

Devon Branch

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Cream-spot Tiger PETE HURST

Newsletter



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

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Butterfly Conservation



Devon Branch Newsletter

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The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or of Butterfly Conservation either locally or nationally.

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AMANDA HIUNTER

Small Blue has been having a good brood at Berry Head, Brixham and has also been seen at Walls Hill in Torquay. The inland quarry site at Torquay continues to show the species although not in high numbers for the first brood.
(Information from Amanda Hunter)

Welcome to the June edition of Devon BC's newsletter. Now we are coming into summer, I am sure that you will be enjoying refreshment in the unfolding season with new species of butterfly and moth gradually appearing.

Declining biodiversity is constantly in the news but our work in Butterfly Conservation actually boosts biodiversity giving many often less common species a chance to persist. We target butterflies and moths in our conservation work but this benefits other invertebrates, other fauna and flora and helps to keep special habitats going.

Members' Day and AGM on October 19th 2019 in Crediton will have Phil Sterling talking about the amazing opportunities of the beneficial management of roadside verges and the wildlife that can thrive there with his own examples of success on some Dorset roads. Andy Barker will talk on Magdalen Hill Down BC reserve and how it has become a flagship butterfly reserve in Hampshire. There is a link between this reserve and Devon, since years ago Marsh Fritillary was introduced there from Devon stock. We will also have a members' photo presentation slot organised by David Turrell and Peter Beale (see page 11).

Early butterflies in 2019: Incredibly, 4 species of butterfly were seen in the first two days of January, including a Painted Lady on the 1st at Bovisand, Plymouth (Vic Tucker). March, which is the usual first month for non-hibernators to start appearing had an incredible 15 species, including a Green Hairstreak on 27th at East Prawle (see photo opposite, Michael Brooking), the earliest ever county record. More typically March may see circa a dozen butterfly species reported, but in March 2018 when we had the Arctic blast only 6 species were on the wing. Once again April this year has seen Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary emerging when historically it would have been May. Even Pearl-bordered Fritillary, which precedes Small Pearl would have more commonly been first encountered in early May until recent times.



Green Hairstreak
MICHAEL BROOKING

Campaign for a Wilder Future - Barry Henwood

Many of you will already know of the campaign by the Wildlife Trusts for a wilder future. We are all painfully aware of the dreadful decline in wildlife including insects. Among invertebrates there is good data for butterflies and moths from the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and the Rothamsted Insect Survey showing a decline in abundance. Please sign up to the campaign from the link below and you will be provided with suggested actions you can take. These include writing to your MP to influence the content of the forthcoming Environment Bill. This is a rare opportunity, so please get involved. <https://action.wildlifetrusts.org/page/40436/data/1>

Butterflies of 2018 - Roger Bristow

The year 2018 was generally a mixed one for butterflies. The number of records received (20,974) was down slightly on 2017. The start of 2018 was not as good as 2017, with only 80 butterflies of 6 species seen in the first 3 months (compared with 411 butterfly sightings of 12 species in 2017).

The relative abundance of butterflies at any one site was, however, about the same as last year, except in the Butterfly Conservation numbering code E (>100) where there were 19 species, compared to 11 species in 2017. In terms of numbers of butterflies observed at any one locality, the Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown were in the top spot with over 1000 individuals counted on 11 July at Saltram (V. Tucker), followed by the Marbled White with 659 individuals at Spreyton on 8 July (L. Gerrard), and the Silver-studded Blue with over 500 at The Warren Undercliffs on 24 June (M. Brooking).

The top eight butterflies in terms of records submitted were the Small White (2,830), Large White (2,156), Red Admiral (1,695), Gatekeeper (1,653), Speckled Wood (1,483), Meadow Brown (1,438), Peacock (1,168) and Comma (1,140). Last year's No. 1 butterfly, the Red Admiral, was relegated to 3rd place.



Including the scarce migrants (Large Tortoiseshell, Map Butterfly and Swallowtail) and Geranium Bronze, 47 species were seen in total in Devon in 2017.

Small White - most recorded Devon butterfly species in 2018 PETE HURST

Excluding the hibernators, 10 species (Small Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Large White, all 4 Hairstreaks, Marsh Fritillary, Marbled White and Grayling) emerged either at the same time or earlier than in 2017. The last flying date for about a third of the species was later than in 2017, although for one of these (Orange Tip on 3 Oct.) the last flying date was exceptional. Excluding the hibernators, the flying season was shorter or about the same for 16 species compared to 2017, and longer for 22.

As in many of the previous years, most of the species which are double-brooded, showed no clear temporal separation of the broods; the Dingy Skipper and Wood White were the exceptions.

The first butterflies of the year were Red Admirals seen on 1 Jan and then commonly up to 19 Feb. A Peacock was first seen on Jan. 10th and then commonly throughout the rest of the month and during February and March.

There were only 9 butterfly sightings (Red Admirals and Peacocks) in February.

In March, 44 adults were seen (including all the usual hibernators). The only additional species was one Small White on 21st (V. Tucker), two on the 26th (G. Watson and B. Heasman) and one on the 31st (A. Sherwood).

April was cold and wet and this reflected in the number of sightings (277, compared with 1,518 in 2017). Large Whites were seen on the 3rd and 5th, followed by a Holly Blue also on the 5th. A surprise sighting was a Clouded Yellow at Branscombe on the 9th (L. Creedon) – another was seen on the 21st at Bolberry Down (R. Macklin). The first Green-veined White was seen on the 11th (F. Rayner), as was a Speckled Wood (V. Tucker). The first Orange Tip appeared on the 14th (N. Burnell). Both a Small Copper and a Green Hairstreak were seen at Portlemouth Down on the 19th (M. Brooking), followed by a Wall at East Soar the following day (M. Brooking). On the 21st a Dingy Skipper was seen on the Lyme Regis Undercliffs (P. Butter). The first migrant Painted Lady appeared on the 25th at Bolberry (R. Macklin) The last additional April species was a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on Portlemouth Down on the 30th.

