

Butterfly Conservation Cambridgeshire & Essex

BRANCH NEWSLETTER



Another new Blue for Cambridge



Clifden Nonpareil (Catocala fraxini)

Butterfly Conservation Cambridgeshire & Essex Newsletter – Autumn 2022

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Editor's notes... Welcome

Welcome to the
Cambridgeshire and Essex
Butterfly Conservation
newsletter for Autumn 2022.



This is my first time out as Editor, and I'm very excited to have been invited to join the committee and to take on this role.

It's undoubtedly a hard time for our butterflies and moths and there's been a lot of bad news over the past year; first the publication of the 2021 report "The State of Britain's Larger Moths" and in May this year "A Revised Red-list of Britain's Butterflies". And as if the reported declines weren't enough we then all had to watch helplessly as plants withered and the ground became like concrete in the extreme high temperatures of the summer, affecting both adults and larvae alike. But while there seems little to be optimistic about, our outgoing Editor Bryan Russell drills into the data and reflects on the nuanced messages about our butterfly populations on page 16.

My first steps into the daylight (I'm primarily a moth recorder) have been to talk to some of our experts about local places to go to see butterflies, and to also draw some positivity from the successes that conservation work in some of our priority sites has achieved, with help from our fantastic volunteers.

And speaking of volunteers – there are a number of vacancies advertised in this newsletter! From taking over a butterfly transect to a number of roles with our Committee, your Branch needs you! If you are interested in finding out more please get in touch.



We also have news from the Big City Butterflies project in Essex and a report from Cambridge where moth recording is at the heart of community engagement and involvement in ambitious plans for a small but precious Local Nature Reserve. If you have any stories to share about moth or butterfly projects or activities you're involved in we'd love to hear about them so please drop me a line.

Another new Blue for Cambridge...

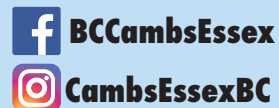
Hopefully you'll have enjoyed and got involved with the national Moths Matter campaign in the news and on social media throughout October. To support this, even though this magazine is reaching you a little later than intended, we have a magnificent Clifden Nonpareil moth on the front cover. This species is making a triumphant return to the UK; it was once fairly widespread but became regionally extinct from its last known stronghold in Norfolk in the 1960's. It has been recorded most years since as an immigrant from the continental mainland and bred occasionally in the southeast, but in the east of England has been rarely seen more than a few miles inland from the coast. However, since 2018 this moth has been spreading rapidly westwards and is now being widely recorded throughout Cambridgeshire and Essex and is confirmed to be breeding. If you have aspens (the larval foodplant) nearby keep your eyes open in late summer and autumn as, like their close relative the Red Underwing, individuals seem to readily settle on windows and warm walls during the day, and will also come to sugar to feed.

Check out Cambsmoths and the Essex Field Club websites to find out where this spectacular moth has been seen so far.



Clifden Nonpareil settled on a window sill
Catocala fraxini

Join us on social media for local updates and share your photos and sightings of moths and butterflies.



Special sites for Butterflies

by Annette Shelford

Site photos: Michael Gittos

I'm a newcomer to the Cambs and Essex BC Committee, although I have been a member of BC for almost a decade. Listening to the conversation at my first committee meeting made me aware that there was a lot of very hard work going on in the background that I was completely unaware of to maintain priority sites that I was only dimly aware of. That in turn made me wonder if all of our members were aware of the rich diversity of butterfly sites to explore in our part of the world. So as a way to get to know my fellow committee members and other local experts a little better & to understand their roles I had a chat with them about where to go and see butterflies near to where we live.

Priority Sites

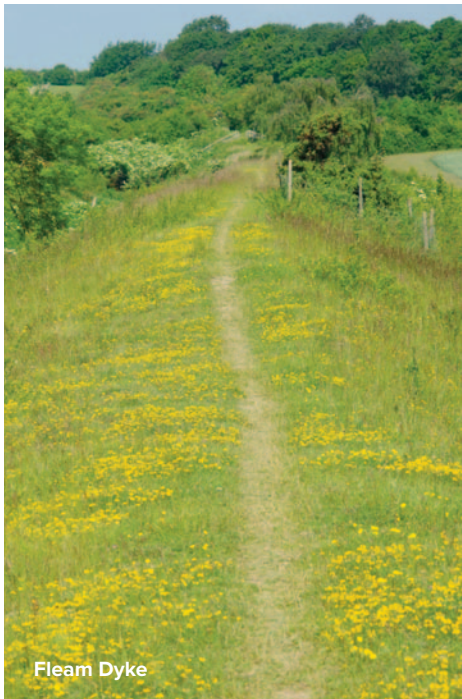
Butterfly Conservation currently funds and supports work at four sites in our area, with capacity for two more. These sites are carefully managed to conserve some of the Amber and Red Listed species of butterflies which have historically thrived in these habitats. Conservation Officer Vince Lea looks after 3 sites in Cambridgeshire, and Joanne Yarker has recently taken on the same role for Essex where she oversees work at Hadleigh Great Wood. They each work with the



Devil's Dyke at Galley Hill



Devil's Dyke Work Party



Fleam Dyke

site owners and alongside people from other conservation organisations and volunteer groups to keep the habitat in tip-top condition not just for the target butterfly species, but also to help with the general management of the site for wildlife.

