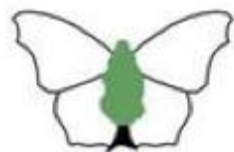


Butterfly Conservation

Cumbria Branch Newsletter 43



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Photographic Quiz: Vegetative Lepidoptera!

Compiled by Rob Petley-Jones

Test your identification skills on these British butterflies and moths. Those of you who are botanists or gardeners may be at an advantage as the names of all these species also include the name of a plant (in English). As some plant names are commonly used in Lepidoptera names there is necessarily some repetition! No prizes as ever – just a good feeling if you score well. There are 14 to have a go at, 6 here and more on inside back cover. Answers on p22 . Good luck!



MESSAGE FROM OUR BRANCH CHAIRMAN

Welcome to our Autumn 2021 newsletter. Few could have imagined that nearly two years after coronavirus reached our shores, we would still be suffering so much from its impact. Much of our 'normal' activity has been affected: most conservation work parties were cancelled, our guided walks programme limited and our 2020 Members Day and AGM was by zoom! However, Covid permitting we have planned a full programme of work parties for Autumn/Winter 2021/22 and by the time this goes to print we will have had a 'proper' Members Day and AGM at the wonderful Haybridge Nature Reserve. If you missed this event be sure to calendar next years 'flagship event'.....details will be in the Spring 2022 issue. You will see all planned work parties listed and dated later in this newsletter.... again please calendar and come and join us.



[It really makes a difference to our rare species and you get to do healthy exercise in beautiful areas!]

On a positive note, after a very cold [but dry and sunny] April and an exceptionally wet May the weather more than 'blossomed' in June and July. Until almost the end of May I feared for our Spring butterflies and moths but the warm and at times hot sun arrived just in time to give us good emergences of Northern Brown Argus, Dingy Skipper, Small Blue, Marsh

and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and relatively promising numbers of Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Duke of Burgundy, Large Heath and Mountain Ringlet. Cold April nights delayed the emergence of some species including Dark Green, High Brown and Silver-washed Fritillaries and Scotch Argus and as I write this in early August we still await a significant emergence of Peacocks, Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells. Grass-feeding Large and Small Skippers, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Grayling did well....Small Heath and Speckled Wood less well.



Do you have a special butterfly or moth memory? Twenty years ago I came by chance upon a huge roost of 3,000 Chalkhill Blue. We would regularly holiday on the Isle of Wight [a gem of a 'butterfly isle'] and late in the afternoon in a sheltered location near the chalk hillside of Brook Down I noticed lots of Chalkhill Blue butterflies beside the



path roosting on the flower heads of the yellow composite 'Fleabane'. I did not count each one!.....but counted 300 within a 10m length so given there was at least 100m of Fleabane I can only estimate that this prime roost site contained at least 3,000 butterflies! Some blue butterflies can form vast colonies and if you are in the right place at the right time the results can be stunning. I was reminded of this in late June of this year when walking with friends in warm sunshine on the Great Orme at Llandudno. During a fairly short walk we saw between 1,500-2,000 Silver-studded Blues.....mostly on the wing but many also in colonial groups at rest on grass stems and seed heads in sheltered locations. With many in flight it was harder to estimate numbers but two



years previous when I walked the same route later on in the day most were at roost making it easier to count batches of 20 to 50 giving a total nearer to 3,000!

These two memories will remain but they are now joined by a third from my recent walk to CWT's wonderful Smardale Gill NNR. I went on Peter Boardman's guided walk in early August and again it was 'right place right time' as

Scotch Argus were out in force. Who could not be uplifted by sharing your picnic site [and your arms and legs and sandwich box!] with literally hundreds of butterflies! Those who attended will never forget....thank you Peter for leading this walk.

A rather different special moment occurred this July when after years of 'blood, sweat and toil' on the fell behind Allithwaite [near Grange -O- Sands] Wendy Nelson telephoned to say that High Brown Fritillary had returned to Wartbarrow. Wendy has devoted dozens of hours to working on this site knowing that the right scrub clearance could once again turn this limestone hillside into a haven for flowers, birds and butterflies. Scrub clearance has opened up 'rooms' and 'corridors' for the ground flora



to recover on what had become a scrub covered limestone hillside. Branch volunteers have helped [we have two more sessions planned in our 2021/22 programme] but credit must go to Wendy for her remarkable contribution, hard work and no little skill in driving this project forward. To see DS, NBA, SPBF, DGF, SWF, WLH, Grayling, Wall and now the UK's rarest butterfly the HBF all back on this site is a remarkable achievement.....well done Wendy,

Martin and all the volunteers.

