a week's holiday there were only two brief interludes of what I would call good butterflying.

The first proper butterfly encounter was on limestone. I stopped the car to enjoy the variety of flowers, and the sun appeared briefly. There was a Cuckoo calling not far away, and it was joined by Quail, while the warmth of the sun induced a few butterflies to take to the wing. Blues are always a challenge to identify in Spain, as there are a lot of possibilities, but here I saw what I was sure were Common Blues (usually a safe bet), along with smaller blue butterflies. These proved to be Small Blues, not a butterfly that occurs in Suffolk (or anywhere in East Anglia, come to that), so they were a delight to find. I only managed to photograph a female, which wasn't of course blue at all, but a very dark chocolate brown, fringed with contrasting white.

There were various white butterflies flying, including Green-veined White, while there was a moment of excitement when a Scarce

Swallowtail appeared briefly, stopping just long enough to have its photograph taken. I'd already photographed this species in Greece the month before, but it's a butterfly that is difficult to resist. We photographers always believe that the next shot we take will be better than any previous one of the same species. It wasn't, but it was quite pleasing even so.

The next notable butterfly experience was a road-side car park where we had stopped for a picnic, next to the River Ebro. The sun came out, somewhat unexpectedly, and suddenly there were butterflies flying. It was Grizzled Skippers that first caught my attention, and they were quite numerous. They are aggressive little chaps, chasing any other butterfly that comes near, regardless of species. These skippers are members of a highly confusing group, members of which can be extremely challenging to identify, even with good photographs. My conclusion was that these were Southern Grizzled Skippers, a widespread and common species.

Flying with them were a few golden skippers, and these proved to be Small Skippers, just like the ones we get at home. They can be found throughout much of Western Europe. There was a third skipper, too, a rather handsome insect that I only identified after photographing it: Southern Marbled Skipper. I was taking its portrait when my companion gave a shout for a fritillary. I hastened over to photograph it

## The Suffolk Argus

---

and realised at once that it was one of the few small fritillaries that I can identify with certainty at a glance: Queen of Spain. The distinctive shape of the wings makes naming it easy. This was a nice fresh individual. I've seen Queen of Spains on the wing as early as February (in Bulgaria) and as late as the end of November (in Greece), as this is an insect with a series of broods and an almost continuous flight period for much of the year. Climate change may well see this butterfly establishing itself in Suffolk in years to come.

The final butterfly list for the week was a disappointing 21 species, and I don't think it would have been much longer if butterflies, rather than birds, had been our main target. Giving sunshine I would expect a list at least three times as long. On a birdwatching trip to the same area eight years before I'd enjoyed many more butterflies, including wonderful High Brown Fritillaries. There are some terrific possibilities, including Apollos in the nearby high Picos Mountains, but you need sunshine. Without it, butterflies just don't appear.



*Scarce Swallowtail by David Tomlinson*



*Queen of Spain by Fritillary David Tomlinson*



*Southern Marbled Skipper by David Tomlinson*



*Southern Grizzled Skipper by David Tomlinson*



## Survival Scales

*Jeremy Mynott*

July is usually a quiet time for birds but it's often the best month of the year to see butterflies, emerging to drink in nectar from the summer flowers. This year, however, we've had such disturbed weather with these heavy rains and squally winds that many things have been knocked out of kilter. Knocked out of the sky, too, in the case of butterflies, many of which are just venturing out for the first time in all their fragile beauty. Imagine how vulnerable they are if caught in a downpour, with huge raindrops exploding on and around them like shells. In fact, they dive for cover in a shower, just as we do. They usually hide under nature's own umbrellas, clinging to the underside of leaves and using the clever waterproofing on their scales, like the overlapping tiles on a roof, to shed stray droplets from those delicate wings.

These scales are one of the distinguishing features of the larger grouping of both moths and butterflies called *Lepidoptera*, literally 'winged with scales'. The thousands of scales on a butterfly's wing are a wonderful piece of micro-engineering. They act as tiny reflectors, which bounce the light off to create those shining colours, and they are also subtly ridged to serve as gutters, funnelling moisture away to keep the insect dry.