Devil's Dyke & Fleam Dyke

Vince told me that these linear chalk earthworks provide important habitat for the locally rare Chalkhill Blue and Dingy Skipper. The Dykes run SE-NW through East Cambs, just touching the border with Suffolk near Newmarket. They support the largest remnants of the chalk grassland habitat in the county, formerly associated with the large area of the sheepwalk which stretched across south Cambs. The Branch has worked on Devil's Dyke, where it runs across Newmarket Racecourse, at the location which has been the heartland of the Chalkhill Blue colony for many decades. In recent years, the butterflies have spread north and south, along the Dyke, as well as colonising the neighbouring Fleam Dyke and the nearby Roman Road. At Fleam Dyke, transect monitoring, organised by Roger Lemon, recorded a maximum count of 650 Chalkhill Blues in July 2022!

"We can only work on a small section of the Devil's Dyke, but the results can be seen in the density of Chalkhill Blues here compared to the rest of the Dyke, as well as greater diversity of other species."



Chalkhill Blue
Polyommatus coridon

Photo: David Bradley

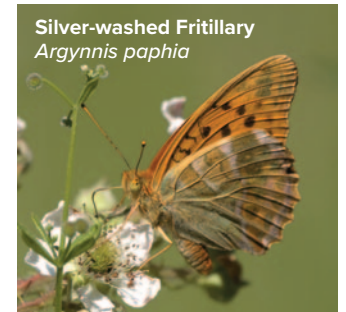


Hadleigh Great Wood Work Party

"It's also been amazing to see Adonis Blue arrive here too recently – we're not quite sure where it's spread from but it has been a very welcome surprise and demonstrates that what we are doing works."

Brampton Wood, Cambs

Several sites in this Wildlife Trust-owned ancient woodland are managed specifically for Black Hairstreak. This involves cutting and laying stands of the larval foodplant, Blackthorn. Black Hairstreak is one of the UK's rarest butterflies and is currently known from fewer than 30 sites across central England. The wide rides are also one of the best sites in the county for seeing other woodland species including Purple Hairstreak, Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary.



Silver-washed Fritillary
Argynnis paphia

Hadleigh Great Wood, Essex

This ancient oak woodland is a remnant of a much larger wood, and Jo works here with a team of volunteers from the local community with the aim to repopulate the woodland with Heath Fritillary which had almost disappeared from this site. The species is still doing quite well at neighbouring sites so it is hoped that careful management to support growth of the food plant (Cowheat) will see a return of a breeding population here. White



Heath Fritillary
Melitaea athalia

Photo: David Bradley

Admiral is also resident in Hadleigh Great Wood and can be found in the same areas as the Heath Fritillary.

As well as being great sites to visit in the spring and summer if you want to see these species, you can also get involved and find out for yourself how these sites are managed for butterflies by volunteering to join a work party – see the back cover for details and forthcoming dates during the winter.

These are by no means the only places in the area to see butterflies- and when you're planning where to visit on sunny days next year here are some more places to add to your list.

County Butterfly Recorder for Essex Rob Smith told me that the woodlands around the county were doing well, in particular for Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary, though seeing them can be another matter entirely!

“Purple Emperor could be under-recorded in many areas- a new recording method that observes their activity in the woodland canopy from a high point means that they are much easier to spot, and is giving us much more encouraging data, though the fact that more people are seeing them and photographing them more often suggests that the numbers are also genuinely increasing.”

Sunny south-facing slopes around **Hadleigh Downs Country Park** and **Canvey Island** now have well established populations of Marbled White after the species had all but disappeared from the county. Clouded Yellow, visiting from the Continent, can also be found across much of this area in late summer.

David Chandler has been walking a butterfly transect on **Benfleet Downs** near Hadleigh for 12 years where he said he can record good numbers of up to 28 resident species of butterflies and day-flying moths including Green Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak and, in recent years, Jersey Tiger.

“Another South Essex resident is the Wall Brown. The local micro-climate that gives a longer growing season also allows the butterfly a third generation in recent years, as has occurred in 2022. With climate warming it is possible that this butterfly might spread further north again and up through Cambridgeshire too.”

Edward Pollard, County Butterfly Recorder for Cambridgeshire, also gave me a run-down of his top sites across the county.



Photo: David Bradley

Trumpington Meadows near Cambridge is now famous for being home to a growing population of Small Blue. There had been only a few records in our region since 2000 until the species was noted at Trumpington Meadows in 2018. The site is managed by the Wildlife Trust who have created a species rich grassland on former arable farmland. The site now has a rich assemblage of species including Marbled White, Purple, Green and White-letter Hairstreak and relatively regular migrant Clouded Yellows.