At the other end of the season, 17 species were seen in October (last flying dates are in parentheses): Holly Blue (29th), Common Blue (20th), Small Copper, Brimstone (20th), Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Wall (21st), Speckled Wood, Small Heath (18th), Clouded Yellow, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White (2nd), Orange Tip (3rd) and Comma.

Ten of the above species: Small Copper (2nd), Large White (1st), Small White (13th), Clouded Yellow (17th), Comma (2nd), Peacock, Red Admiral (dominant – 21 sightings), Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, and Speckled Wood (2nd) continued flying into November (35 sightings in total).

Five species were seen in December: 2 Red Admirals (26th) 2 Peacock (26th), 2 Commas (8th), 1 Small Tortoiseshell (26th). The last butterfly of the year was a Painted Lady on the 27th at Stoke Point (V. Tucker).

The Red Admiral and Peacock flew in every month of the year; the Small Tortoiseshell flew in 11 months of the year, the Brimstone and Comma flew in 10 months of the year, and the Small White flew in 9 months of the year.



Dingy Skipper numbers down in 2018 PETER VERNON

Dingy Skipper numbers, as with many other Spring butterflies (most notably the Orange Tip) were down by more than 50%. The first brood (12 sightings; 24 in

2017) flew from 21 April on the Lyme Regis Undercliffs (P. Butter) up to 4 June at Haldon (G. Vernal). There were only 5 second brood sightings: from July 21 at Salcombe Mouth (P. Butter) to 14 August at Salcombe (G. Vernal). Sightings (30) of the Grizzled Skipper were significantly up on 2017 (16) following a concerted effort to visit as many of its former colonies as possible, with confirmation that it still flies on Braunton Burrows and Haldon, but it was not recorded at Lydford this year. It flew from 5 May at Miltor Mator Common (D. Turrell) until 5 June at Deer Park Farm (A. Compton). Large Skipper sightings were down 50% and Small Skippers down by a third.

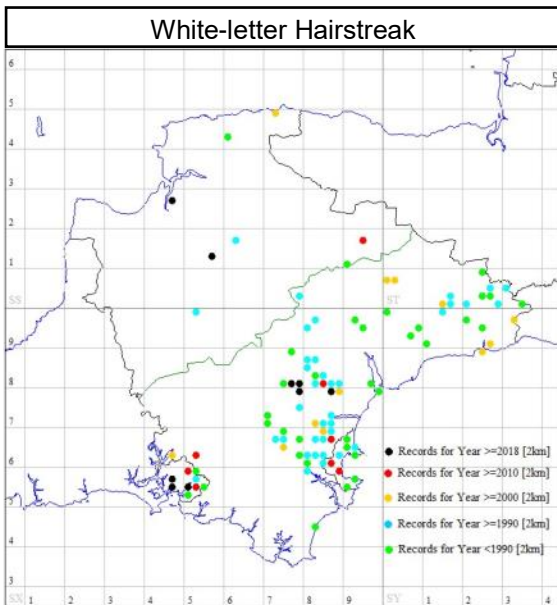
Large and Small White numbers were up significantly, and in fact the Small White was the most commonly observed butterfly of the year. Green-veined White sightings were about the same as in 2017, but Orange Tip sightings were down by two-thirds (69%), the most notable decline of all the Devon species. However, there were two exceptionally late sightings – 20 Aug., Liz Hamling, and 3 Oct. M. Lowe. Wood White numbers were also down dramatically (by 60%). There was a clear separation into first (7 May to 6 June – 12 sightings) and second (10 July to 14 Aug. – 8 sightings) broods. The stronghold of the Wood White is the DWT Reserve at Meeth, followed by the East Devon Cliffs. However, there were three sightings (2 June, G. Porter; 6 June, R. Hill and 3 Aug. R. Hill) at Otterton, a new locality for the species.



Wood White PETE UNDERHAY

The number of sightings of the Brown Argus almost halved (down 42%), with only two sightings of the first brood (15 and 27 May) and 12 of the second brood up to 21 Aug at Exton (M. Randle). The Small Copper had a good year, with numbers up by 21%, which in turn was up 20% on 2016. There was no sharp distinction into first and second broods; but it was about the middle of June, with, as usual, about ten times more sightings of the second brood. There were three sightings of the first brood of the Adonis Blue between 23 May and 4 June and three sightings of the second brood between the 23 Aug. and 3 Sept at Branscombe and Torbay. There were good numbers of the first brood Small Blue at Lummaton, Berry Head and Wall's Hill between 14 May and 6 June, and smaller numbers of the second brood between 21 June and 3 Aug. (M. Brooking). It was an excellent year for the Common Blue with numbers doubling, following a 40% decrease in 2017 on top of a 30% decrease in 2016, but with a slightly shorter flying season. As previously, the division between Spring and Autumn broods was possibly in the middle of June with the Spring brood much smaller than the second brood. After a poor year in 2013, Holly Blue numbers picked up in 2014, and increased again in 2015, halved in

2016, increased by about 60% in 2017, but fell back slightly in 2018. The flying season was much shorter (7 months compared to 9 months) than 2017. The first brood (about 66 sightings) flew from 5 April at Down Thomas (K. Williams), until about the middle of June. The second brood, with ten times the number of those of the first brood, flew from late June until 29 Oct. at Soar (R. Macklin). Lesley Kerry (Silver-studded Blue Co-ordinator) informs me that on the East Devon Pebblebeds, Silver-studded Blues were seen in good numbers in the usual places, in places where they have not been seen for years, and in places where they have never been recorded before! On the East Devon Commons, Silver-studded Blue sightings doubled (738, compared to 367 in 2017) Similarly, in South Devon, Michael Brooking recorded some incredible numbers (2,121 cf 713 in 2017) and discovered a new colony at Stannings. Rocks SX 69 37. None was seen at Bovey Heathfield. As last year, there was a flying season of 9 weeks.