Butterflies have other ingenious survival tricks, too, and they need them. Suffolk has suffered terrible losses in its butterfly populations over the last century. The

famous Suffolk entomologist, Claude Morley, writing in the 1920s, lamented even then that all we would soon see were 'the plebs of the highways and hedges', by which he meant the commoner kinds of whites, browns and blues. Since then, many of these have gone from the county too, but one 'pleb' which is still just about surviving on Suffolk heathlands is *Plebejus argus* ('small pleb with many eyes'), the silver-studded blue. This species has evolved a very clever alliance with ants. By day, the young caterpillars are shepherded to ant's nests for protection from predators like birds, emerging at night to feed on the heathers. In return, the ants feast on the sugary secretions supplied from glands on the caterpillars' bodies. 'Win-win' – a happy symbiosis.

The silver-studded blue is so named from the brilliant pinheads of iridescent scales on the underside of its wings. I went to watch some of these little beauties recently on Hollesley Heath, fluttering about in a sunny spell. The spectacle lasted just an hour. The clouds closed in, and the rains came again. But as the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore noted, 'The butterfly counts not in months but moments, and has time enough'.



*Silver-studded blues by Trevor Goodfellow*

### Top Twenty Garden Nectar Plants

Richard Stewart

As a final article I have selected a 'top twenty' all of which we have grown in our gardens. They are listed in seasonal order with twice as many for the summer as that is when most butterflies are seen. The number after the plant indicates the 'Suffolk Argus' edition in which the plant appeared. I have listed a few Latin names where one variety is preferable, and all plants are best grown in clumps in a sunny spot.

Spring: Aubretia 73, Alyssum 73, Arabis 73, Dames' Violet also known as Sweet Rocket 76, Buddleia *alternifolia* 74.

Summer: Bowles Mauve Wallflower 74, Lavender - *Lavandula angustifolia* 82, Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* 83, Thrift 88, Osteospermum 84, Thyme 88, Buddleia *dauidii* 74, *Verbena bonariensis* 89, Golden Rod 79, Valerian 89.

Autumn: Michaelmas Daisy, preferably purple shades 83, Juice from rotten fruit, especially plums 86, Sedum spectabile 87, Ivy - *Hedera helix* 81, Buddleia *weyeriana* 74.

---

### Mercury Rising

Editor

According to British Dragonfly Society (BDS) scientists revealed that dragonflies are exposed to mercury contamination in our waterways and therefore testing could reveal the true scale of the problem. These insects' larvae live in all types of freshwater lakes, ponds, ditches and even puddles so

they are ideal for testing for levels of this dangerous neurotoxin. Scientists say that there is no safe level for mercury which even pollutes the air and is carried by rain to our water courses and oceans. Fish accumulate mercury and top predators can accumulate dangerous amounts which, if ingested by humans, can damage brain cells and may be linked to Alzheimer's. It is said that human activity is responsible for the mercury pollution we are exposed to which is about 450 percent higher than natural levels (*National Geographic*).



Image: Migrant Hawker by Trevor Goodfellow

## SBBC 2024 EVENTS REPORTS

### *Words from Onehouse - Mark Brewster*

Events in this contributor's diary were, like others', at the mercy of our somewhat inclement and unseasonal weather as summer approached. A planned visit to Harleston's Jubilee Wildflower Meadows with Blackbourne U3A was rearranged at the eleventh hour, and the Northfield Wood walk (see below) was not only hard work, but occasionally very wet underfoot.

One engagement unaffected by wind and rain was a trip to the RWSfm 103.3 studio at West Suffolk Hospital. Presenter Adrian Copping extended the invitation as we chatted at Pakenham Water Mill Wildlife Day. Some weeks later—and having thawed out—I spent an enjoyable hour chatting on air with Adrian. Amongst the many aspects of butterfly and moth conservation I was

given the opportunity to talk about were the reasons behind species' decline, the importance of larval food plants, our Wild Spaces initiative, membership options and recording methods. Evidently, things went very well, and I look forward to joining Adrian again at some point. (Top gig Mark! well done – Ed.)

### *11/6/24 Burgh House Farm Walk – Trevor Goodfellow*

The weather on the day was not conducive to butterfly flight, nonetheless, the brave group of walkers were greeted by Bill Mayne who gave a detailed background to the farm's new setup. The extensive tree and hedge planting was evident as we were guided through the meadows past many orchids. Bill also explained the connection between Sutton Hoo and one of the newly planted woods where the oak trees were grown from acorns of the trees cut down for timber used in the building of the Sutton Hoo replica ship project. A few butterflies were spotted, Brimstone larvae on SBBC donated Buckthorn, and a couple of day flying moths including a Blood Vein. So, despite the cool and dull conditions, we all enjoyed the walk. Many thanks to Bill for his time.