You will notice in this issue of our newsletter we have no less than three contributions from visitors to Cumbria who love coming to see our countryside and butterflies. Simon Saville is a BC trustee and a remarkable man.....not someone who regularly takes long cycle rides he decided to 'train up' to cycle from Lands End to John O' Groats to help raise funds for butterfly conservation. He has kindly sent us a report of his journey as he passed through Lancashire and Cumbria. 'Thank you' Simon and CONGRATULATIONS on raising over £30,000 to help keep our special places fit for butterflies, moths and wildlife. Rob and Brigit came to stay from Kent and in their article it is a joy to see how coming from the 'Garden of England' they still found so much of interest in South Cumbria. Finally Tim Wallis is a 'birder' and earns his living as Warden at RSPB Conwy Estuary in North Wales. Like so many who enjoy birds it is not hard to start appreciating how so many good bird sites are also great for butterflies, moths, dragonflies and wild flowers.

Thank you to all our newsletter contributors....without you [and our editor Karen McLellan] we would not have a newsletter!..... a newsletter that we can all be proud of. If you would like to write an article for a future edition, please give it a go! It does not

have to be about moths or butterflies in Cumbria.....perhaps you have visited other



parts of the UK or overseas or you have found something of interest regarding habitats, conservation, wildlife gardening, photography or other entomological species such as dragonflies, bees, hoverflies or

beetles. For further ideas it is always worth looking at the last 14 or so back issues of our newsletter available on our Cumbria Butterfly Conservation web-site. Stay safe during this difficult time.

Best wishes, **Chris**.

Cumbria Work Parties 2021/2022

All are invited to become a conservation volunteer...we need more recruits! You do not need prior experience and will be welcome to join as many or as few of our conservation work parties as you can manage. Please note down the dates and venues from below in your diary and look at the [Cumbria branch website](#) for further details or contact Chris Winnick 01539 728254.

Meet at 10:00 at the parking places defined by the grid reference. For full directions please [click](#) here

<u>Sunday</u> 5 September 2021 Witherslack Woods, Witherslack
Ride maintenance
Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 437859 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
<u>Wednesday</u> 8 September 2021 Yewbarrow, Witherslack
Cutting, clearing and burning scrub to make a new coupe
Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 437859 Contact: Chris Winnick 015397 28254
<u>Wednesday</u> 22 September 2021 Graythwaite
Planting primrose plugs
Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 362903

Contact: David Eastlick 015395 32076
Sunday 3 October 2021 Kendal Fell, Kendal Create areas for planting primrose and cowslip Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 508927 Contact: Chris Winnick 015397 28254
Wednesday 6 October 2021 Kendal Fell, Kendal Planting primrose and cowslip Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 508927 Contact: Chris Winnick 015397 28254
Wednesday 20 October 2021 Yewbarrow, Witherslack Cutting, clearing and burning scrub to make a new coupe Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 437859 Contact: Chris Winnick 015397 28254
Wednesday 3 November 2021 Halecat Woods, Witherslack Ride maintenance Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 433835 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
Sunday 7 November 2021 Holme Stinted Pasture, Burton-in-Kendal Cutting, clearing and burning scrub Directions: for full directions please see website. Entry gate grid reference SD 54516 78401 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
Wednesday 17 November 2021 White Scar, Whitbarrow Scrub maintenance Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4609 8530 Contact: Chris Winnick 015397 28254
Wednesday 1 December 2021 Reserve Day, tbc Reserve day for earlier weather-affected work parties Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference tbc Contact: Chris Winnick 015397 28254
Sunday 5 December 2021 Holme Stinted Pasture, Burton-in-Kendal Cutting, clearing and burning scrub Directions: for full directions please see website. Entry gate grid reference SD 54516 78401 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
Wednesday 15 December 2021 Township Plantation, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance and clearing Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4538 8841 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
Sunday 2 January 2022 Wartbarrow, Allithwaite