White-letter Hairstreak R I Kirby

There were 21 sightings of adult Brown Hairstreaks, between 27 July and 16 Sept. The White-letter Hairstreak had an excellent year with the earliest ever sighting (22 June, Chudleigh, Pete Hurst). New sites included East-the-Water (23 Jun, Bob Kirby see photo above, and K & D Symons), Dolton (22 July, M. Easton) and at a new location in Saltram Park (13 July, K. Solman). In Plymouth Central Park eight were seen on 30 June (V. Tucker). The map at the top of the page shows the current distribution of the White-letter a 60% fall in 2017), but with a slightly longer flying period (13 weeks) than in 2017. Purple Hairstreak sightings were up by 38%, and the flying season was slightly longer (10 weeks, cf 9weeks).

In the absence of other migratory species, the early appearance of the Red Admiral (1 Jan.) and continuing to fly right into December, indicates emergence during hibernation rather than migration, and that the Red Admiral is capable of surviving our Winters. White Admiral sightings were about the same as 2017

and with a similar length flying season (6 weeks). Although good numbers were seen, the overall total of Peacock numbers was down by 34%. Small Tortoiseshell numbers fell by 27%, following a 33% reduction in 2017, and a 75% decline in 2016. Dark Green Fritillary sightings were up about 10%, but there was a shorter flying season (8 weeks) compared to in 2017 (10 weeks). The Heath Fritillary at Lydford, the only site in Devon where the species occurs, had a poor year, with a maximum count of 109 on 10 June (J. Evans). The reduced flight period was from 20 May to 22 June with a total count for the 4.5 week flying period of 160 (550 total in 2017). The number of High Brown Fritillary records was up 20%, but with a slightly longer flying season (6.5 weeks) than in 2017. They did surprisingly well at most of the 'good' locations. Some 63 adults were seen at Trentishoe on 15 Jun (M. Oates). Pearl-bordered Fritillary sightings, like many of the Spring butterflies, were down dramatically (35%), and it had a much shorter flying period (4.5 weeks, cf. 13 weeks in 2017). Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary sightings were down 22%; the first brood flew from 30 April at Portlemouth Down (M. Brooking) until about the last week of June; sightings from 17 July until 9 Sept. at Prawle (R. Macklin) were presumably second brood. Marsh Fritillary records were about the same as 2017. It flew from 20 May at Dunsdon (E. Peacock) mainly until 20 June, although one was seen on Witheridge Moor on 3 July (R. Jones), 24 at Grendon Farm on 24 July (S. Phelps), and eight at Riddon Farm on 5 Aug. (R. Gethin). Maximum numbers on any one day were 152 at Middleton Barton on 6 June (J. Plackett). The Silver-washed Fritillary had an excellent year with numbers up by almost 50%, and with sightings from all over the County, but with only an 11-week flying season (15 weeks in 2017). Glanville Fritillaries, which have been seen on the cliffs south of Torbay for the last four years, were absent this year, despite searches in suitable weather during their normal flight period.

The number of sightings for three of the satyrid species (Gatekeeper, Grayling and Small Heath) were the same as in 2017, four (Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Meadow Brown and Ringlet) were significantly down in numbers, but the Wall had its best year since 2014 with sightings up by almost 50%. It was, as usual, double brooded with 44 sightings of the first brood between 4 April and the end of June; and the much larger second brood (141 sightings) from 12 July to 21 Oct at Stoke Point (V. Tucker). Most sightings were singletons, but up to 20 were seen in a few places. The Speckled Wood was seen in only 8 months of the year in 2018 (10 in 2017). There was no clear distinction between first and second broods. Most sightings were ones and twos, but 41 were seen on two occasions (12 June R. Macklin; 6 Aug. V. Leat).

There were 4 scattered early sightings of the Clouded Yellow (9 April, Branscombe, L. Creedon; 21 April, Bolberry Down, R. Macklin; 7 May, Dawlish Warren, P. Chambers and 4 June, Roborough Down, D. Gregory). From 12 July onwards there was a steady trickle mostly of singletons, but 20 were seen at Strete Gate on 8 Aug. (M. Brooking) until the last sighting on 3 Nov.

on Dunscombe Cliffs (S. Anderson). Painted Lady sightings were down slightly on 2017. The first sighting of 2018 was a singleton on 25 April. at Bolberry Down (R. Macklin), followed by a few scattered sightings in early May. Then on 27 May a small-scale immigration, mostly singletons, began and continued throughout June and into early July. Numbers were reinforced by a larger scale immigration which appeared to start on about 20 July and continued until about the middle of August. Thereafter it was just one or two sightings per day until 22 Oct. when 3 were seen at different points in the Soar area (R. Macklin). Most sightings were singletons, but 31 were seen on 24 July at Braunton Burrows (M. Decrind). There was a very small-scale immigration at the end of the year when one was seen by Vic Tucker at Stoke Point on the 27 Dec. and another on 1 Jan 2019 at Bovisand.

