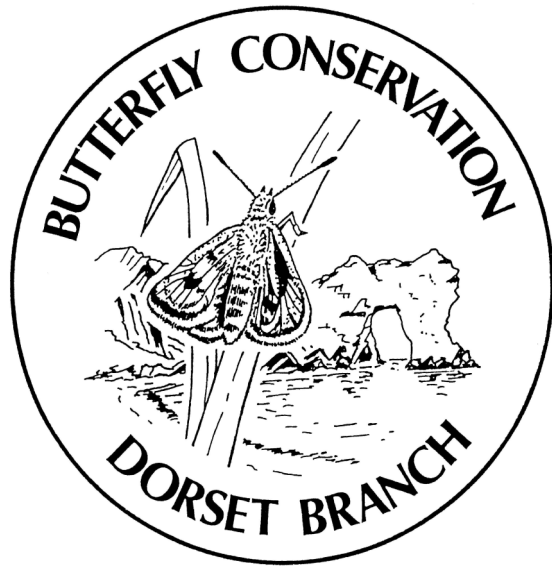


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# Dorset Branch



[www.dorsetbutterflies.com](http://www.dorsetbutterflies.com)



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

## Chairman's Letter

By the time you read this I will have retired as Branch Chair and Nigel Spring will have taken over, so we have decided to share the letter between us.

On the whole, 2014 was a good year for butterflies and moths; broadly similar in terms of total sightings to 2013 but much better than the preceding few years. As usual there were winners and losers. Apart from August, every month of 2014 was warmer than average, but the winter months were very wet. This year we are experiencing a late spring, which is delaying the emergence of butterflies. Weather patterns such as these are one of the factors which affect our butterflies and moths.

As usual we had an active year for events, including those we organise ourselves (guided walks, ID workshops and walks, moth trapping sessions, events on our butterfly reserves etc.), and participation of our volunteers and attendance of the display stall at events organised by others. Winter events focus on maintenance of our reserves and other good butterfly sites. Many people help us run these events throughout the year, but I would like to mention Bridget de Whalley and Nigel Spring in particular.

Lyn Pullen is continuing to develop and improve the branch website, with invaluable technical support from Dom Greves. It is now much easier and rewarding to use. A particular feature is the online sightings facility, which is becoming more and more important as a way of recording your butterfly records. I can recommend it as being by far the easiest way to submit your records. Every single one is verified by our team of Martin Raper and Nick Urch, to whom we are very grateful as it is most important that the records are accurate.

At the AGM on 21<sup>st</sup> March, a number of changes on the Branch Committee occurred. Leaving the committee are Allan Higgin as Treasurer, Richard Belding as Conservation Officer, Bridget de Whalley as Display Coordinator, and me as Branch Chair, and joining it are Georgie Laing as Treasurer, and Richard Norman as a Committee Member. Our new Chair is Nigel Spring, who will also continue in his role of Reserves Manager. Georgie used to work in the Finance Department at BC Head Office, so is very well qualified to take over. Richard has worked on our reserves for many years.

Over the last 11 years or so, Bridget has taken the display stall to countless events over each summer, often accompanied by the sales stall. She is on the move most weekends, and if not busy attending an event she may well be out looking at butterflies. We are hugely indebted to her for her energy and commitment, which has introduced thousands of children (and adults) to the joys of butterfly and moth watching. She is continuing throughout this summer, and will then hand over responsibility for the display stall. We are still looking for someone to take over, so please get in touch if you are interested in this very rewarding role.

Richard Belding joined the committee in 2004 as Conservation Officer. At that time he was also working in the field of conservation, so was ideally qualified to take on the role. His advice and support have been invaluable, particularly in helping to secure funding for two of our butterfly reserves. Although he is retiring from the committee, Richard will continue in his role of Conservation Officer, for which we are very grateful.

Allan Higgin was elected to the committee as Treasurer in 2007, having previously served on the committee for a period. During his time with us he computerised our financial records, and kept a tight hold on our accounts. We are extremely grateful to Allan for managing our finances so competently.

Although I have greatly enjoyed my time on the committee, I have got to the point where I need to step back from such a responsible role. I was therefore very pleased when Nigel Spring agreed to take over as Branch Chair. Nigel re-joined the committee in 2005, and has been our Reserves Manager for many years. Nigel's great strengths include his knowledge of conservation related matters, and his ability to enthuse those around him. These are not among my abilities, so I think Nigel is an ideal person to take over from me. I am therefore happy to retire as Chairman, leaving the branch in Nigel's very capable hands. I would like to thank all my fellow committee members, both past and present, for their support and companionship over the last 10 years.

I look forward to meeting many of you at branch events in the future, and wish you a good butterfly and moth summer.

***Jane Smith, retiring Branch Chair***

We should all feel very grateful to Jane for all the time and energy she has contributed to the Dorset branch, first as Secretary and then as Chair. The Branch has grown considerably, both in its level of activity and its membership, and Jane has been a very calming, stabilising influence during this period.

We are going to be presented with ever growing challenges in the years to come. The threats to the countryside and butterfly and moth habitats are increasing every year, while the systems for statutory protection for them become weaker. Butterfly Conservation at the national and branch level has to mobilise more practical support and interest from its members and the general public to counter these trends. It is really important that we keep environmental conservation high on the political agenda and in a prominent position on the public's list of priorities. The Dorset branch has possibly the fullest ever

calendar of events for the summer, more sites for butterfly transect walks than ever before, and a very attractive and busy website which is extremely easy to use (with a greatly improved system for logging sightings). If everyone gets involved in some way or other and brings their friends, neighbours and communities with them, we could make this a fantastic butterfly and moth summer!