Ride clearing and maintenance Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 387767 Contact: Martin Chadwick 01539 532553
<u>Wednesday</u> 5 January 2022 Township Plantation, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance and clearing Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4538 8841 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
<u>Wednesday</u> 19 January 2022 Wartbarrow, Allithwaite Ride clearing and maintenance Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 387767 Contact: Martin Chadwick 01539 532553
<u>Wednesday</u> 2 February 2022 Wakebarrow, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance and scallop making Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 462867 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
<u>Sunday</u> 6 February 2022 Wakebarrow, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance and scallop making Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 462867 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
<u>Wednesday</u> 16 February 2022 Farrer's Allotment, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 462867 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
<u>Wednesday</u> 2 March 2022 Farrer's Allotment, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 462867 Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
<u>Sunday</u> 6 March 2022 Witherslack Woods, Witherslack or Hampsfell tbc Ride maintenance Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference tbc Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254
<u>Wednesday</u> 16 March 2022 tbc Reserve day for earlier weather-affected work parties
<u>Wednesday</u> 30 March 2022 tbc a reserve date tbc Reserve day for earlier weather-affected work parties

PLEASE NOTE: All work parties start at 10.00am at the meeting place and we aim to finish by 3.30pm. Volunteers can of course leave whenever they wish...a half day is better than none! Bring a packed lunch, a drink, water-proofs and suitable footwear. Tools and gloves are provided (you may wish to keep the gloves and use again on future

occasions) and there is training/guidance for new volunteers. We work at our own individual pace with rest periods. This is also a sociable and enjoyable activity and incredibly rewarding when you notice how many of the UK's rarest butterflies have benefited from the changes in habitat achieved by our work.

Care with Coronavirus Regardless of the relaxation of Covid restrictions on 19 July, we need to take precautions to protect our volunteers and each other for the foreseeable future. Please consider wearing masks outdoor in confined areas and particularly when the group gathers. We want you to feel comfortable at this work party.

Cumbria's Hawk-moths - a quick glance at the *Sphingidae* family



There are around 18 species of this family of large and colourful mainly nocturnal macro-moths in Britain, of which nine are migrants. Fifteen or so species have been recorded in Cumbria though in most years well over half the county's records are of the two species,

Elephant Hawk-moth and **Poplar Hawk-moth**. But regular moth recorders will now and again also come across **Small Elephant**, **Eyed**, and **Lime Hawk-moths**.

Meanwhile there are plenty of daytime observations, quite often reported on our BC Cumbria "Sightings" page, of the immigrant mainly day-flying **Hummingbird**

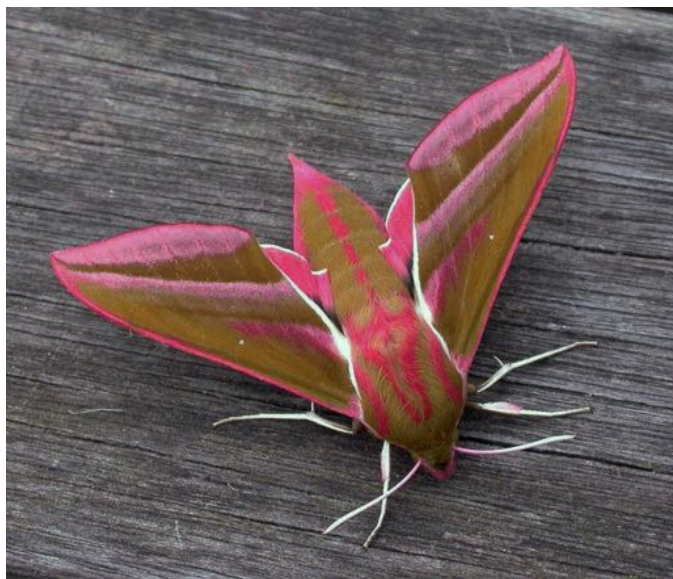
Hawk-moth whose very name gives a good clue as to its hovering behaviour while feeding. The latter would be the odd one out, were it not for the

Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth, a perfect bee mimic whose larval food plants include Devil's-bit



Scabious – there are only a handful of modern confirmed records of this day-flyer in Cumbria, but we’ve plenty of suitable habitat so why not look out for it next spring? The photos here don’t do full justice to this beautiful group of insects, and for recorders checking their daily moth trap there is always a frisson of excitement when any of these turn up – even the commoner ones.