Of the scarce migrants, a Swallowtail seen on 13 June at Chelson Torquay (Bailey) was probably a bred and released specimen. Another, seen between Lydford and Okehampton on 22 July (J. Gillard), may have been a genuine immigrant. A Map butterfly seen in the Clennon Valley on 17 Aug. by M. Millman could have been a genuine immigrant, but most likely it also was a bred and released specimen. There was a probable sighting of a Large Tortoiseshell on 5 June at Blackpool Sands (C. Webb) and a definite sighting at Dawlish Warren on 2 July (D. Cawthraw). Finally, a new species was added to the list of Devon butterflies – the Geranium Bronze. One was seen at Budleigh Salterton on 31 Aug (Bryan Smith) and another on 27 Sept (David Smith). As these sightings are so widely separated in time, it seems likely that they were two different individuals.

Finally, a big thank you to all 1.394 recorders, whether it was just a single sighting or a whole year's worth of records. Without your data, this comprehensive review of the 2019 butterfly season would not have been possible.

A special thank you to Janet Cheney for help with the tedious inputting of manual data.

Overleaf is a yearly summary for all species in 2018 compared to 2017.



Map butterfly M. MILLMAN



Geranium Bronze
DAVID SMITH

| Species | | First sighting | | Last sighting | | Records | |
|---------------------|------------|----------------|------|---------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | | 2018 | 2017 | 2018 | 2017 | 2018 | 2017 |
| Small | Skipper | 28/5 | 7/6 | 21/8 | 30/8 | 98 | 146 |
| Large | | 27/5 | 18/5 | 8/8 | 29/8 | 160 | 316 |
| Dingy | | 21/4 | 23/4 | 14/8 | 29/8 | 17 | 39 |
| Grizzled | | 5/5 | 16/4 | 5/6 | 6/5 | 30 | 16 |
| Wood White | | 7/5 | 18/4 | 14/8 | 7/8 | 20 | 51 |
| Clouded Yellow | | 9/4 | 7/4 | 3/11 | 17/11 | 85 | 57 |
| Brimstone | | 19/1 | 15/2 | 20/10 | 10/11 | 416 | 504 |
| Large White | | 3/4 | 5/4 | 1/11 | 10/11 | 2156 | 1738 |
| Small White | | 21/3 | 11/3 | 13/11 | 6/11 | 2830 | 1656 |
| Green-v. White | | 11/4 | 26/3 | 2/10 | 10/11 | 839 | 898 |
| Orange Tip | | 14/4 | 13/3 | 3/10 | 14/7 | 153 | 477 |
| Green | Hairsreak | 19/4 | 23/4 | 23/7 | 19/7 | 55 | 81 |
| Brown | | 27/7 | 15/8 | 16/9 | 23/9 | 17 | 21 |
| Purple | | 23/6 | 1/7 | 2/9 | 2/9 | 36 | 26 |
| White-letter | | 22/6 | 1/7 | 22/7 | 25/7 | 12 | 10 |
| Small Copper | | 19/4 | 25/3 | 2/11 | 16/11 | 615 | 486 |
| Small Blue | | 14/5 | 27/4 | 3/8 | 31/7 | 12 | 27 |
| Silver-studded Blue | | 2/6 | 30/5 | 4/8 | 5/8 | 28 | 22 |
| Brown Argus | | 2/5 | 2/5 | 21/8 | 22/9 | 17 | 29 |
| Common Blue | | 14/5 | 6/4 | 20/10 | 8/10 | 1002 | 512 |
| Holly Blue | | 5/4 | 25/3 | 29/10 | 10/11 | 551 | 581 |
| Adonis Blue | | 23/5 | 14/5 | 3/9 | 29/8 | 6 | 8 |
| White Admiral | | 18/6 | 18/6 | 1/8 | 30/7 | 34 | 37 |
| Red Admiral | | 1/1 | 1/1 | 26/12 | 22/12 | 1695 | 3314 |
| Painted Lady | | 25/4 | 18/2 | 27/12 | 10/11 | 621 | 658 |
| Small Tortoiseshell | | 21/2 | 10/2 | 26/12 | 17/11 | 651 | 885 |
| Peacock | | 10/1 | 11/1 | 26/12 | 17/12 | 1168 | 1769 |
| Comma | | 13/3 | 18/2 | 8/12 | 10/10 | 1140 | 1111 |
| Small P-bordered | Fritillary | 30/4 | 27/4 | 9/9 | 1/9 | 133 | 169 |
| Pearl-bordered | | 2/5 | 10/4 | 4/6 | 10/7 | 106 | 163 |
| High Brown | | 14/6 | 11/6 | 29/7 | 14/7 | 38 | 31 |
| Dark Green | | 31/5 | 30/5 | 26/7 | 17/8 | 88 | 77 |
| Silver-Washed | | 14/6 | 7/6 | 1/9 | 17/9 | 336 | 245 |
| Heath | | 20/5 | 10/4 | 22/6 | 3/7 | 7 | 20 |
| Marsh | | 20/5 | 18/5 | 5/8 | 19/9 | 100 | 105 |
| Speckled Wood | | 11/4 | 22/1 | 2/11 | 7/9 | 1483 | 1704 |
| Wall | | 20/4 | 2/4 | 21/10 | 28/8 | 185 | 131 |
| Marbled White | | 11/6 | 14/6 | 15/8 | 22/8 | 148 | 252 |
| Grayling | | 6/6 | 14/6 | 14/9 | 10/9 | 50 | 53 |
| Gatekeeper | | 11/6 | 7/6 | 5/9 | 14/9 | 1653 | 1671 |
| Meadow Brown | | 28/5 | 7/5 | 17/9 | 10/10 | 1348 | 1505 |
| Ringlet | | 13/6 | 25/5 | 31/8 | 30/8 | 488 | 714 |
| Small Heath | | 14/5 | 8/5 | 18/10 | 10/9 | 105 | 108 |
| | | | | | | 20974 | 22358 |