***Nigel Spring, new Branch Chair***

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### **Big Butterfly Hike 2015**

*BC's Chief Executive and Dorset resident **Dr Martin Warren** explains his plan to walk the Jurassic Coast from 27th July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August.*

Ten years ago I walked the Jurassic Coast in order to raise awareness about the decline of butterflies, and raise some funds for their conservation. As you know, Dorset is blessed with an incredibly beautiful coastline which was declared a World Heritage Site in 2001 for its unique geology, which spans over 185 million years of the Earth's history (including the entire Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous geological periods). The walk also runs through some crucial habitats for butterflies and moths, so it was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, albeit one with a serious purpose.

I met with several celebrities along the way, gaining substantial coverage in local press and radio. The walk was launched by Thelma Barlow (of Coronation Street and Dinner Ladies fame) and along the way I spent time with Chris Packham (running a children's event on Portland), local MP Jim Knight at Lulworth, and journalists Mike McCarthy from the Independent and Mark Stratton from BBC Wildlife magazine. I was also delighted to be able to raise around £10,000 for conservation.



Martin with Chris Packham on his  
previous walk

I am planning to repeat the walk again this year, this time to raise awareness of the Big Butterfly Count which starts on 18<sup>th</sup> July with a launch in London with our President Sir David Attenborough and ending on 9<sup>th</sup> August. My walk will start in the second week of the count, from Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

A lot has changed in the ten years since my last walk and I will be drawing attention to some good things that have happened locally (such as BC's four Nature Reserves in Dorset) as well as some species that have become even more threatened (like the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary). During the walk I will be reporting progress via social media such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as blogs on the main BC website. I will also be raising funds for rare butterflies again, hoping to exceed my previous total of £10,000.

I will publish my itinerary in due course on the main BC website with links to the Dorset Branch website. I would love to meet any Branch members at one of the stop or start points, where you may be able to meet some of the eminent people who I have invited to join me. If the weather is kind, I might just conduct a record 100 Big Butterfly Counts along the way! Don't forget to do the count yourself, an ID sheet and form will be included in the Summer edition of *Butterfly* magazine and can be found online at [www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org).

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### **Habitat Management and Butterflies in Dorset**

***By Lawrie de Whalley***

At Butterfly Conservation's Lankham Bottom reserve near Cattistock, the Chalkhill Blue has declined from a transect count of 173 pre 2007 to zero since 2009. This butterfly has also gone to zero at the Cerne Abbas transect. Across western and central chalk areas, no sightings have been sent in to Levana or the Regional Action Plan since 2012, while between 2001 and 2005 36 sites had a Chalkhill Blue presence here. These areas are all used for commercial cattle grazing, with mandatory anti-worming and other disease inhibiting injections applied. Research is needed to show if the butterfly is affected by the polluted dung, which males use extensively to provide 'substance

packets' to females during mating. The larval foodplant, horseshoe vetch, is still present on many of these sites.

By contrast, Portland transects have very high Chalkhill Blue counts: 400 for Tout, 130 for Perryfield, and huge numbers at Church Ope Cove. There is no commercial cattle grazing on Portland. It may also be interesting to study surviving populations at Fontmell, where cattle grazing is mainly outside of the flight period, and Bindon Hill (MOD land near Lulworth), which has limited animal grazing.



Chalkhill Blue © Ken Dolbear

Marsh Fritillary sites in Dorset vary hugely in line with management techniques. One private site, known to be ungrazed since 1947 and managed using a tractor-towed cutter on rotational strips, has consistently very high numbers of adults and webs. Under this management regime the devils-bit scabious plants have large leaves, 3 to 5cm wide, and in 2014 over 100 adults were seen in 10 minutes here. Another Blackmore Vale site continues to have a modest Marsh Fritillary population, mainly in the area managed by branch volunteers with brush cutters. Cattle grazing needs careful control on the major part of the site as overgrazing in the areas holding the larval foodplant, devils-bit scabious, can be a problem. It is important that grazing continues as grass control is vital. Much of the site has bramble and scrub regrowth which cattle will not graze; the branch has offered to cut some of this.

The surge in the Marsh Fritillary population at Clubmens Down (National Trust) near Shaftesbury is really good news. Transect counts were zero up to the year 2000, whereas the 2013 count was 87. Before 2000 the site was mainly sheep grazed, but it is now

lightly cattle grazed. It would be very useful if weekly transect counts indicated grazing animal estimates or presence, as the time at which cattle are present is critical.

390 Marsh Fritillaries were counted on the 2011 transect at Southfields/Hogcliff South in the Sydling Valley. However, following very serious cattle overgrazing in spring 2012 the count dropped to just 2. After this overgrazing was repeated in spring 2013 the count fell to zero, and remained there in 2014 meaning this species is extinct on this National Nature Reserve. No lessons were learnt by the managing agency here.

An adjacent field used to be used to keep the animals when grazing reached its optimum but this is now used for silage. It is helpful if transect walkers inform their coordinators when they see problems such as this developing.

The Lankham Bottom (BC) Marsh Fritillary transect count rose from 19 in 2004 to 44 in 2014. There is no spring grazing here, which allows devils-bit scabious to flourish. Under an arrangement set up by BC headquarters, summer/autumn grazing on the 100 acre site is limited to 15 animals. At Melbury Down, a 25 acre field was grazed down to less than half an inch (1cm) in 2013. The result was shrivelled brown plants and less than 10 butterflies where there would normally be 100+. A gate had only to be opened onto the next field to let the cattle onto healthy grazing. This is a National Trust owned field so it is strange that such extreme conditions were created.