Magog Down lies on the chalk ridge to the east of Cambridge and is the location of an ambitious, long-running chalk grassland restoration project. The efforts are paying off and the site is now home to a large population of Small Blue, as well as other grassland and scrub species including Green Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Marbled White, Small Copper, and Common Blue. In 2022 Chalkhill Blues were recorded for the first time since the 1950's and there is hope that they are now re-colonising the site.



Photo: David Bradley

Monk's Wood near Huntingdon and **Bedford Purlieus** near Peterborough are both remnants of ancient woodland, and like the woodland sites in Essex they are showing the signs of being home to growing populations of White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary and Purple Emperor. Monk's Wood is where Black Hairstreak was first recorded in the UK, in 1828. It remains one of the best sites in the country for the species. The ancient meadows in Bedford Purlieus are also home to Dark Green Fritillary and other grassland species.

Our experts offer free guided field visits to many of these sites. Sign up for our email reminders by contacting info@cams-essexbutterflies.org.uk or keep an eye on the 'In Your Area' pages of the main BC website, Facebook and Twitter.

Information about field visits during spring and summer 2023 will also be in the next newsletter.

Special sites of the future?

It's great to enjoy seeing and learning about butterflies at sites where they are known to be present and are actively conserved, but it's also vitally important that we look for butterfly populations in new places. The first step towards this is to record what we see.

Jo said *"We still have the potential to work with two more sites in the north of Essex, and are actively looking at currently under-recorded butterfly species to identify what can be done and where to focus more attention in the future."*

Rob agreed, saying *"There are still so many areas where we have no idea what's going on because nobody has ever recorded there, or a recorder has moved on and records just end."*

Edward added *"Records are vital. And they all count! Putting a casual record on iRecord of a butterfly you've seen when you're out walking the dog could be the first record of that species at that location."*

Bill Mansfield, Cambs County Moth Recorder said very much the same when I asked him about sites for finding moths: *"We are blessed with some excellent sites where rare species can be found, including Wicken Fen and Chippenham Fen. But I'm most interested in what turns up in a garden where nobody has ever run a light trap or used pheromone lures before because it's immediately adding new data points to the bigger picture. It's all about getting out there and looking and recording, wherever you are."*

So wherever you are out and about, keep your eyes peeled and record what you see. You never know, it could be the start of something special.

How to submit your records

iRecord Butterflies is available as a free, easy to use smartphone app for iOS and Android. It allows you to record details of butterflies and day-flying moths you see as well as to upload photos. All verified records will be submitted to Butterflies for the New Millennium or the National Moth Recording Scheme.

There is a records page on our Branch website where you can submit your butterfly sightings and upload photos. If you've not seen it before it's also a great place to find out what other people have seen and where: www.cambs-essex-butterflies.org.uk/submit_sighting.php



Wicken Fen, near Ely



Photo: Kate Merry

Big City Butterflies

Habitat Management & Recording

by Steve Bolton

We are now in year 2 of the 4 year project and it's been a very busy spring and summer. Nine sites have been directly supported with planting and seeding to improve habitats for butterflies and moths and 11 new Butterfly Conservation monitoring schemes have been established, including provision of 5 moth traps to councils and community groups.

The Cambs & Essex Branch areas included in the project are London Boroughs of Newham, Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham. Work here has focussed on West Ham Park and The Greenway in Newham, Eastbrookend Country Park in Barking and numerous sites in Redbridge. We have been working with the community group Transition Town Ilford at Valentines Park in Redbridge to create meadow habitat adjacent to their Forest Garden area. The group have been busy doing repeated cutting and raking to reduce nutrients and encourage more wildflowers.

We are also planning a number of community tree planting days on the site where site managers are keen to replace disease affected Ash trees with disease-resistant Elm trees supplied by the project to support White-letter Hairstreak.



It has been brilliant to see the transformation at Clapham Common from boring rye grass to beautiful wildflowers. The new butterfly meadow was created and seeded in March and after a slow start it was in full bloom by July with a riot of colour from annual wildflowers including Corn Marigold and Cornflower.

Perennials such as Birds-foot Trefoil and Ox-eye Daisy are also getting established and will replace the annuals next year to create long-term food sources for butterflies and moths. These include caterpillar foodplants like Common Sorrel for the Small Copper butterfly and fine grasses for Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper. It will be fascinating to see which butterflies start colonising and breeding. The banks and shrub and tree planting will help to provide shelter and the best conditions for breeding, roosting and over-wintering. The Friends group have started regularly recording butterflies on the common and will be keeping a close eye on this new habitat.



Wildlife planting on Clapham Common. Before...



... and after!

Big City Butterflies Engagement

by Ele Johnstone

Big City Butterflies is really blossoming now and this year, with the help of our volunteers, we have run 24 school workshops, 17 community events and 7 big public events.