Summary data of Devon butterflies for the year 2018 compared to 2017

Grizzled Skipper sightings

Grizzled Skipper is one of our smallest butterflies and has become increasingly localised and much harder to find in Devon. A comprehensive survey last year had sightings from just 9 areas though the hope is that other populations are still out there (the butterfly can easily be overlooked). So far (in late May), Braunton Burrows has shown small numbers distributed over the site (info. from John Breeds). Dave and Hazel Land have reported encouraging numbers (7 - 9) from a site near Dunchideock on 12th May including a mating pair. Pete Hurst was delighted to photograph a Grizzled on Haldon Butterfly Walk on 3rd May having seen none there for many seasons (though others have seen singletons). Amanda Hunter has reported seeing 3 individuals at Miltor Mator near Kingskerswell on 14th May and also Clive Harris found and photographed another on the opposite side of the valley from Miltor Mator on the edge of Whilborough Common on 4th May. Some very good news is that John Rickett has once again found Grizzled at Trenchford Reservoir near Bovey Tracey after 2 consecutive years when its habitat was mowed around the flight season.



Grizzled Skippers: top left, on Haldon, PETE HURST. Left, Whilborough Common, CLIVE HARRIS. Above, near Dunchideock, DAVE LAND.

Members' Butterfly Photo Presentation on Members' Day - David Turrell

I know that a large number of you take excellent photos of many UK butterfly species and we would like to try and feature a few of these photos in a short presentation at this year's Members' Day (Saturday 19th October) as we have done on some other Members' Days. So if you have some photos that you think other members would find interesting, could you please email them to: turrell213@yahoo.com It would also be good to know where and when you took the photo (if known) and if there are any interesting but brief notes to go with the photo please let me know too. Photos should be .jpg file format and sent as an attachment to the email. Please don't attach more than two or three photos per email and a maximum of six images per person. Pictures from anywhere in the UK will be welcome. Only a selection of submitted photos can be shown though I will try to show as many as I can in the 20 minute allocation. Good luck! Dave.

Photo of Small Tortoiseshells submitted in the 2017 Members' Day Photo Presentation
ANDY BROWN



(Barry reports on Devon moth data a good year in arrears after all records have been received):-

Moth Officer's report for 2017 - Barry Henwood

The table of records submitted during 2017 below shows the astonishing scale of recording with over 96,000 received. The county is now so well covered by recording effort that new county or vice-county records are becoming less frequent. In fact, during 2017 the only such record was of *Ophiusa tirhaca*, a colourful moth in the family Erebidae which was found inside a Plymouth sports centre. It had never been seen in Britain before and is presumed to be an adventive. There were seven records of *Cyclophora ruficiliaria* Jersey Mocha whereas previously there was one in 2011, two in 2015 and seven in 2016. The species is a recent UK colonist and appears to be established now in the Bere Alston area.

The finding of *Cepphis advenaria* Little Thorn at Bere Ferrers is most interesting. Previously there was just one Devon record and that was from the Rothamsted trap at Starcross in 2009. As three were recorded at Bere Ferrers, it seems likely that there is an established population there.

2017 was the best year ever for *Catocala fraxini* Clifden Nonpareil with nine records including two in one trap on 17 September. In previous decades there was one record in the 1970s, six in the 2000s and eight in the 2010s. The species is thus becoming more frequently recorded. It is now established in Dorset, so it seems likely that this spectacular species will become a resident species in Devon, if it is not already breeding here.

Chrysodeixis chalcites Golden Twin-spot is recorded as a migrant in Devon for the second time. *Photodes fluxa* Mere Wainscot is recorded in VC4 for first time since 1960. The moth was caught near its foodplant *Calamagrostis epigejos* Wood Small-reed, so it seems likely that it is resident there.

Devon Moth Group is recommended for anyone wishing to take a keener interest in moths. The group has enormous expertise amongst its membership and produces an annual report which for 2017 was 54 pages long.

| Devon Moth records | Pre-2017 records | 2017 records | Total submitted in the last year |
|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Accepted at species level | 31,031 | 62,381 | 93,412 |
| Accepted at supra-specific level | 285 | 1,440 | 1,725 |
| Not accepted | 423 | 457 | 880 |
| Butterflies | 39 | 30 | 69 |
| Total | 31,778 | 64,308 | 96,086 |

Hot times for Moths ? - Paul Butter

This year has seen some record breaking spring temperatures with people sunbathing on south coast beaches in February and the hottest Easter Sunday and Monday on record. So how is this affecting our insects? Well although day time temperatures in February were high, the nights were quite cold, so moths were unexceptional. We saw the usual numbers of early spring species and very few migrants were recorded on the Atropos flight arrivals website.

In March I had an unusual form of Hebrew Character in the garden, see photo right, known as *ab.obsoleta* where the usual black markings are replaced by pale ochre. Apparently this form is more usual in Scotland and on March 9th there was a northerly gale. Could it really have been blown this far south? A few migrant Dark Swordgrass appeared in the area in March but the most unusual catch in my garden was a Least Black Arches incredibly early on March 22nd, six weeks earlier than my previous earliest record in 2017. This was amongst 17 different species compared to a more usual 8 or 9 in the garden at this time of year.