Marsh Fritillary eggs on devils-bit scabious. This plant was in an ungrazed area, and the leaves were over 5cm wide. Photo © Carole Argles

Constant vigilance is required for good grazing levels, but it is not easy to move animals under current farming regulations. The importance of an adjacent holding field must be appreciated. Overgrazing of the type reported here is not unique to Dorset, and several other BC branches report a similar problem, which leads to the question of whether a remote central office is issuing the instructions. With lighter grazing we retain the structure of the sward, with a mix of plants at different heights. This article has quoted butterflies because we have regular site reports, but I suggest that a whole range of other animals and plants are lost under this harsh national regime.

Thanks to all Transect Walkers and Coordinators, Regional Action Plan reporters and to Bill Shreeves for putting the results together. We still need more RAP records. My thanks to private site owners and managers who have taught me that good practice for cattle grazing can be achieved in a commercial environment; this is where many of our vulnerable species survive.

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### **Tout for the Count!**

***By Ian Laing, Transect Coordinator for Portland***

The Isle of Portland has three butterfly transects, and the first that you encounter as you reach the top of the hill on New Road is Tout Quarry. The crest of the slope above the corner, where banners frequently proclaim congratulations on various 'big O' birthdays, is part of section 6 of the walk. To explore Tout more fully take the 3rd exit at the roundabout by the Portland Heights Hotel, then turn right where there is a brown tourist sign for 'Tout Quarry Park'. Follow this road to the end then bear right onto an unmade track into a parking area.

It is well worth a visit, Tout is rated fourth of 17 visitor attractions on Portland by Tripadvisor (only 3 of the 54 current reviews mention the

butterflies, but one specifically cites the Chalkhill Blue).

Tout is rather better known as a sculpture park. Since 1983, established and emerging artists have created both temporary and permanent work in response to the disused quarry workings. There are over 70 to see, and there are plinths with maps to help you find them. One of the permanent carvings is "Still Falling" by Antony Gormley and it is not unusual to have Section 5 of the transect walk interrupted by people visiting for this sculpture.

But Tout is also a valuable wildlife haven. Dry unimproved limestone grassland has developed naturally over this 13 hectare site since the quarry was abandoned, without infill, in 1910, and in 2012 it became a reserve of the Dorset Wildlife Trust. Interesting plant species include horseshoe vetch, kidney vetch and autumn gentian. Lichens and bryophytes are found across the site. Twenty two butterfly species are seen regularly, suggesting that they are breeding here or nearby. These include Chalkhill and Adonis Blues, and the unique 'cretaceous' form of the Silver-studded blue. Another nine species are seen occasionally.



Chalkhill Blue at Tout

Transect walks on the site have been carried out since 1992. Total butterfly numbers in the early years were fairly stable, averaging about 1,200 per year, until 2003. The six most numerous species, in order of sightings, were Chalkhill Blue, Meadow Brown, Common Blue, Marbled White, Grayling and Silver-studded Blue, together accounting for almost 80% of all the butterflies seen.

But from 2004 up to and including 2012 there seems to have been a

somewhat fallow period for the butterflies of Tout. The average annual count for this period fell to less than 500. For reasons that are not clear fewer weeks were walked during this time, but this was often mainly during the early and late season and so cannot entirely account for such a dramatic decline in butterfly numbers.

There was no active management on the site from 1995 to 2007, during which period invasive species, particularly cotoneaster and buddleia, became established and spread in some areas. More recently, Tout has become a part of the Portland Living Landscapes Project. This project aims to restore up to 200 hectares of limestone grassland on Portland. It is mainly funded through a grant from Viridor



Tout quarry, near the Lanos Arch, before (left) and after (right) cotoneaster removal (photos by Sam Hamer, DWT Project officer)

Credits Environmental Company through the Landfill Communities Fund. One of the major tasks is the removal of cotoneaster.

How will the wildlife respond to this management? Well, butterfly counts at Tout have certainly improved dramatically in the last two years. In 2013 we counted just over 2,000 butterflies for the first time, and in 2014 this record total increased by a further 25% to 2,500.

The Chalkhill Blue is still the most numerous species, and one in five of all butterflies seen throughout the summer are of this species. The second most common species over these two years illustrates an

astonishing success story. It is the Gatekeeper. These were rarely seen in the 1990s (4 butterflies in 5 years). Numbers increased a little during the 'fallow' period (an average of 21 per year) and have increased spectacularly in the last couple of years such that 461 were counted in 2014. It has undoubtedly been a good year generally for the Gatekeeper and it will be interesting to follow the trend for this species at Tout in future years.

Meadow Brown, Common Blue and Marbled White all still feature among the six most common species at Tout. Grayling have dropped a little to seventh place, replaced in the top six by Ringlet, another species that has significantly increased in numbers at this site. A record of 179 was counted in 2014, compared with 15 for the whole of the 1990s. The Silver-studded blue has dropped in ranking to become the 9<sup>th</sup> most common butterfly in 2013/14 although numbers for this species do fluctuate and the 48 counted in 2014 is twice the average for the previous 10 years at this site.