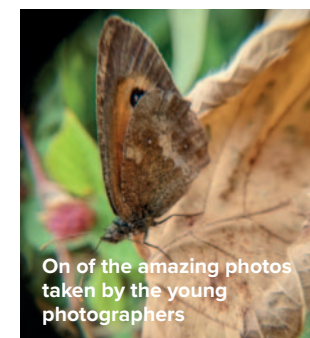
Photos: Chris O'Donovan



In the second year of the project, I have really focussed on running more unique events and activities to appeal to London's diverse communities. One example of this was "Moth Fest", a local community event in collaboration with local artist Liina Lember and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park which offered butterfly/moth walks with a twist, arts workshops and a special night-time viewing of Liina's light installation. We had great feedback for the event and I am keen to mirror this in other areas of London too!

One of my highlights in the North East of London this summer was running a nature photography workshop for teenagers at Hainault Forest. Young people who took part were able to pick up some beginner photography techniques and have a go at cyanotype photography before using their mobile phones cameras to apply what they had learned while getting up close and personal with the insects of Hainault Forest Country Park. We provided clip-on macro lenses for them to experiment with. It was amazing to see the teenagers so absorbed by photography and connecting with nature.

The winner of a spin-off photography competition will receive a Youth membership to BC and some other goodies!



On of the amazing photos taken by the young photographers

Excitingly, we have also been involved in a large-scale arts project funded by Arts Council England called *The Colour Of Transformation*. The project is led by Trinidadian artist Bryony Bengé-Abbott and is supported by Butterfly Conservation and the William Morris Gallery.

Through the metaphor of butterfly metamorphosis, *The Colour of Transformation* shares new perspectives on nature inspired by the stories of Global Majority women pioneers in conservation and land justice. This is such an amazing opportunity to reach and inspire, and really highlights the many aspects of butterflies which resonate with people.

For more information see:

<https://bryonybengeabbott.com/thecolouroftransformation>

To find out more about Big City Butterflies projects and volunteering opportunities please contact sbolton@butterfly-conservation.org

You can sign up for regular enews updates at <https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/conservation-projects/england/big-city-butterflies/big-city-butterflies-enews>

Transect vacancy at Cornmill Meadows

Photos: Keith Winch



Keith Winch, the Transect Coordinator for Essex, is moving house soon and will sadly be too far away to continue to monitor his butterfly survey site at Cornmill Meadows near Waltham Abbey.

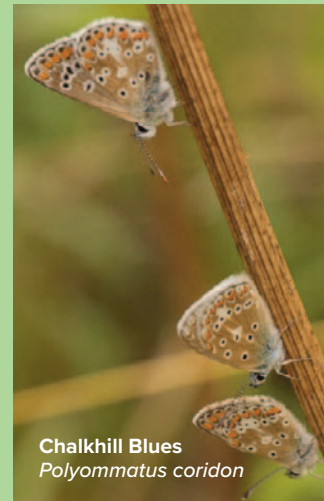
We are looking for a volunteer to take over his transect and continue the important work of regularly assessing the diversity and abundance of butterflies seen along the route of the walk.

Keith says *"I have done this walk weekly for the last nine seasons so I know it pretty well. It would be a shame if there was nobody to go there, even if it was only once a month, as data from the site goes back to 2005. Over the years I have counted 26 species of butterfly including both Purple & White-letter Hairstreaks there."*

Cornmill Meadows is an important grassland site for wildlife, and the transect is a 1.5 mile circular walk taking in different types of habitat. The route follows a mostly level soil or grass track with access via a gate. It is uneven in places and some sections can get very muddy and may not be suitable for mobility vehicles or wheelchairs. The site is a part of Lee Valley Regional Park, and as a volunteer recorder there you will be given a parking permit which entitles you to free parking in any of their car parks.



ClouDED Yellow
Colias croceus



Chalkhill Blues
Polyommatus coridon

Keith is very keen to hand over this transect in person, which would be a great opportunity to learn the route and to get his tips about where sightings of particular species have been over the years. You will need to be confident about identifying and counting butterflies on the wing, record the data, and able to commit to regular visits – ideally weekly – to the site from 1st April to the end of September each year.

The best outing at the site for Keith was in July 2017 when he counted an astonishing total of 560 butterflies on his walk. This year his highest day count was 162, and numbers vary a lot through the season and from year to year. *"It takes about an hour to get round the route but I usually take*

longer because of my photo habit!" he added.

If you'd like to take over this transect and want to know more please get in touch with Keith (keithwinch@gmail.com) for further details.



New to butterfly recording and not sure?

A Butterfly Transect is a survey that regularly follows the same route through a site, recording the different species and numbers of individuals seen at different points. By monitoring the same site by the same route repeatedly we build up a much clearer picture of what the populations are doing over time.

The Red List Revised

by Bryan Russell

This May saw a publication from our Branch Head Office which has caused much discussion. The article, titled “Half of Butterflies at Risk of Extinction” summarised the findings of the latest instalment of long-running research. The story made it into national news and it paints a particularly bleak picture for the future of many of our native species of butterflies.