Hebrew Character
ab. *Obsoleta*
PAUL BUTTER

It was Easter that really became exceptional and I was running three traps at the Undercliffs NNR on the south Devon coast on 18th with a night time minimum of 14°C after a very hot day. Twenty four species were noted but unfortunately I had a generator malfunction during the night so I determined to return on 22nd April. Luckily this was just as warm with south easterly breezes bringing Saharan dust overnight. Out of an exceptional 66 species recorded there were no fewer than 11 that I have never recorded in April in the last nine years of continual recording. These were mostly common moths that occur regularly every year and so have reasonably reliable data with the exception of Ruddy Carpet which has the flight period stated as June-July in the Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland.



Scorched Carpet PAUL BUTTER

As the table overleaf shows, one of these moths, Willow Beauty that I recorded on April 22nd is over five weeks earlier than previously recorded and all are at least eleven days earlier. This is an extraordinary length of time. It also shows that 2013 and 2016 were both "late" seasons for many species and that many

| Moth | Previous Earliest Date | Previous Latest 1 st Date |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Barred Umber | May 2 nd 2014 | May 31 st 2013 |
| Scorched Carpet | May 15 th 2018 | July 8 th 2017 |
| Sharp-angled Peacock | May 15 th 2017 | June 17 th 2013 |
| Common Wave | May 5 th 2013 | May 31 st 2016 |
| Puss moth | May 2 nd 2014 | June 11 th 2015 |
| Common Swift | May 11 th 2017 | June 6 th 2013 |
| Buff-tip | May 2 nd 2017 | June 3 rd 2016 |
| Brown Silver-line | May 2 nd 2017 | May 29 th 2013 |
| Willow Beauty | May 31 st 2018 | July 12 th 2013 |
| Least Black Arches | May 3 rd 2017 | May 20 th 2013 |
| Ruddy Carpet | May 15 th 2018 | |



Left, Ruddy Carpet.
Right, Puss Moth
PAUL BUTTER



of the previous earliest dates were in 2017 and 2018 indicating a trend towards earlier seasonality.

The records for the 22nd April also included some rarer species, with 7 Jersey Mocha, now established in the area and 5 Ruddy Carpets. The only migrants were 2 Rusty-dot Pearls despite the Saharan dust event.

Butterfly flies at 3C! - Pete Hurst

In April this year we had lots of welcome visits from sky-blue Holly Blue butterflies and for a week or two it was hard to walk down the garden without seeing one.

The morning of 11th April was chilly but sunny. At 8.45 am I noticed a flash of white, or at least I thought it was white, of an insect charging into the garden. Intrigued, I dashed out from the conservatory to investigate. I shook

the large rose bush where it had landed, and eventually out flew a Holly Blue. Its powder-blue underwings had obviously given the impression of a lighter colouration in the early low sunlight. The shade temperature was only 3C. Most Butterflies will only get active when the mercury makes it into double figures, typically 12C (though I have seen Red Admiral in temps. well below 10C). I was therefore surprised to see this butterfly flying at such a low temperature.



Holly Blue AMANDA HUNTER

Sherlock Holmes hat firmly on, I managed to deduce what had happened. Our garden wall from which direction the butterfly flew, is Ivy-covered and catches early sunshine. Holly Blue larvae have regularly been found here in the autumn eating the developing Ivy flowers. Holly Blue pupae will inhabit cracks and crevices in the stone wall before hatching in the Spring, commonly on sunny days. The one I saw almost certainly had just emerged in the sunshine. Recently, Wood Pigeons have been coming down to feed on the Ivy berries there, and one flew off as I went into the garden. Therefore the said Wood Pigeon must have forced the new hatching to scoot out of danger as it collided into the Ivy-covered wall.

Pearl-bordered Fritillaries under the power lines at Haldon

Colin Burningham

Every year, we make a visit to Haldon in April/May to view the magnificent colony of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at this site. Because of other commitments, we visited the site a little early this year on 29th April in somewhat marginal conditions without a lot of hope of seeing any sign of these butterflies, although we had heard that they had already been seen there this year, perhaps in more favourable conditions. On arrival at the site, the car thermometer read 13.5 deg C and although the sky was bright, there was a slight precipitation in the air; not the best conditions for viewing butterflies, but we soldiered on nevertheless.



Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Haldon
COLIN BURNINGHAM

To our surprise, we saw a couple of Fritillaries on initial entry to the site and by the time we reached the information board, we had seen a number and had positively identified them as Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. We photographed a number of them; they were all sitting on the ground with their wings wide open, despite the somewhat poor weather. Furthermore, they flew quite readily and they were clearly soaking up the weak sunlight for we saw not one with its wings folded. On a slow walk through the site adjacent to the information board, which had been cleared of scrub during the winter, we counted at least 20 specimens.



Adela reaumurella micro moth
COLIN BURNINGHAM

Although there was little else flying on the site, we were lucky enough to see a Long-horn micro-moth *Adela reaumurella* settled nearby but clearly showing its magnificent antennae which gave it almost an equivalent width to its Fritillary companions!

Not valid conditions to walk a transect but clearly very suitable for a casual sighting.

This Purple Hairstreak drifted down to the ground from the overhead tree canopy as I walked along a tarmac drive near Trenchlebere Down on Dartmoor. After getting a photo or two, I tried to get it to take flight out of harm's way, but to no avail. This was during the July heatwave of 2018 and so I tried trickling water over its feet to stimulate drinking if it was dehydrated. This had no effect and it remained out in the open on the tarmac.