Adonis Blue is a concern, with only two seen in 2014, although the highest annual total of 27 was recorded only two years ago, in 2012, an otherwise unexceptional year. Adonis Blues are most likely to be found along section 3, which is the stretch of the coast path on the western edge of the reserve. This gives excellent views of Chesil Beach and, on clear days, the coast around to Start Point across Lyme Bay. It is, together with section 6, one of the two best sections of the walk for butterfly numbers. Silver-studded Blues are also most likely encountered on Section 3. Chalkhill Blues may be seen throughout the reserve, but greatest numbers are found on dection 1, above and around the 'Circle of Stones' sculpture area.

So, do come to see and enjoy the butterflies on Tout. July is the best month. Thanks must go to the many volunteers who, over the years, have walked this transect and therefore contributed so valuably to the data we have on Tout Quarry. The Dorset Wildlife Trust would also like to pass on their thanks for the continued efforts at the site which are now helping them to assess the impacts of management work.

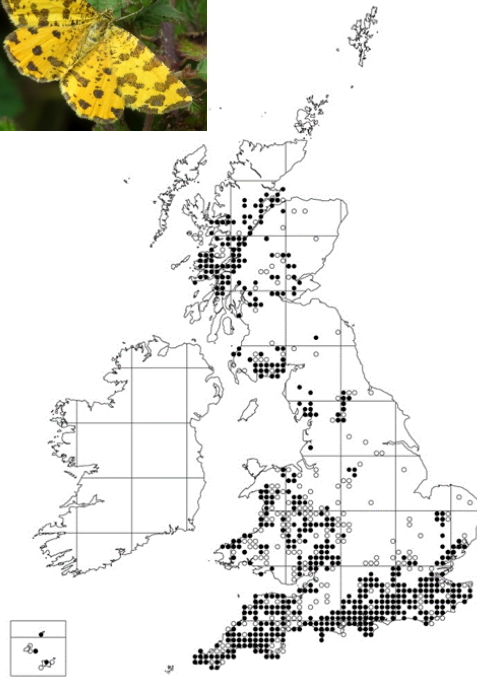
## **Day-flying Moth and Caterpillar Recording**

***By Zoe Randle & Richard Fox***

Butterfly Conservation would love butterfly recorders to record day-flying moths and moth caterpillars when they are out and about. In 2018, in collaboration with Moths Ireland, we will be publishing a Macro-moth Atlas for Britain and Ireland.

The majority of moth recorders use light-traps and, as a result, the many species of day-flying moths may be relatively under-recorded compared to nocturnal ones. Butterfly recorders can make a huge contribution to the forthcoming atlas by submitting records of day-flying moths such as Speckled Yellow (figure 1) and indeed distinctive caterpillars (e.g. Cinnabar) that they encounter while out looking at butterflies.

The National Moth Recording Scheme run by Butterfly Conservation will provide the UK moth data for the forthcoming atlas. The scheme already holds over 17.3 million moth records and geographical coverage of the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man at 10km resolution is very good (97% have at least one moth species recorded).

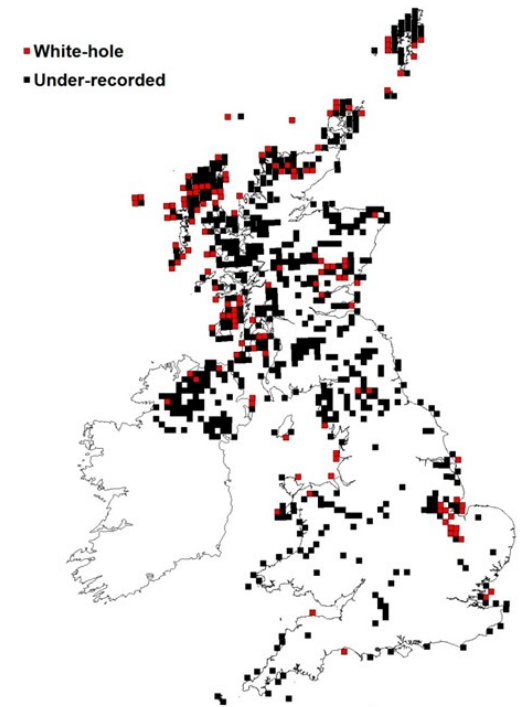


**Figure 1:** NMRS Provisional distribution map of Speckled Yellow at 10km resolution. Open circles pre 2000 records and solid dots 2000 onwards records.  
Speckled Yellow photo © Pam Parsons

There are only 113 10km squares for which we do not have any records from the year 2000 onwards (see figure 2). However, in addition to these, there are 613 10km squares which we consider to be under-recorded - they possess 50 or fewer records of 25 or fewer species. You could really help by targeting these unrecorded or under-recorded squares for moth sightings during your butterfly recording.

To find out which 10km squares, or tetrads, are under-recorded in your area please contact Les Hill, your County Moth Recorder, via [les@mklep.co.uk](mailto:les@mklep.co.uk) or 020 8946 7806. If you wish to venture further a-field, the list of County Moth Recorders can be found on the Moths Count website ([www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org)).

Many butterfly recorders already record the moths they see along their transects. In 2013, the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) team extracted moth records entered into Transect Walker software. The data extraction exercise revealed data for 109,485 individuals of 123 moth species, with 13,622 records from 403 sites. The five most frequently recorded species (in descending rank order) were Silver Y, Six-spot Burnet, Cinnabar, Burnet Companion and Speckled Yellow. These records will be re-patriated to County Moth Recorders in due course.



**Figure 2:** Map of National Moth Recording Scheme 'white-holes' and under-recorded 10km squares from 2000 onwards.

Participants in the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey are also encouraged to record day-flying moths in their squares. In 2014 a record of Blood-vein in Gloucestershire was only the second for SP10 and the first since 1974.