This is the ‘Red List’ of endangered butterflies which has been updated this year, following the last revision in 2010.

All of us who are interested in butterflies are aware that they are generally becoming less common, and that this is believed to be mostly due to habitat loss. It’s also been the case for some time that with one or two species we have even started to hear their names and the dreadful word ‘extinction’ in the same sentence... but now it’s half of them? How worried should we be?

How the list works

The Red List comes from long-term data collected over many years across the UK, incorporating the numbers from all of the BC surveys, including the Big Butterfly Count. It uses a complicated set of calculations that establish where our different species of butterflies sit on a scale of ‘extinction danger’. It is presented using colour coding to make it easy to interpret at a glance – a convention that is used in wildlife surveys all over the world – and uses a familiar traffic-light colour scale where green is ‘doing ok’, amber is ‘not too good’, and red means ‘in danger’.

Regionally Extinct here refers specifically to UK status – the species is still breeding elsewhere in the world but no longer in the UK. We are lucky not to have any Globally Extinct species, so there is always hope. In an ideal world all of our species would be thriving in the green zone of Least Concern, but the world is far from ideal.



As well as showing us the current conservation status of all of our native species of butterfly, it also compares how they are doing now with their status in 2010.

The list still includes the four species that have **gone extinct in the UK** since 1860, namely Large Copper, Black-veined White, Mazarine Blue and Large Tortoiseshell; it’s important to remember them because there is always hope – keep reading!

Our **Threatened species** – those at real risk of extinction unless things can be turned around soon – fall into the amber and red categories

Species now classified as **Vulnerable** are Swallowtail, Grizzled and Silver-spotted Skipper, Small Heath, Small Pearl-bordered, Pearl-bordered, Marsh, and Duke of Burgundy, Scotch Argus, White Admiral, Brown and White-letter Hairstreak, Chalkhill, Adonis and Silver-studded Blue, and Northern Brown Argus. While this is a very precarious place for all of these 16 species, a few, including Duke of Burgundy, have recovered sufficiently since 2010 to be downgraded from Endangered status. The presence of Adonis Blue and Chalkhill Blue in this category makes our conservation work at sites in Cambridgeshire even more important.

Endangered includes 8 species. Sadly Wall, Grayling and Large Heath, species all familiar to many of us in the east of England, have now declined to the point of being included in this red category for the first time alongside Wood White, High Brown, Glanville and Heath Fritillary and Black Hairstreak. Wall has seen a shocking decline of around 70% in distribution in just a decade, and this is borne out by it’s



Duke of Burgundy mating pair
Hamearis lucina

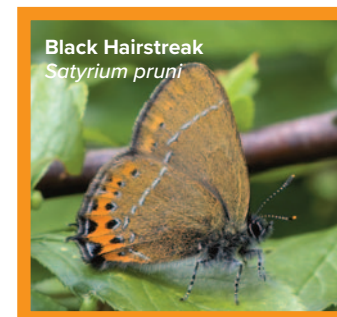
Photo: Shutterstock



Adonis Blue
Polyommatus bellargus



Wall
Lasiommata megera



Black Hairstreak
Satyrium pruni

Photos: David Bradley

disappearance from parts of Essex where it was once abundant.

To qualify for Endangered status, the species must have lost much of its habitat, or at least be significantly reduced in distribution range and also in numbers where it is found. This is averaged out to prevent over or under reacting caused by one unusual season. Additional riders are also taken into consideration such as the closeness of other colonies and significant fluctuations in colonies where it does occur.

In general it is the habitat specialist butterflies which have suffered most in terms of numbers, caused by changes of land use and land management intensity. The extinction risk of these species is further increased when their colonies become more and more isolated which limits the chances of recolonising suitable new habitat and limits interbreeding. The importance of retaining green corridors to connect areas of potential habitat becomes very clear in this context.

Despite it being very widespread and a relatively common species, Small Heath is now classified as **Vulnerable** due to its numbers having dropped so sharply over the past decade. Other species of butterfly such as Silver-washed Fritillary can be less common but as their overall numbers are relatively more stable they are classified as being less concerning because they don't have a similar level of decline.

The four UK species adapted to our most northern climate, for example Scotch Argus, are all now **Threatened** as they are showing negative responses to climate change as vegetation zones begin to shift north and to higher altitudes in response to warming temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns.

The Swallowtail, despite having relatively stable numbers, is a particularly complex case. It is felt



Photos: David Bradley

to be vulnerable to marginal sea-level rises, as increased salinity in the Norfolk Broads will kill off the caterpillar food plant and there is no other suitable habitat in the UK for the English sub-species.

Is there any good news?

There is always hope! There are no species currently classified as Critically Endangered; Large Blue and High Brown Fritillary have been brought back from the brink. Other species including Dingy Skipper and Chequered Skipper have also seen improvements after substantial efforts have been made to conserve them – this is great news as it shows that these interventions pay off.