*Selfie by Mark Brewster*



*Bill revealing orchids at Burgh house walk*



## The Suffolk Argus

---

20/6/24 *Walk on the Wild Side (Harleston)*  
– Mark Brewster

Having postponed our planned May visit, I finally greeted Bryann and other members of Blackbourne U3A in Haughley Road, Harleston. Whilst we would remain dry this time around, a cool, stiff breeze made for poor butterflying.

Shortly after we'd taken the short walk to the Jubilee Wildflower Meadows, a lone Small Heath announced its presence by flying low in front of those at the front of the group. Other than that, just a handful of Meadow Browns were seen, along with the occasional distant white. Nevertheless, I was able to familiarise attendees with a brief history of the meadows, the work of Andy Wilks and his dedicated team of volunteers, and the circular walks around the village.

Around an hour and a half after we'd convened, we gathered once again in Haughley Road, where I thanked Bryann and his fellow members for their generous and rather unexpected donation to branch funds.



*Blackbourne U3A*

13/7/24 *Northfield Wood – Mark Brewster*

Not only were weather conditions far less than conducive for recording butterflies, but some parts of Northfield Wood remained under several inches of water following persistent rainfall. In anticipation of seeing little, I'd emailed those hoping to be wowed, perhaps, by the ancient woodland's larger and more colourful species, not wanting them to be disappointed I also hoped they would not be deterred by the weather.

A short pre-walk recce in my trusty Aigles saw me arrive at the car park smiling. I'd seen a Ringlet! Gleeefully, I broke the news to those who'd arrived ahead of our 10.30 start. The one obliging butterfly I'd seen at around 9.45 was a sign of what was to follow, as eventually we recorded a dozen. In fact, our tally was six species, a solitary White Admiral being the possible highlight. Whilst Silver-washed Fritillaries were conspicuous by their absence, our eagle-eyed editor spotted what we established later was the pupa of a Large White, plus a Muslin Moth caterpillar close to the wood's entrance as we departed.

The next day, with the sun shining and far fewer clouds in the sky, I walked the wood again. My iRecord submission shows 11 species and includes 16 Silver-washed Fritillaries. What a difference a day makes....



*Large white pupa on a tree leaf*

21/7/24 *Trudie's Garden Open Day* -  
*Richard Stewart*

The local weather forecast predicted good spells of sunshine, but the reality was a mainly cloudy day. Most visitors found it difficult to find many butterflies, even along the Buddleia Avenue. Species were largely restricted to Red Admiral, Peacock and Comma, with Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown along the hedge of native species and adjoining acid grassland. A few Grayling were present with one settling on the side of the painted caravan. My group were also able to see how it covered up the prominent eyespot to improve its camouflage. Fortunately, the sheep fields to the right of the garden produced Common Blue, Small Copper and Small Heath and one large White plus a single Speckled Wood brought the species total to eleven. Other insects included a much-admired Pantaloon bee, *Dasygaster hirtipes*, with bright yellow pollen baskets on its hind legs. There were a few Azure damselflies by the largest pond, but this was a day when even bee numbers were low. Swallows were nesting in the shed near the car park and a Green Woodpecker was calling. One of the great attractions was the moth display area where two MV moth traps were set the night before and the captured moths were displayed for visitors to admire. Thanks to Trevor Goodfellow, and Tony and Sandy Fox who thrilled young and old by identifying the moths and outlining their life cycles, foodplants etc.

74 species were recorded, and it was interesting that 37 of the species recorded

last year were not seen this year even with a similar species count (68 in 2023). All records were uploaded to [Suffolkmoths.co.uk](http://Suffolkmoths.co.uk) and verified.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Lucie, Trudie's daughter, for coming over from South Africa to organise the day and the earlier one in aid of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. I lost count of the number of visitors expressing delight about how Paul the gardener had managed the garden to its still superb condition- for example he decided to leave the parking area uncut, so visitors were met with a veritable carpet of yellow hawkweed and bird's-foot trefoil. Marie Stewart is thanked for welcoming visitors and guarding the donations bucket.

Finally, thanks go to Peter Maddison, the Branch Chairman, for all his work before, during and after the Open Day. Despite the weather being far from ideal for butterflies there were many generous donations leading to a total of £644.82 for the work of Butterfly Conservation.