In the run up to the forthcoming *Macro-moth Atlas for Britain and Ireland* all butterfly recorders can help boost coverage by recording moths, whether on butterfly/WCBS transects, during 'casual' butterfly recording or by specifically targeting areas that are under-recorded for moths. Your help will be very gratefully received. Records are best submitted to your local County Moth recorder on an annual basis by the end of the year to enable incorporation into local datasets and ultimately the National Moth Recording Scheme.

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### **Conservation activities on our Dorset Branch Butterfly Reserves in 2014/15**

*From Nigel Spring, volunteer Reserves Manager*

#### **Alners Gorse**

We have had one of our most successful and active years since the reserve was purchased in 2005.

- Numbers of Brown and White-letter Hairstreaks were very encouraging (attracting many additional visitors in July and August), White Admirals were seen in at least three different parts of the reserve and Silver-washed Fritillaries were in good numbers, though not quite as high as in some recent years. Common Blues showed a strong recovery but sadly no one recorded Marsh Fritillaries on the reserve and no larval webs were found. The Brown Hairstreak egg search in December recorded three times as many eggs per recorder.hour as in the previous year. Of the more common species, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones were both recorded in bumper numbers.
- 3 male Nightingales took up territories in 2014, up from the very poor year in 2013 when only one male sang regularly.

- Almost all the cordwood stacked up after the clearing of the woodland was sawn up and split, and the majority of the logs were distributed. Large areas of the cleared woodland were brushcut to reduce the natural regeneration of birch and gorse.
- The blackthorn, bramble and willow scrub threatening the open grassland habitats is to be cut on a rotational basis and this has been done by BC volunteers and contractors. A number of the solitary oaks in the southernmost part of the reserve have been felled and logged (and a few ringbarked and left standing) in line with the management plan.
- The three Dartmoor ponies, Clara, Blackberry and Scarface, have been joined by two skewbald ponies. These came to us in the summer of 2014 in a terrible state after being abandoned on Bodmin, but they are now looking very healthy and happy. They have grazed the grassland and the wooded areas of the reserve and have also been used for grazing the open areas on our neighbours' land at Rooksmoor. The ponies moved to Lankham Bottom for two months in February, where it is drier and there is more grass. The ponies have been checked daily by a team of 6 local 'lookers' to whom we are very grateful for their time and energy.
- Events: there have been work parties each month between September and March, with other impromptu sessions in between. The dawn chorus walk in May attracted 10 people, the weekend of moth-trapping and guided walks May 17-18<sup>th</sup> attracted 24 people, the equivalent event in July had 26 people.
- Moth species: the moth event of May 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> recorded 166 moths of 53 species and the July 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> event recorded 604 moths of 102 species.

#### **Lankham Bottom**

- Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Skipper, Brimstone, Ringlet and Green Hairstreak were in bumper numbers in 2014, and Marsh Fritillary did well though not exceptionally. This species' range has extended to areas of the reserve where it was not formerly found – on the short turf slopes on the eastern side for example. This is possibly a consequence of the deterioration of

the quality of the habitat on the north facing slopes where the sward has become rather long and full of thatch.

- The mothning session in July recorded 669 moths of 101 species: very encouraging numbers.
- The open day in July attracted 24 visitors including several new members. There have been 4 weekend work parties and a number of impromptu sessions where volunteers have joined contractors to cut scrub, remove ragwort, and clear old fence lines prior to re-fencing.
- A section of the fence line was replaced on the southern boundary by local contractor David Wareham. The fence was repaired and a gate replaced on the western boundary. A gate had to be replaced on the corral by the main entrance after thieves stole it; all the hinges and mounting bolts have now been welded to reduce the risk of theft.
- Unauthorised access by horse riders onto the reserve has increased to such a point that the main gates are now padlocked with pedestrian and disabled access provided by a new RADAR kissing gate. This was largely paid for with a £400 donation from the Fox and Hounds Inn at Cattistock which ran a programme of fundraising events for us.
- Contractor Mark Paull has paid his annual visit with his 3m wide front-mounted flail to cut all the scrub regrowth. As we clear more and more of the overgrown scrub, there will be increasing areas of regrowth to clear each year. The bramble and thorn regrowth on the steep slopes are cleared annually by teams of contractors with brushcutters.
- The rabbit numbers declined briefly last year but have now increased again. A group of ferreters visit the reserve regularly to cull them to try to reduce the erosion and overgrazing on the slopes.
- We have begun to coppice the overstood hedge on the southern

boundary of the reserve with a view to laying the regrowth as a hedge in five years or so. The coppicing will take place over three years and the neighbouring farmer, Dan Newman, will fence the exposed stools against his stock. We are very grateful to Dan for his constant cooperation through the year.

- The ragwort problem was less than in previous years, partly as it was not a 'ragwort year', partly (we like to think!) because we have been attacking it every year for the last 4 or 5, and grazing it adequately with Paul Atwell's cattle and our ponies. It is a very time-consuming and expensive problem.