Most of the hawk-moth species are large by any standard, with forewing lengths ranging from 20-24mm for Narrow-bordered Bee and Hummingbird Hawk-moths up to 52-60mm for the iconic **Death’s Head Hawk-moth** with its skull-like symbol on the thorax. There are over 70 Cumbrian records of this latter unmistakable species, but with only a handful of these in the present century. The larvae of



most of the hawk-moths are medium to large in size and equally eye-catching, ranging from that of the elephant trunk-like Elephant Hawk-moth to several species with a distinctive “horn” at the tail end. In both larval and adult forms, many species have built-in defence mechanisms against predation by birds etc. For example, the Eyed Hawk-moth in its adult

form has unmistakable eye-spots on its hindwing, which it can expose to deter insectivorous birds, while the afore-mentioned Elephant Hawk-moth has false eyes on its first thoracic segment, perhaps to give predators the impression of a small inedible reptile.

So, in both adult and larval forms, hawk-moths are an altogether fascinating family of moths, well worth keeping an eye open for and all distinctive enough to avoid risk of misidentification.

Martin Tordoff



Marsh Fritillary Update

In the Spring edition of this newsletter I reported a bit of a downturn in 2020 of the overall larval web counts in Cumbria and what the reasons were likely to be, particularly on sites/colonies where the breeding habitat was not being managed appropriately or at all. In those cases I expect the figures to continue to decline but on sites which are managed

properly and in accordance with good practice the figures provisionally for 2021 are looking good. There can be little doubt however that the serious decline in Ennerdale has largely been caused by the actions of the major 'core' colony landowners there and that decline is likely to continue until appropriate management is not only restored but is also successful.

Although I have had to scale down my own work as age and energy starts to bite (plus 5 grandchildren to care for in school hols!) Dave Wainwright our Regional Officer along with other volunteers is going to survey as many of our key sites as possible during August 2021. We have around 30 colonies in Cumbria now however so not all will necessarily be surveyed annually now because the surveys must be planned during August and there are only 31 days to do it in!

In addition to already known breeding sites we continue to find or hear about new sightings and if they appear to be on suitable looking habitat or near extant breeding sites we must check those also in August because a breeding presence has to be confirmed before it can be classed as a breeding colony. Even then we might find a single larval web but if we still feel it is not a suitable site it is sensible to look at it again next year. In 2021 already we had two such sites to look at and on one we did in fact find 7 larval webs on a huge site which we felt had been colonised more than a year ago and could support a larger presence so that was confirmed as a new self-colonised breeding site. In the other case we really wanted to find a 'stepping-stone' colony between one confirmed site and another, and several adult butterflies had been seen but the physical appearance of the site in August was not optimistic. In the event I'm told a single web was located but we really need confirmation next year and the habitat itself needs to be managed to have any chance of long-term occupation – so it was not sensible to confirm that one as a confirmed new breeding colony/site.

THE SUCCESS OF THE CUMBRIAN RE-INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that our Marsh Fritillary project has been enormously successful. Even if maybe it has not received too much publicity outside of Cumbria that is not the point and that is not why it was done but our successful strategy has now also been done by our friends in South Wales and early signs are that they are also being successful – we in Cumbria wish them well and every success with their Marsh Fritillary Project.

WHAT NOW?

It is vital we don't let the success run into decline again and that depends on more than simply monitoring larval web counts on each or most sites annually. We can happily do those counts as they give us an early warning sign if all is not well – and it already has done BUT what is needed also is the will to do something about it. Therein may lie the problem because we in Butterfly Conservation depend on and have to rely on others to do their bit as well.

That includes the landowners who have to manage the sites appropriately and in most if not all cases in accordance with Stewardship Agreements they are signed up to. *This used to be a hugely successful colony on a*



fantastic mosaic of well grazed habitat – it isn't now!