Purple Emperor is back in the green zone, and has expanded its range. For some species such as Wall, climate change will perhaps improve its chances of expanding inland and north. And although Large Tortoiseshell has again been classified as Regionally Extinct for the purposes of this survey, it is known to have made a return to southern England, and by the next Red List update in a decade it is hopeful that it will have been reinstated as a UK breeding butterfly.

We should also prepare ourselves for the addition of new species to the UK list as the climate continues to warm, for example the Long-Tailed Blue which is now apparently breeding quite regularly along our south coast.

The full report: *A revised Red List of British butterflies. Insect Conservation and Diversity, 15 (5) Nov 2022*
Richard Fox, Emily B. Dennis, Andrew F. Brown, Jon Curson



Photo: Shutterstock



Photos: David Bradley

FREE winter arts events...

This activity is part of the **Chequered Skippers – Taking Flight** project funded by the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

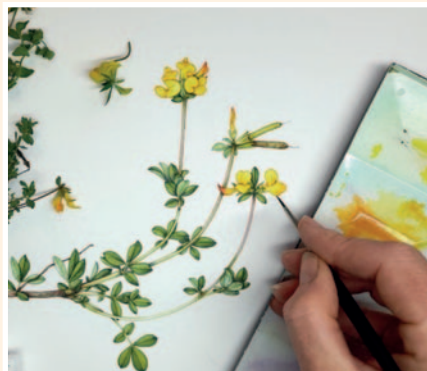
Plant Illustration with Lizzie Harper

Wednesday 11th January 2023

7pm – 8.30pm (Online)

Join Lizzie live to begin painting your own Bird's-foot trefoil flower in real time.

Learn how the professionals produce accurate botanical illustrations. By the end of the 90 minute session you will have had the opportunity to paint a section of a Bird's-foot trefoil plant, and will know how to tackle both the leaves and the flowers. (You may not have a completed illustration though, as finishing a botanical illustration often takes hours).



Booking essential: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/429769471057

Branch AGM Format – Have your say!

We hope that in 2023 it will be possible to resume having our AGM as a physical meeting, but we would like to hear from you about what you'd like it to be. If you have any suggestions about what the meeting should include, where it could take place, or when it would be then please let us know. Do you like the traditional format with a members meeting and talks in the autumn, or do you want something different?

The Committee recently discussed this, and some of the ideas that came up included having a meeting in the summer rather than autumn so that it could combine with a field visit, a physical meeting with virtual speakers to broaden our options, and a blended meeting so that you could continue to attend online if you preferred.

Please let us know what you think by contacting our Chair, Mike Gittos: Mrmikegittos@hotmail.com

Moth recording and Community Engagement at Logan's Meadow

By Victoria Smith (Local Nature Reserve Ranger – Cambridge City Council), Ben Greig (Friends of Logan's Meadow), Adrian Matthews (Cambridgeshire Moth Group) and Annette Shelford.

Photos: Adrian Matthews & Annette Shelford

Logan's Meadow is a small local nature reserve (LNR) in north Cambridge. Formerly a grazing marsh which lay neglected for many years before being designated as a LNR in 2005, it is in what was previously an industrial and agricultural part of the city dominated by gravel pits, factories and the old power station.

While many urban LNRs are isolated 'green islands' with relatively low biodiversity, the setting of Logan's Meadow on silty flood plain right next to the River Cam connects it to the Cam corridor all the way up to Wicken Fen. This is reflected in the biodiversity of this site, particularly for species associated with fen carr and riparian habitat such as Reed Warbler, Water Vole, Daubenton's Bat and Otter. The damp woodland part of the reserve is planted with a variety of mature and well-established deciduous trees including poplar, willow, sallow and alder, and the established hedgerow that borders some of the site includes hawthorn, spindle, field maple and dogwood.

The site is managed by Cambridge City Council with some support from local businesses but most of the hands-on maintenance and development work is carried out by a dedicated team of volunteers from the local community and includes local residents and students from the Cambridge universities. Volunteers also help to monitor wildlife at the site, including the Swift Tower, nest boxes, and moths!

The site is managed for wildlife and the community. Always well-used, it has seen a huge growth in popularity and importance over the past 2 years when people rediscovered the green spaces close to their homes for fresh air and

exercise during the pandemic. The space was even used by bands and choirs as a Covid-safe practice venue.

Local moth recorder Adrian Matthews started moth trapping at the site in 2017. Logan's Meadow was a great opportunity to fill a gap in the moth data for the city. He now works with the recently-formed Friends of Logan's Meadow in raising awareness of local wildlife – specifically moths – and this summer they have run a series of very successful moth trapping and bat walk events for families. These have been successful both for the numbers of people getting involved and some great habitat-specific new records (see below) as well as a really good diversity of other species. Seeing moths which are typical of fenland sites is proof that the site is working!