*Grayling at Trudie's Garden  
open day by Trevor Goodfellow*

## The Suffolk Argus

---

*21/7/24 A Warm Welcome in Walsham –  
Mark Brewster*

I was greeted by Janette Winch and her husband Richard at Walsham le Willows and weather conditions not really suited for butterflies. My brief was to familiarise Walsham Wild Woods' volunteers with recording methods during their Big Butterfly Count event, and as the day progressed, a good many other volunteers, steering group and committee members, village residents and family groups came along. ID sheets and Butterfly Conservation leaflets were distributed, and I was able to demonstrate the use of recording apps. Through the morning and into the afternoon, several surveys were conducted around the site. We covered the usual aspects of butterfly and moth conservation as we chatted.

Walsham Wild Woods effectively comprises two large meadows, one with patches of scrub. Tree planting has taken place, and pathways are cut and maintained. I had not been to the village for a good many years and can only describe the area as a gem. It was a thoroughly enjoyable and productive day, and Janette has since been good enough to register two Wild Spaces.

For those interested in visiting Walsham Wild Woods for the first time, the post code is IP31 3BD. More details, including those of where to park, are available at [walsham-le-willows.org](http://walsham-le-willows.org)

It was a rather damp, gloomy spring and early summer. As I type, though, the sun is shining, and we badly need some rain.



*Walsham Wild Day*

*27/7/24 Pakenham Wood SWF Walk –  
Trevor Goodfellow*

I arrived ten minutes before the arranged meeting time armed with a piece of paper with three names on it to remind me who had registered to turn up. To my delight there were several familiar and a few new faces waiting patiently.

The 15 strong party including the vicar headed out across the churchyard, via a kissing gate towards the cattle meadow and passing a few Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. The pit in the meadow hosted a few thistles which attracted Small White and Peacock while Red Admirals flew past. We then walked through a further kissing gate and along a path flanked by more meadows rich in wildflowers and occasional butterflies. Then on to the woodland edge: a sunny track where we saw Purple Hairstreak, Large White, Red Admiral and Peacock. At the end of that track, we paused to photograph Purple Hairstreaks that came down from high. The return walk included a diversion into the wood to a small clearing where we saw Silver-washed



Fritillaries, Red Admirals and Small and Large Skippers, but unfortunately no White Admirals. One of our party spotted a Speckled Wood which we all agreed was unusually scarce this year. Returning between the meadows we were treated to several emerging 6-spot Burnet moths.

Their greenish iridescence made for a good photo and nearby uninhabited cocoons were visible on grass stems and even on the fence wire. A total of 13 butterfly species were seen plus 6-spot Burnets and Dingy Footman.



*Pakenham Butterfly Walk 2024*



*Who would have thought that a Speckled Wood could get such an audience.*

## Dingy Skipper Summary 2024

Trevor Goodfellow



Very cold nights and wet cool days during April and May could have stalled the main emergence of adult DS, but first records on the 8th of May were for the Archery Club ride 204 plus 2 individuals along the ride between main clearing and ride 204. This was encouraging; however, further records were very disappointing, peaking at 10 on the 19th of May.

Responding quickly to short periods of suitable weather, I persevered with searching in case there was a delayed hatch but to no avail. Numbers petered out, right up to 2nd June when 4 worn individuals seemed to have gravitated west. All these were found on ride 204 as far west as 100m from the main road. There did seem to be more BFT than previous years and I don't remember

seeing any adults here before, maybe an indication of short distance migration or speculative movement to find mates.

Ride verges, Jesse's plantation, and main clearing were all unusually lush, but Bird's-foot trefoil (BFT) was widespread.

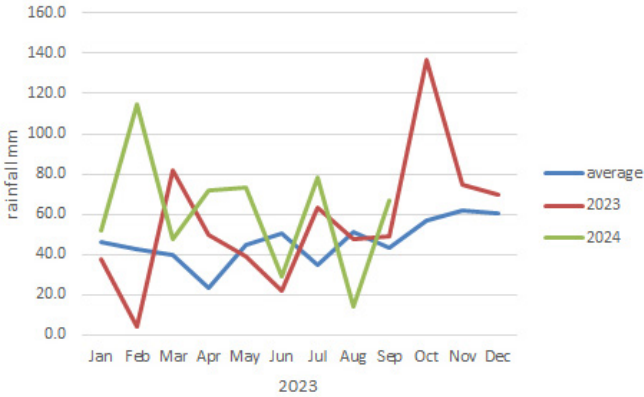
In conclusion: FE work around Chalk lane area restricted surveying dramatically, although recent records in that area have been lean.