There is only so much WE can do in that respect but we live in hope that things will improve and at least we have given this species a fighting chance of long-term survival because of our well planned and carried out reintroduction strategy which has now topped around 30 colonies of which only seven were deliberate reintroductions and the others are self-colonised and that was exactly in accordance with our planned strategy.

Thank you indeed to all those volunteers who have helped along the way – you can all be proud and when next you see a Marsh Fritillary butterfly in Cumbria you can genuinely say that if it was not for what you did it might well not have been there at all.

Steve Doyle

Special butterflies and habitats of the southern Lake District

We are two members of Butterfly Conservation (BC) and are in our local Kent group. BC held a fund-raising auction earlier this year in which my wife, Brigid, placed four bids. Two were successful, she has a knack for such things. The first was a pair of colourful sandals: better still, the second was an opportunity for a four night stay at the home of Chris and Claire Winnick in Kendal to see some of the special butterflies and habitats of the southern Lake District. The readers of the Cumbria branch newsletters will all be familiar with Chris, Chair of the Cumbrian branch of BC, and his enthusiasm for all things Lepidopteran and his experience in leading butterfly searches in various parts of the country. Our stay was duly arranged for early June, tying in with a trip to see family in Northern England and Scotland once Covid lockdown allowed.

With mounting excitement, on June 7th we drove over from Sedgefield unerringly to the Winnick's home. With no time to unpack bags, Chris whisked us off to our first search a little way along the motorway to a known Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) site. A short walk later across a grassy, boggy, low hillside, there they were, numerous Marsh Frits! This was our first of several lifers' of the trip, and on just our first outing. They disappeared from Kent some years ago. Kent Wildlife Trust has a current project



to restore fenland in Southeast Kent around Ham Fen, where Marsh Frits were once present prior to land drainage for agriculture. Ham Fen also happens to be the very first official beaver reintroduction site in England. A number of whites (both *Pieris napi* and *brassicae*) and Meadow Browns (*Maniola jurtina*) were also seen, together with a few Common Blues (*Polyommatus icarus*). The Frits kept low in a fair breeze but were easy to see though harder to photograph, flitting between tussocks of grass and sedge among some heather and bilberry on quite wet ground. This site is also known to be good for Small

Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria selene*) but none were seen, probably due to the cold spring which appears to have delayed a number of natural events, including some butterfly appearances. Meadow pipits and skylarks were singing and moving around too, and there were numerous Hirundines over nearby water. The view west was a typical reminder of why the Lake District is so popular, why hadn't we visited for years?

Having agreed a time for the evening meal, we were surprised by Chris with an offer to delay food with a walk up Kendal Fell towards the golf course. It was a lovely sunny day, for a change, so, why not? Near the top is a small quarried area improved by BC volunteers with selected planting, for which our reward was a couple of familiar species for us in Kent. Firstly, Duke of Burgundy (*Hamearis lucina*) for which Kent remains a stronghold, with now as many as thirteen colonies in Denge Wood, outside Canterbury, thanks to the Kent BC group who have been toiling to improve and expand habitat. Coincidentally, Denge Wood is justly famous for its orchids and also has the rare White-Spotted Sable moth (*Anania funebris*) as well as the more common Burnet Companion (*Euclidia glyphica*). The second was a first for the year: a Large Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanus*). The poor weather in Kent had meant a number of missed weeks for my two UKBMS transect count routes at Hothfield Common, a unique area for Kent of heath, bog, and fen. My first Kent record of Large Skipper this year was 17th June after returning from Kendal! With plenty of flowers out, there were numerous common spring butterflies on the golf course and path verges despite the top being windy. Of course, being on the top meant another fantastic view across Kendal to the fells beyond. Delaying meals was to be a feature of our stay, there was so much to see and enjoy!

Next morning we headed for Whitbarrow, an imposing limestone upland seen from many a mile around and to become a familiar landmark for us. Here, under broken cloud with bright sun in scrubby woodland with clearings containing bracken and, critically, lots of

primrose and violet, we encountered more Duke of Burgundy. The violets explained the many Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (*Boloria euphrosyne*) seen, as well as some Small Pearl-Bordered in this more sheltered habitat compared to our first site. The Fritillaries were again 'lifers' for us, both having shrunk to a generally westerly



distribution. There was a reintroduction of Pearl-bordered to Tudely Woods in West Kent in 2007 with some breeding success after more habitat management by BC in partnership with Forestry Commission and RSPB. We then moved on to White Scar at

the southern end of Whitbarrow where, 'lifers' coming thick and fast, we found a good population of typically wing-marked Northern Brown Argus (*Aricia artaxerxes*).