These events are really important in helping to get the community engaged with plans to expand the site and create even more fenland habitat in this urban setting and it's been particularly pleasing to see plenty of young people coming along and getting interested in moths. As the site is surrounded by street and security lights, Adrian uses a mercury vapour (MV) light trap. These traps have very bright bulbs that give off ultraviolet light which is especially attractive to insects.

At some of the sessions he has also used sugaring – a heady concoction of sugar and beer soaked into a piece of rope or painted on to a tree – which attracts some moths in the same way that some butterflies are attracted to over-ripe fruit. They



also walked around the site at dusk to look for the first moths starting to fly. As the site is a great place to see male Ghost Moths (*Hepialus humuli*) and Small China-mark (*Calaclysta lemnata*) displaying and competing to mate (lekking) it was an opportunity for people to learn that they can also see moths going about their business just by watching quietly after sunset or looking by torchlight.

These events also involved people in identification and recording. During the evening events and at a follow-up moth trap opening session the following morning, Adrian encouraged people to help with identifying moths and other insects that are found in the trap and explained why it's important for us to know about the unseen diversity of moths at the site, and how moths, along with butterflies, are important indicators of the biological wellbeing of a place.

Over the past 5 years that Adrian has been occasionally trapping at the site he has recorded 212 species in total, including some moths that he has not seen before despite trapping for over a decade in his own garden less than 1km up the road!

The list from the site this year includes not only moth species associated with the prevalent mature trees at the site but also, increasingly, those that are fen and marsh specialists as well as a number of species that are localised and scarce. Moth species are usually described as 'Resident' or 'Immigrant' (or sometimes both). All species occurring naturally in Britain are assigned a national conservation status by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. The 'National Status' of species provided in reference books, while useful as a guide, is now generally treated with caution as the distribution and abundance of species can and does



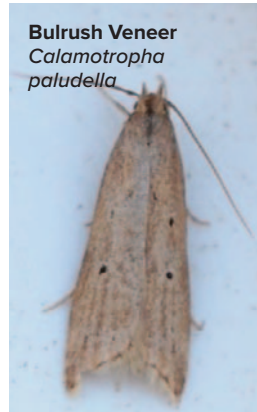
change quite rapidly and is certainly being affected by climate change. A useful way to assess local abundance and distribution is to look at the Cambsmoths website (cambsmoths.co.uk) which holds all historic and contemporary accepted records of moths occurring in Cambridgeshire.

In the following paragraphs, species marked * are classified as 'Local' – recorded from 101-300 10km squares in Britain since 01/01/1960. Species marked ** are classified as 'Nationally Rare B (Nb)' – recorded from 31-100 10 km squares in Britain since 01/01/1980. Species marked ^ are classified as 'Nationally Rare A' (Na) – recorded from between 16-30 10 km squares in Britain since 01/01/1980. While all moths are important to conserve, their national and local status help us consider which to target for recording and conservation.

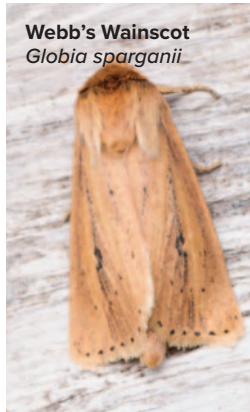
The Reed Bed at Logan's Meadow, which includes areas of Bulrush, was extended in 2007 when the site was being developed and now successfully provides a habitat for a number of local and rarer species. Fen Wainscot (*Arenostola phragmitidis*)* has only been recorded at Logan's Meadow since July 2021 with good numbers in both 2021 and July 2022 suggesting a breeding population. Twin-spotted Wainscot (*Lenisa geminipuncta*)* – another reed dweller was recorded for the first time in July 2022. The larvae of the micro moths, Reed Veneer (*Chilo phragmitella*)* and Fen Crest (*Brachmia inornatella*)^ also feed on Common Reed. The Fen Crest has only been previously been recorded at larger Cambridgeshire reserves such as Wicken and Chippenham Fens, Kingfisher Bridge and Welney so it was very pleasing to find it present at Logan's Meadow in July this year. Species associated with Bulrush are also now present on site including Bulrush Veneer (*Calamotropha paludella*)* and Webb's Wainscot (*Globia sparganii***). These moths are all species associated with good quality fen habitat, demonstrating the potential of even a small site to provide a home for specialist species given a direct connection to other sites.



Fen Wainscot
Arenostola phragmitidis



Bulrush Veneer
Calamotropha paludella



Webb's Wainscot
Globia sparganii

Double-lobed (*Apamea ophiogramma*) is another fenland species present, as is Crescent (*Celaena leucostigma leucostigma*)* which needs yellow iris as a larval foodplant. Cream-bordered Green Pea (*Earias chlorana*** despite its national status is relatively abundant here, as are other willow feeders including Willow Knot-horn (*Sciota adelphella*)*, Willow Marble (*Apotomis lineana*)* and Red Underwing (*Catocala nupta*). The damp woodland supports a good range of specialist species including Brindled Shoot (*Gypsonoma minutana*** and Rosy Cloaked Shoot (*Gypsonoma aceriana*)* which feed on poplar and Round-winged Muslin (*Thumatha senex*)* that relies on rotting leaf-litter or algae. It's also been pleasing to record Garden Dart (*Euxoa nigra*) here, a species which is nationally common but has seen a massive decline since the 1970's and is very infrequently recorded in Cambridge.