### **Broadcroft Quarry**

- Silver-studded Blue numbers were down in 2014 but Chalkhill Blues were up. There were very good numbers of Common Blues and Large Skippers, and bumper numbers of Gatekeepers, Small Heaths and Ringlets. We need to create a new batch of bare scrapes to encourage the Silver-studded Blues and their host ants.
- Our moth session on June 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> recorded 122 species: an excellent total. 24 people visited for the moths and the guided walks.
- We have held two weekend work parties this last winter and two other conservation sessions in midweek when volunteers joined contractors to cut scrub, and to brushcut and remove the grass in the mosaic that we aim for every year. We are also very grateful to the local Re-Think group who have visited regularly to help clear scrub and keep the footpath open.
- The Dorset Wildlife Trust treated the cotoneaster with herbicide in 2013 but did not return for the promised follow-up visit in 2014. Clematis regrowth is an everlasting problem – one of the brushcutting sessions is usually dedicated to this each year.

- We are very concerned about proposals for the dinosaur theme-park 'Jurassica' which is planned for the quarry adjacent to our reserve, and would like more reassurances from the parties involved that this will not impact on the butterfly reserve.
- We are very grateful to Ian Laing for organising the team of transect walks for the Portland reserves.

### **Perryfields Reserve**

- Chalkhill Blue, Meadow Brown, Grayling, Ringlet and Gatekeeper did very well in 2014.
- Volunteers and contractors worked together one day in winter 2014/15 to clear litter and reduce the bramble regrowth in the grassland.
- Another work party took place in March, when the cotoneaster killed as a result of herbicide treatment by the DWT project team was cut and burned and more of the invasive bramble was brushcut in the area where the Chalkhill Blues thrive.
- Brushcutters have also been used on the grassland above the tramway, adjacent to the new supermarket, where bramble threatens to degrade grassland important for Small Blues and other species.

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### **Report on National Moth Night 2014**

*From Bob Steedman*

This year National Moth Night was held over three nights from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July. The theme was woodland moths and the Dorset Branch of Butterfly Conservation organised three events, one on each night, followed up each morning by a butterfly walk.

**Upton Heath Event 4<sup>th</sup> July:** the first event, joint with DWT was based on the Urban Wildlife Centre at Beacon Hill, Corfe Mullen. The overnight catch in the moth trap was opened at 9am with about fifteen eager observers keen to see the contents. It had been a warm humid night which gave favourable conditions for a good selection of moths with 164 moths of 70 different species. These ranged from the tiny *Batia lunaris* micromoth to the attractive Elephant Hawk-moth. The assembled company were impressed with the range and beauty of the many moths, and those new to mothing were surprised by how many attractive moths there were. Of course there were a fair number of dull brown jobs but some of these had interesting patterns on the wings.



Garden Tiger © Barbara Steedman

A similar number of people joined us for the butterfly walk on Upton Heath, though some of the faces had changed. The main interest was in the Silver-studded Blues and Graylings, although low in numbers they provided plenty of excitement for those seeking out these elusive insects. Also a Dartford Warbler on top of nearby gorse provided more than passing interest. Most people said they had found the moths and the walk very interesting and thanked Andy Fale, Warden, for guiding us.

**Ryewater Event 5<sup>th</sup> July:** The second event was courtesy of Clive Farrell on his Ryewater Estate south of Sherborne. Over thirty people were attracted to the event and again several people new to mothing were astounded by the variety and attractiveness of the moths. The party was split into two groups for traps opened by Wren Franklin and Nigel Spring. Over seventy species of moth were recorded. Again, the colourful Elephant Hawk-moth, Lime Hawk-moth, Swallow-tailed Moth

and Black Arches were the most admired. Wren led the late morning walk around the Estate which is an experience in itself with several fantasy features; these, including a 50ft reptilian monster, are popular with parties of school children. However our group were more interested in the conservation work that had been done to create a variety of habitats for butterflies to thrive. On a warm day this provided us with a feast of butterflies including Skippers, Marbled Whites and Small Tortoiseshell. Everybody thanked Wren for a splendid Lepidoptera experience.

**Alners Gorse 6<sup>th</sup> July:** Always a favourite haunt of butterfly admirers and moth-ers, Alners Gorse is the flagship nature reserve of Dorset Butterfly Conservation. A keen group of mothers turned up at 9am for the opening of five traps run by resident warden Nigel Spring. Two and a half hours later we had recorded over one hundred species of moth and counted over six hundred individual moths. The highlights included Blackneck, Garden Tiger, Little Emerald and a variety of Hawk-moths. An interesting butterfly walk lead by Kathy followed with several species including Purple and White-letter Hairstreaks. Again we were indebted to Kathy and Nigel for entertaining us to a fascinating morning of moths and butterflies.

## Dorset Branch Website

*Lyn Pullen updates us on the website and social media*

I hope you've been onto the website recently and admired our make-over. The main difference you will notice is on the home page, where there are now some areas which fill themselves automatically, making it look more lively without me having to do a lot more work (see the picture below). Less obvious, but crucial to some people who look at our site, is that it is better for people who are using tablet computers or smartphones (i.e. 'mobile devices'). Statistics for our website show

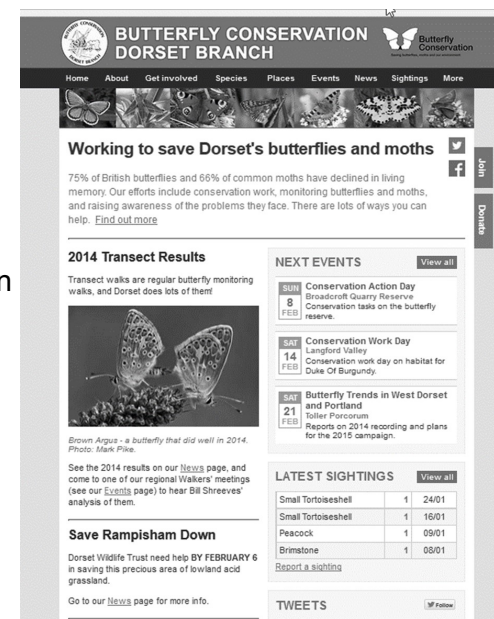
than around one third of our users view the site via these devices.