We returned to Kendal for lunch and to collect Claire for the afternoon with easily accessible butterflies and flowers in mind. First to the Cumberland Wildlife Trust (CWT) reserve of Latterbarrow which was indeed awash with wildflowers, suitably accompanied by all of the common, widespread butterflies, but also more Northern Brown Argus. I was able to help a couple searching specifically to locate greater butterfly orchid which we had already picked up on our wander through the myriad blooms. A great spot to sit surrounded by beauty on a warm, sunny day.

Our next stop was at another CWT reserve, Meathop Moss, where we again saw Chris running along the boardwalk and leaping into the heather to confirm a very early Large Heath (*Coenonympha tullia*), typically skittish. Another first for us in this feast of new butterflies. We learned about the nature of Mosses and of the number in this

area, improving our understanding of one that we had visited earlier in the trip in Northumberland, Ford Moss, where the highlights were cuckoo and an adder basking on the path around the Moss. No Large Heaths were out yet there, but it is reported to be a good site for them. Along the track into Meathop Moss, we saw several Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*), Comma (*Polygonia c-album*), and Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*).

Our last stop on a fine late afternoon was Grange-over-Sands where Chris treated all to ice cream followed by a walk around the bird lake and along the prom with its fine flower beds and fabulous views across the water to Arnside Knott and beyond. It had been a very successful day for us.

The weather remained kind to us on Wednesday 9th except for a short, light morning shower during a walk around the Haybridge nature reserve in the Rusland valley.

Fortunately we were sheltered by trees and then, over a packed lunch, by the visitor centre. Though closed due to Covid, there were seats sheltered by the eaves, under which a pair of spotted flycatchers were feeding chicks above our heads. A group of volunteers were planting wildflowers in the wetland area. We had a pleasant chat with the reserve manager who helpfully pointed out one of the highlights, the snake pit. I am used to looking under sheets of corrugated roofing for local reptiles but this was different. It was truly a 'pit', a rectangular one filled with hay and straw to create warmth when rotting down and covered with matting too, for even more warmth. A very posh snake hotel indeed. Lifting the mat confirmed its popularity with a mix of over two dozen grass snakes and slow worms some of which stayed long enough for a photograph. We were told that an adder had been found in it a few days earlier. There were other highlights too. The little-known Osprey pair were at their nest and easily seen both from the Centre and from the specially-placed hide. Along the boardwalk, several spikes of Coralroot Orchid were in flower. While Kent has the greatest range of British orchid species, to the best of my knowledge it does not have Coralroot, another first sight for us.



After our damp lunch, the weather improved during our journey to Barrow-in-Furness and the impressive Ormsgill Slag Banks. This proved rich with many butterfly and moth species. In fact, we saw our first lovely Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*) soon after leaving the car park. We saw more Common Blues and also Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*), as well as the common butterflies. Two familiar moths also seemed common, Mother Shipton (*Euclidia mi*) and Burnet Companion (*Euclidia glyphica*), clovers and trefoils being numerous on the grassy flats near the estuary. The abundance of Small Blues was explained by impressive numbers of kidney vetch along the slopes of the slag heap. Chris commented that it 'looked the best ever'. Further along, Sea Buckthorn became more and more obvious, invading the open areas. Plans are to push this back and to create more scrapes for the kidney vetch: good luck with the prickly buckthorn!

Thursday 10th, our last full day, turned dull and windy. Early Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*) had been reported on Arnside Knott so we intrepidly headed there. Sadly, it is now quite rare in our area of Kent, but there are still a few around Folkestone. Despite the excellent habitat on the Knott, with grassed areas and dry, bare patches, nature confounded us - a rare fail on this trip. Nevertheless, we were compensated by the fabulous views over the Kent Estuary and beyond, Blackpool Tower was easily seen. There were again some lovely wildflowers, especially in the Heathwaite area of the Knott, and another Mother Shipton moth.