The butterfly then sat with wings open - not commonly seen with Purple Hairstreak. Surprisingly, the upper-side looked more brown than purple and I wondered why that was. It still had no intention of trying to move off.



The butterfly changed its orientation and suddenly a uniform pale purple showed. This was a male butterfly with purple on the fore and hindwings. The pale colouration gave away that it had lost many of its coloured wing scales (fresh individuals would be bright purple) and it dawned on me that this was a butterfly at the end of its life. No doubt it had bred successfully in the many days of sunny weather during its lifetime. This was only the 11th of July so an earlier than usual expiry date!



PETE HURST

Summary of remaining field and other events for 2019

Sun. 9th June : Dunsdon Devon Wildlife Trust reserve, near Tamar lakes, and possibly Vole House Farm North Devon 1.30 pm

Meet in the reserve car park [SS 302 080]. Heading west from Holsworthy on the A3072 towards Bude, after about 2.5 miles take a right turn signposted Pancrasweek. Continue north past Pancrasweek church for about 1 mile and turn right at T-junction. Go through Lana following the road round a sharp left bend. The entrance to the reserve is on the left, just before Gains Cross. Wellington boots advisable. Target species Marsh Fritillary. Leader Jenny Evans: jennifer.evans@lineone.net or 01837 871 163.

Sun. 9th June: Jurassic Coast Undercliffs East Devon 10.30 am

Meet at Whitlands, grid ref. SY 306 910. A walk through the NNR starting with a look at moths caught the night before then focussing on Humble Glades. From the A3052 from Seaton turn first right after Charton Cross down the access road signed Whitlands. Target species: Wood White, Chalk Carpet, Small Purple-barred, Dark Green Fritillary and Dingy Skipper. Great flora too. A joint event with Axe Vale & District Conservation Society. Booking essential as numbers are limited. The terrain is quite arduous and stout footwear advised as well as sun protection, drink and packed lunch. Leaders Martin Drake martin-drake2@gmail.com and Paul Butter paulnbutter@hotmail.com

Fri. 14 June: New England Wood near Lee Mill Moth event 9.00 pm

Meet at SX 597 543 (nearest postcode PL7 5BA). From the A38 at the Lee Mill junction, following signs to Yealmpton. After about a mile at the sharp right-hand bend, take the minor road straight ahead (New England Hill). At bottom of hill, turn into parking area at New England Quarry, through gate on left. Entrance to reserve is circa 1 minute walk further along the road, on the left, just after bridge. If weather looks unsettled contact leader by 6:30pm to check event is still happening. A joint meeting with Devon Wildlife Trust, Devon Moth Group, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, Butterfly Conservation, Devonshire Association. Leader Barry Henwood: 01626 364 080.

Fri. 21st June 2019: Dart Valley near Holne, DWT Reserve Moth event 9.00 pm

Meet at Newbridge car park SX 711 708, nearest post code TQ13 7NT. There will be a walk before it gets dark and moth trapping soon after 10pm. If the weather looks unsettled please contact the leader by 6:30pm to check the event is still happening. A joint meeting with Devon Wildlife Trust, Devon Moth Group, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, Butterfly Conservation and Devonshire Association. Leader: Barry Henwood 01626 364 080.

Sat. 22nd June: Tiverton Hospital Wildlife Garden 11 am - 12 midday approx. and Cove Down Farm near Bampton 2.00 pm onwards

Meet in car park of Tiverton Hospital (EX16 6NT), grid ref. SS 951 133. Assemble by the Rotary Club's garden at the north-eastern end of the grounds. Parking permits will be available for this event. The garden has native herbs and shrubs that attract butterflies and bees. Leader is Gavin Haig.

For the Cove Farm visit travel up the A396 and turn right in Cove village, or at the next right-hand turn. The latter is just before the nursery and plant centre. The nursery is well worth a visit. Meet at Cove Farm (EX16 7RU) at 2.00 pm (grid ref: SS 961 200). Grassland butterflies and a range of other wildlife. Leaders: Yolanda Cruwys and Paul Tillsley. Please let Peter Beale know if you plan to attend one or both of these events.

Tel. 01626 333 106 or beale@eclipse.co.uk

Sun. 30th June: Ashclyst Forest nr. Exeter 10.30 am – 2.30 pm approx.

From Broadclyst proceed north along B3176 and take a right turn just BEYOND the left turn to Killerton House (B3185) and follow the lane straight on, past two left turns, and the Forest Gate car park is on your left. Grid ref. for the Forest Gate car park is SX 999 995. We will explore this large area of woodland known at this time of year for the beautiful White Admiral, lots of Silver-washed Fritillaries and Scarlet Tiger moths. A joint meeting with National Trust. Our guide will be NT volunteer Malcolm Jarvis. Event contact Pete Hurst tel. 01626 854 182.

Sat. 6th July: Plymbridge Woods Moth event Plymouth 9.00 pm

Meet at Plymbridge Woods National Trust car park at SX 523 586 on the Plympton side of the river. From A38 Marsh Mills roundabout take B3416 into Plympton, follow to roundabout and turn left into Glen Road and then left again at next roundabout onto Plymbridge Road. Follow to end of road. Plenty of room for Devon Moth Group members to bring their own equipment to a varied habitat of ancient woodland and riverside meadow. This is an open public meeting held jointly with the National Trust and Devon Biodiversity Records Centre. Leaders: Dave Gibbon (01752 666 231 and 07904 129 309) and Chris Acraman.