The ease of using our on-line sightings form has proved itself, with sightings coming in via the website shooting up from 2,760 in 2013 to 6,185 last year. Our thanks go to our techy, Dom Greves, for all his work on the technical bits of the website.

Our Facebook page continues to do well. Thanks go to Dave Whalley for putting things up in addition to my contributions. Our number of "Likes" has gone up from 149 in January 2014 to 344 in January 2015. On Twitter we are doing even better, going up from 274 "followers" to

659. We are followed by several BBC departments and others which are less explicable, such as a wetland centre in Canada! The figures on the two social media sites have been helped by another innovation to the website, which means that when I put up a new item of news, it is automatically pinged out on Facebook and Twitter as well.

If you've got any comments on the website or social media sites, please do let me know: cobbler@btinternet.com



## Plant Sales

Lyn Pullen will be running her plant sale stall again this year, so do see if you can pot up some plants to help. Last year was a bumper year, thanks to Winfrith Newburgh holding a village open gardens weekend, helping the Butterfly Conservation stall take a total of £815.30.

### ***Electronic Newsletter***

*If you would like to receive your next magazine by email please will you let Robin George know? Her details are on the back of this Newsletter. You can of course receive it both electronically and by post if you wish. Receiving it electronically will help us to save money and is more environmentally friendly.*

### **The Dorset/Wiltshire Butterfly Scramble: August 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015**

***From Nigel Spring***

The Wiltshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation, masterminded by Jane Martin, have come up with a novel and fun way of adding to our county butterfly records totals - especially for those previously neglected 'white holes'. The Butterfly Scramble over the first weekend of August will be along the lines of the 'bird races' that Bird Clubs have been doing for a number of years now, and will involve teams of two or more recorders collecting records from their allocated areas over 5 hours on one of the days of that weekend. The recorders in the Wiltshire branch collect their records in Tetrads (i.e. 2km x 2km squares) so we have modified the rules to accommodate our Dorset recording system based on 1 km squares. There will still be an element of competition between the two counties, and within Dorset the team with the most points will receive prizes and fame while the branch benefits from the increased records! Read the rules below and then contact me to obtain a joining form.

#### **Our Dorset Butterfly Scramble**

The Aim: to record as many butterfly species and individuals as possible in 1km squares within the allocated 10km square in the allotted 5 hours.

Date: Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August and/or Sunday August 2<sup>nd</sup> (during the Big Butterfly Count period)

Time: 10am-3pm.

Final get-together: de-brief and awarding of rosettes(!) – optional: this will be held at a site as central as possible for all the participants from 6pm on the evening of Sunday August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

#### **DORSET RULES**

1. The scramble starts at 10am on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August and/or Sunday August 2<sup>nd</sup> and finishes five hours later at 3pm on each day. The choice of days is left to the participant teams and will depend on the weather forecast. See section 10. below.
2. Each team will be allocated a 10km square from which they are free to choose at least one 1 km square to record butterflies in. The 10km squares will be chosen to include the unrecorded 'white holes'. Km squares which are white i.e. so far unrecorded will carry more points than those which already have records for them.
3. Each butterfly species recorded within the boundaries of a 'virgin' 1km square will count as four points, with an additional two points for every additional number of that species seen, so seeing a Gatekeeper will earn you 4 points & seeing 4 Gatekeepers will earn you 10 points. Species recorded in any other non-virgin 1km square within the allocated 10km will count as two points for the first of the species then one point for additional sightings. Competitors will therefore visit a 1km square and try to find as many species as possible within that square. Once you feel that you have exhausted that square's potential you can move on to another square within your 10km square.
4. In the next square you visit the same rules apply, so the Gatekeeper (s) in square 2 will again add 4 or 2 points to your total score, depending on whether the second square is a virgin square or a previously recorded one. In this way competitors will cover a number of squares in the 5 hours and there will be some different strategies involved – do you race around a load of squares counting 5 species in

each? Or take longer and count 15 species in a good square? You'll have to plan your route and choose your squares wisely – and you'll have to keep an eye on those Small / Essex skippers; remember each species is worth more points.

W 5. Teams will consist of a minimum of 2 people, all of whom must stick together throughout. Team members do not need to be Butterfly Conservation members. If you would like to join a team rather than make up your own please get in touch.

6. Teams must email me to register and will be sent their recording forms by email. I will need to know who is in the team and please also give your team a name. Please register by 25<sup>th</sup> July.

7. All butterflies must be recorded in Dorset and be Dorset butterfly species – so no sneaking off to a butterfly farm!

8. To add some extra thrills there's the 'Humming-bonus Hawk-moth' - a random element that can appear in any square at any time. If a Hummingbird Hawk-moth is seen in any of your 1km squares 20 points can be added for that square.

9. At 3pm on the dot the scramble is over. Any species seen after this time i.e., while walking back to your car etc., do not count. Teams will add up their total points to determine their final score.

10. If the weather is suitable and teams feel inclined to count butterflies on both days, the two days' records will be treated separately as far as the contest is concerned, not added together!

11. Dorset Scramblers will meet at the agreed venue with their results on the Sunday evening at about 6pm or alternatively can e-mail or post the results – see below.