We returned for lunch not at all downhearted as the trip overall had given us some fabulous sights. As it was now very dull, and later to rain, we temporarily abandoned butterflies and visited the lovely Holehird Gardens in the afternoon. Therein is a fabulous display of plants, including several national collections. But of course we still saw a few of the common butterflies over the flowers in sheltered areas of the gardens. And we returned home with a couple of *Dactylorhiza* orchids bought from their shop for our garden, a bonus, and they flowered well, reminding us of the many Northern Marsh Orchids that we had seen.

We were in no hurry to leave for our next destination to friends near Oxford on Friday 11th so Chris kindly showed us another interesting site at Holme Stinted pastures in the morning. The weather remained poor, very dull and cool with more rain, so we did not

see any of the expected large Fritillaries. However, it was easy to see the good work of Chris and his volunteers again in managing the scrub on site to retain the bracken and violet-rich habitat essential for those butterflies. Then home for a final lunch and our departure.

I find it a challenge to sum up after so many highlights and firsts. We left envious of the beauty and variety available. A great collection of butterflies, including many of the ones rare in the UK. Orchids and many other wildflowers appeared everywhere we went. I was especially impressed by the number, and rich colour of Northern Marsh orchid, much deeper and more vivid than our Southern Marsh variety. We went to a number of places where very few other folk were encountered, most pleasantly surprising us given the popularity of the Lakes. I volunteer for both Kent Wildlife Trust and RSPB so I could well appreciate the work that Cumbria BC volunteers put in on behalf of the butterflies. Well done to them. Finally, the patience and kindness of our hosts must be emphasised. We invaded Chris and Claire's home all in a good cause but, nevertheless they provided us with great comfort and food with grace and generosity, as well as the grand tour of butterfly hotspots. Our warm thanks to them. Our appetite to revisit has been well and truly whetted, perhaps a little later in the year for those large Frits!

Rob and Brigid Insall

The Moths of Lancashire

A 3-year project to produce a definitive and full account of all moths in VC59 and VC60



Belted Beauty

Starting in Spring 2021, this project will culminate in a full colour hardback providing detailed information about every single moth species recorded in Lancashire from the mid-1800s to the modern day.

To help us improve upon and fine-tune the information we already have, 2021 and 2022 will be our final opportunity to carry

out as much recording and fieldwork as possible.

During this time, we hope to fill in as many coverage gaps as we can and try to re-find some of the species not seen for the past 20 years or more – have they really been lost or are they waiting out there for some lucky person to rediscover?

What can you do to help?

- 1) Record as many species as possible at your home trap site (or elsewhere, if at all possible) during the 2021 - 2022 seasons and submit the records to your County Moth Recorders.
- 2) Visit at least one under-recorded tetrad in your area during different parts of the 2021 season. Pick a different one to blitz in 2022. Details of where these are will be made available soon.
- 3) Using the on-line 10km Matrix and Tanyptera tetrad maps (see links below) see if it is possible to update any species not recorded since 1999 (blue squares) anywhere in the county.
- 4) Record any moths (small or large) wherever you are - on your daytime walks, shopping trips etc. Try rearing larvae or collecting leaf-mines.
- 5) Perhaps enlist family members and friends to look out for, and photograph, any moths they see. Ask any Lancashire based family or friends if you can run a light trap in their garden for a few times each year.

And it doesn't matter if the moths can't immediately be identified - photos can be posted on the Lancashire Moths Facebook group, passed on to your County Moth Recorder for help or submitted (with a guess at the identity) on iRecord (see below).

The most important thing is to **MAKE SURE TO SUBMIT YOUR RECORDS.**

Perhaps you run a moth trap on a few occasions a year or just enjoy recording daytime moths; each and every record really does matter and will be of great value to this project. So please send your records in – even if they are from many years ago. See information on the Lancashire Moths website <https://www.lancashiremoths.co.uk/> on how to submit records and what extra proof might be needed for some of the more difficult to identify species.