The stand-out from the final trapping event for 2022 was to see a Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*) arrive to feed on sugar on 24th September. There are aspens on the site so this could well have been a homegrown moth! A spectacular end to the season and a very memorable moth for everybody to see.

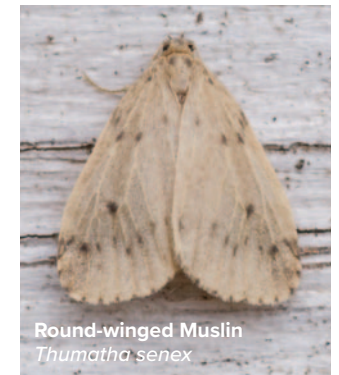
These events are really helping to get the local community engaged, involved as volunteers and excited about this special place and the collaborative work that will be taking place to expand and improve the habitat. They also help to demonstrate why this work is so important to the biodiversity of the city.



Cream-bordered Green Pea
Earias chlorana



Brindled Shoot
Gypsonoma minutana



Round-winged Muslin
Thumatha senex



Clifden Nonpareil on sugar
Catocala fraxini



Winter sunset over the reed beds and boardwalk

Friends of Logan's Meadow are now working on the next phase of expanding the managed habitat across more of the site. Volunteers have already planted hundreds of donated trees including oaks, birch, limes, holly, hazel, alder, buckthorn and even scots pine. In coming years they will create a new belt of woodland and help to screen the offices (and bright security lights!) of the Pye Industrial Site. By increasing the diversity of trees away from purely wetland species we are aiming to future-proof the site which is like to become dryer in coming decades. This increases the potential for more diverse invertebrate wildlife, hopefully including an increase in the number of moth species we see as well.

We are all really excited about getting started on the next steps forward – which will include extending the reed beds and meadow areas and creating new, bigger open water areas – to help this site to achieve its potential as a fenland stronghold in the city.

We would love to have more regular butterfly, day-flying moth and early stages recording taking place at the site. If you would be interested in helping with this, please get in touch with Vic: victoria.smith@cambridge.gov.uk

If you are interested in supporting the **Friends of Logan's Meadow** or attending any of our nature activities in 2023 please contact Ben: friendsoflogansmeadow@gmail.com

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This Branch magazine is printed on recyclable paper, but rather than recycle it in the bin, please hand it to a neighbour or someone else who might be interested, or leave it in a waiting room or other such place where it might get picked up.

Butterfly Conservation is a national charity with over 40,000 members and clear aims.

- 1) Recover threatened butterflies and moths
- 2) Increase the numbers of widespread species
- 3) Inspire people to understand and deliver species conservation
- 4) Promote international conservation actions.

In addition to this, it manages 30 separate sites around the country, home to some of our rarest species. All the actions and activities of Butterfly Conservation ultimately support the delivery of these core aims.

www.butterfly-conservation.org.



Butterfly Conservation

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Winter Work Parties 2022-23

The dates for site maintenance works are as follows:

Thursday 5th January 2023

Swadywell Pits

Leader: Susannah O’Riordan
soriordan@butterfly-conservation.org

**Sunday 8th January – 10am
AND Sunday 5th February – 10am**

Hadleigh Great Wood

Leader: Jo Yarker
essex-co@cambs-essex-butterflies.org.uk

Sunday 12th March 2023

Devil's Dyke

Leader: Vince Lea
vincelea@btinternet.com

Please let the leader know that you are planning on coming along.

Check for location, meeting, parking etc details on www.butterfly-conservation.org (Cambs and Essex area).



Scan this QR code on your smartphone!

Your branch needs you....

As a charity, we are dependent on volunteers to do what we can to help butterflies and moths, and there are always lots of opportunities for you to get involved.

We still urgently need to recruit Minutes and Membership Secretaries, as well as a Branch Organiser, to join the Butterfly Conservation Cambs and Essex Branch Committee, to help us to do more and to better engage with our Members.

If you're not so keen on committee meetings, could you help us to expand the activities of our Branch by helping with publicity, fundraising

and representing and promoting BC's work at public events?

If you'd rather be more hands-on, over the winter, we will need Work Party volunteers to help keep our special sites in optimum condition for key species of butterfly. After the harsh summer, this could well be a critical year for all of our butterflies so, if you've been thinking about getting involved, now is really the time – there is a list of dates above.

To find out more about any of these roles, please contact Mike Gittos email: mrmikegittos@hotmail.com

We really look forward to hearing from you.