12. Results & prizes will be presented at the next AGM.

*Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries: email [nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk), phone 07981.776767, or post to 346, Mundens Lane, Alweston, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 5HU.*

***Greetings!*** *The Branch is delighted to welcome the following new members. We hope to meet you all soon at our events and work parties. Please introduce yourselves to any of the committee members and find out how you can get the most out of your membership and what you can do to help.*

**Miss S Arnold** (Bournemouth), **Mrs Y Arnold** (Broadstone), **Miss C Askin** (Verwood), **Ms C A Barrow & Mr C Burke** (Swanage), **Mr A P Bernard** (Weymouth), **Ms J Blackwell** (Wincanton), **Mrs V Bovell** (Templecombe), **Miss S Buckle** (Poole), **Miss K Callaghan** (Bournemouth), **Ms R Cambell** (Ferndown), **Mrs N & Mr M Capper** (Bournemouth), **Ms G Casey** (Wareham), **Mr M Chester** (Blandford Forum), **Mrs C Coady** (Bournemouth), **Miss H Cookson** (Christchurch), **Miss Z Cooper** (Bournemouth), **Mr A M R Cox** (Ferndown), **Mrs S Dawsey** (Sherborne), **Miss J Denyer** (Dorchester), **Dr G & Mrs B Droop** (Dorchester), **Mr A Durie** (Shaftesbury), **Mr J Ellis** (Blandford Forum), **Mrs M J Ensom** (Seaford), **Miss J Exton & Miss J Newman** (Weymouth), **Mr M & Mrs E Farewell** (Shaftesbury), **Mrs P Fenwick** (Weymouth), **Mr G & Mrs M Fisher & Family** (Dorchester), **Mr W Fisher** (Poole), **Mrs J & Mr S Fletcher & Family** (Bovington), **Mr K Flynn** (Bournemouth), **Mrs L Franklin-Danks** (Gillingham), **Mrs J Gardner** (Weymouth), **Ms C Geraghty & Mr A Broad** (Bridport), **Mr T Glynn** (Poole), **Miss E Godden** (Wimborne), **Ms N J Graham & Mr C Coldwell & Family** (Bournemouth), **Mr P Griffiths** (Bournemouth), **Mr S Hare** (Poole), **Miss L Harvey & Mr M Robson** (Wimborne), **Miss S Hatcher** (Weymouth), **Mrs S E A & Mr S Hayes & Family** (Poole), **Ms M Heath** (Wareham), **Alan Hold** (Portland), **Mrs K Hurst** (Blandford Forum), **Dr F Hyden** (Dorchester), **Mrs J Ingarfield** (Corfe Castle), **Ms C Jenkins** (Bournemouth), **Mr R & Mrs J Jolliffe** (Weymouth), **Mr T & Miss R Jones** (Weymouth), **Miss M Liddiard** (Bournemouth), **Mrs A Middleton-Burke** (Salisbury), **Mr II & J A Miller & Family** (Blandford Forum), **Mrs S Monsell** (Poole), **Mrs P Moss & Mrs G Brown & Family** (Bournemouth), **Mr L J & Mrs Y Mountford** (Christchurch), **Mr P & Mrs S Muldoon** (Wareham), **Mrs P Newton** (Dorchester), **Mrs K & Mr N Oshea** (Broadstone), **Miss A Payne** (Sherborne), **Miss S Plimmer** (Ferndown), **Ms J Pridmore** (Poole), **Mrs A & Mr T Ratke** (Bournemouth), **Miss H Rowland** (Bournemouth), **Miss T Russell** (Blandford Forum), **Ms B M Scorey** (Bridport), **Mrs J Simpson** (Poole), **Mr S Smith** (Swanage), **Mrs K Smith** (Ferndown), **Ms A Smithies** (Bournemouth), **Mrs M & Mr A Stewart & Family** (Sherborne), **Ms C Stringer** (Blandford Forum), **Miss J Taylor** (Bournemouth), **Miss C Thackwray** (Poole), **Mrs S Twycross** (Portland), **Mr P & Mrs S Varley** (Bournemouth), **Mrs S & Mr T Waugh** (Bournemouth), **Ms S Weston** (Bridport), **Miss J Wright & Mr M Gee** (Wareham), **Mr R & Mrs C Yeates** (Swanage), **Mr P Young** (Poole)

## **NEWSLETTER DEADLINES**

**31<sup>st</sup> August**

For mid-September publication

**28<sup>th</sup> February**

For late-March publication

If you would like to submit something for the next newsletter please send your articles in by these dates at the latest. Many thanks to the people that have contributed articles to this current edition.

**We are always in need of articles and line drawings, so please put pen to paper, or your finger to keyboard, and send in your contributions.**

## **TREASURER'S NOTE**

**Bank balance at 28<sup>th</sup>  
February 2015:**

**£19,719**

## **COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

All members are welcome to attend committee meetings.

**The next meeting is on 29<sup>th</sup>  
April**

The meeting will be held in the Church Hall at Pimperne. To find out further details about attending this committee meeting please get in touch with Adrian Neil (01305 832937 or [adrian.neil@madasafish.com](mailto:adrian.neil@madasafish.com)) for details.

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Tel: 01929 400209 Fax 01929 400210  
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[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

PLEASE NOTE THE OPINIONS  
EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE  
NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF  
THE SOCIETY OR THE BRANCH

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# **Dorset Branch Who's Who**

**[www.dorsetbutterflies.com](http://www.dorsetbutterflies.com)**

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*\* Branch Committee Member*