Ride 204 and surroundings were well vegetated but did have areas of BFT growing well in most areas surveyed.

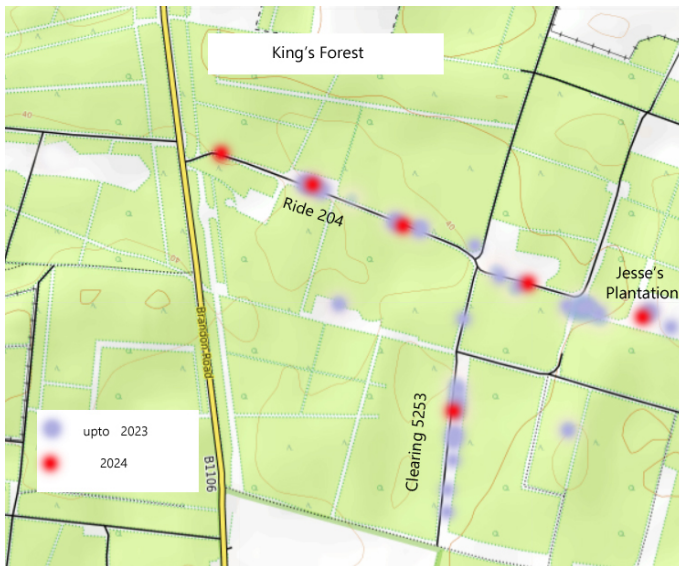
Perhaps last year's FE ride management adversely affected DS life cycle? It must be said that the wet winter (and spring) would have been a key factor in the poor results.

Date Surveyed	Count
8/5/24	7
19/5/24	10
20/5/24	8
21/5/24	1
2/6/24	4

The 2023 rainfall chart on page 25 compares average and recorded rainfall; this shows the increase through the year and three peaks of rain well above average.



Below: The ‘heat map’ below is a guide to the recent decline in abundance of DS in and around ride 204. A few incidental sightings have occurred beyond the map’s coverage.



Many species show a ‘boom and bust’ over short periods so we can only hope that these remaining few individuals breed successfully enough to revitalise this most important remaining Suffolk Dingy Skipper colony. Recent studies have shown that isolated colonies suffer inbreeding

problems that eventually lead to their demise so this is an additional concern.

A meeting with Sharon Hearle (BC) and FE is being arranged to discuss what habitat improvements could be made.



## Musings of a Butterfly Recorder

*James Corton*

Sitting here at the end of another butterfly season I have been reflecting upon the season as I am sure many of the members have. Our butterflies have been in the national press a few times this summer on account of such low numbers. Much coverage has been given already so I won't say too much here. With 22,000 Suffolk records processed and 'only' a potential 150,000 to go for the 2024 Report, it's too early to say if Suffolk fits the national trend for all species but I will endeavour to compare opinion with numbers in the Report. The 2023 Report will be published again as a full Report by the Suffolk Naturalist Society in the New Year. It will contain more maps and flight range data, and some additional data received through sources other than iRecord, iNaturalist and BirdTrack.

I like to start the day with a very British

brew. In summer, a cuppa in the garden and this has given rise to a few observations. Holly Blue seem to eat anything! An old guidebook describes the species as oligophagous but I think they must be polyphagous. Buckthorn, Dogwood, Ceanonanthus, Bird's-foot Trefoil and anything else green, it seems. I also saw Brown butterflies, particularly Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper, coming in and laying eggs on Rye grass on overgrown edges. I grew large quantities of Timothy and Fescue specifically for them and they ignored it in favour of scraps of Rye! Similarly, the Red Admirals have largely ignored my second-rate nettles in favour of the premium Pellitory-of-the-wall. Thank you again for your records and other observations. Still time for surprises, a Clouded Yellow or two and maybe even a Camberwell Beauty or Large Tortoiseshell.



*Sketch by Beryl Johnson*



*Old Lady moth*  
by Ian Goodall



*Beyton Green*



*Beyton Green*





*Cinnabar by Barbara Morris*