Sun. 7th July: Kerswell Down, Kingskerwell 1.00 pm

Meet in the car park at Maddacombe, Kingskerwell, grid ref SX 873 676. Please note there is now a 2M height restriction at the car park. There is a short steepish path from the car park which can be slippery when wet. Target species include White Admiral, Brown Argus and Silver-washed Fritillary. We may extend the walk to adjacent Whilborough Common if time and weather allow. Leader David Poole, tel. 01803 873 880.

Sat. 13th July: Aish Tor nr. Poundsgate 1.00 pm

Meet in the car parking area at SX 707 714. From the B3357 at the top of Newbridge Hill turn west onto the very minor road and the car parking area is immediately on the right. Target species: High Brown Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary. Leader John Barkham tel. 01364 653 903 or bark.person@gmail.com

Sat. 20th July: Dawlish Warren NNR Moth event 9 pm

Meet at grid reference SX 9808 7877 or use postcode EX7 0NF. After you go through small railway tunnel, turn left into the public car park and drive to the very far end right hand side and meet at the wooden gate. The reserve is a mixture of grassland and sand dunes and is owned and managed by Teignbridge District Council. Leader: Kim Leaver (0788 97823).

Fri. 26th Sat. 27th July: Norman Lockyer Observatory, Sidmouth Moth event

Meet at 9.30 pm on Friday 26th for the active moth-trapping or 10.00 am on Saturday 27th (grid ref SY 139 883) to inspect the catch. Best approached off the A3052 having crossed the river Sid in Sidford and turning right past the pub. As you go towards Sidmouth town on this road there is a brown sign to the Observatory on the left just before the road crosses the river once more. The Observatory is at the top of the hill on the left. Joint with Norman Lockyer Observatory and Devon Moth Group. Toilet facilities are available and it is possible to camp overnight in the grounds. Leader Paul Butter Tel. 01297 442 290.

Sun. 28th July: Alners' Gorse BC Reserve, Dorset 11 am Meet at grid ref ST 736 100.

From the A30 at Sherborne take the A352 south, then the A3030 through Bishops Caundle on to the junction of B3143 to King's Stag where you turn left at the crossroads towards Hazelbury Bryan. There is verge-side parking on the left-hand side of the road and a small car park inside the gate to the reserve which can get slippery in wet weather. Come for a day at this

very interesting reserve which hosts four Hairstreaks and is one of the best places to photograph Purple and Brown Hairstreaks and possibly White-letter Hairstreak. Bring drink, a picnic and sun protection. After lunch there is an opportunity to go on to Rooksmoor. Joint event with Dorset Branch. Leaders Paul Butter, Nigel Spring and Martin Warren. Tel 07807 680 455 for Paul or 07981 776 767 for Nigel.

Sun. 4th August: Welcombe Mouth near Hartland, North Devon 11.30 am

Meet at the car park right by the shore (down a fairly rough track), grid ref SS 213 180. The final approaches to Welcombe Mouth are signposted. Mainly a cliff path walk, (suitable footwear required), following part of a BC transect. Primary target species are Wall and possibly Grayling. There should also be interesting cliff and coastal flora and excellent views. Bring lunch. Leader Jenny Evans: jennifer.evans@lineone.net or 01837 871 163.

Sat. 24th August Plymbridge Woods, near Plymouth Moth event 8.30 pm

Meet at Plymbridge Woods National Trust car park (SX 523 586) on the Plympton side of the river. From A38 Marsh Mills roundabout take B3416 into Plympton, follow to roundabout, turn left into Glen Road and left again at next roundabout onto Plymbridge Road. Follow to end of road. Plenty of room for Devon Moth Group members to bring their own equipment. Varied habitat of ancient woodland and riverside meadow. Open to the public and held jointly with the National Trust, Devon Moth Group, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre. Leaders: Dave Gibbon (01752 666 231 & 07904 129 309) and Chris Acraman.

Sat. 7th September: East Budleigh Common Moth event 7.00 pm

Meet at grid reference SY 0383 8446. From Exeter M5 Junction 30 take the A376, after about half a mile take the A3052 towards Sidmouth. After approximately five and a half miles, turn right just after the Halfway Inn onto the B3180 towards Exmouth. Follow this road for about five miles and turn left at the small crossroads which has two brown signs, one pointing left saying Reservoir and the one below pointing right saying Farm Shop. Follow this road through the woodland until it opens up onto the heath. The heathland is owned and managed by Devon Clinton Estates and hopefully some of the late summer heath specialist moths will turn up including The Anomalous. Leader: Kim Leaver (07889 978 223). Joint meeting with Devon Moth Group.

Friday 27th September: Meeth Quarry Devon Wildlife Trust, Moth event 7pm.

Meet at the reserve car park at SS 539 084 for a 7pm til late moth recording event on this years' National Moth Night. The target species is Clifden Nonpareil, a stunning moth that has colonised Devon recently as part of a natural range extension. Its caterpillars feed on poplars including aspen, and there are a good number of these trees right next to the car park. Please check Devon Moth Group website , or ring/email Rob Wolton before coming, to check that the date has not been moved to the day before or after due to weather. The lane leading to the reserve is off the A386 on the left just as you enter the village of Meeth from the south, marked by a DWT signboard. Leader Rob Wolton:-
robertwolton@yahoo.co.uk tel. 01837 810 416. In association with Devon Moth Group and Devon Biodiversity Records Centre.

Sat. 19th October: Devon BC Members' Day and AGM, Boniface Centre, Crediton

A date for your diary – see page 3 for more info.

Committee members and contacts list

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|---|--|
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