One method of submitting records that some



moth recorders find useful, particularly if you aren't recording large numbers, is to use iRecord <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>. These records are checked and verified on an occasional basis by Lancashire's team of County Moth Recorders. By using this website it helps you through the process of making sure you include all of the important information (the 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'who'). To really help the CMR team, do please attach a good photo of each new species whenever possible.

There will be lots more about this project in a biannual **Moths of Lancashire** project newsletter which will be made widely available.

Some useful Links

10km Matrix

Moth species per 10km square (*gives a good feel for where under-recorded areas are*)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2FEedTOVOz2M3IHTTFMTVZmRFE/view>

Tanyptera Tetrad Maps

The Tanyptera project Lancashire Moths tetrad maps (*enables distribution to be checked for all species*). Download from -
<https://www.northwestinvertebrates.org.uk/publications/atlases/>

Newsletter

A first 'Moths of Lancashire' newsletter will be made widely available during April. This will give more details about under-recorded areas, things to look for, species we need photographs of, and much more.



proud.

The book

Ben and I are planning on having this work finished by mid-2024 and we are really looking forward to hearing from everyone, to help make this a County Fauna which will be of great Conservation value, will be of interest and great use to many moth recorders both in and outside the county, and one of which we can be really

Steve Palmer and Ben Smart

Recent Observations on Northern Brown Argus,



A small colony of the Scottish artaxerxes form of the Northern Brown Argus exists just over the Cumbria / Northumbria border at Walltown Craggs Country Park on Hadrian's Wall, a male from 2020. The food plant Rock Rose is abundant on the Limestone strata of the Cumbrian North Pennine Chain, photo 2 from the 2020 AONB Botanical survey of Cumrew Fell 2021. We have not yet found artaxerxes on the Cumbrian North

Pennine Limestone but continue to search, it would be worth visitors taking a look too.

I also wonder whether Brown Argus is moving into South Cumbria and mingling with the Southern form of the artaxerxes there ? Photo 3 is a male with prominent marginal lunules seen at Whitescar Quarry on 10/7/2020.

As I understand it, the Taxonomy of these forms of Genus *Aricia* has been contentious both in Mainland Europe and Britain for decades. At one time the Scottish form of artaxerxes was considered a full and endemic species in it's own right. Also worth considering the current lack of agreement on the definition of " species " for all life forms and the wide spectrum of differing views.



Guy Broome

A Birder Who Loves Butterflies

I used to live in South Cumbria but now live in N. Wales and work as a warden on the RSPB reserve at Conwy Estuary. My passion is all things ornithological but recently I have also become very interested in butterflies and with the chance to visit butterfly sites in my beloved Cumbria who could resist! Having met Chris at Warton Crag in North Lancashire and then at the Conwy reserve I did not know that he would later 'con me' into writing this article on my recent travels!

Having already been successful in finding Marsh Fritillaries, Duke of Burgundies and Small Blues over several days in Cumbria around the end of May, I was very keen to make another trip up from North Wales in early July to try and see some of the fortunate to have a considerable amount of expertise to assist with identification and to provide an insight into the ecology of these species which was really useful and interesting. Other species seen on the walk included several Graylings up on the limestone pavement, a Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, a very worn and tatty looking Dingy Skipper, and a number of Common Blues.

I then headed up to the north of the county where I had arranged to meet up with a friend, and we spent the following day exploring some of the reserves along the Solway coast. We decided to head to RSPB Campfield Marsh reserve first, and despite the morning being rather overcast we managed to see several Large Heaths along the



boardwalk out on the moss, another species which I had hoped to see. As the day brightened up, the verges along the tracks came alive with many Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Small Tortoiseshells, and a few Large Skippers were also noted. In the afternoon we visited Glasson Moss where several more Large Heaths were flying and were a little easier to find now the sun was out.

Mountain Ringlet was the target species for the next day and once again the forecast for the Lakeland fells was not looking particularly promising. Buttermere looked like the best potential, and sure enough the mountains were at least out of cloud when we arrived. Fortunately the

weather continued to improve with some sunny breaks, and we started finding Mountain Ringlets close to the path between Honister quarry and Grey Knotts, with a total of 13 seen in this area. We were surprised to find another 6 individuals close to Grey Knotts summit on the north side. Several Small Heaths were also seen along the walk as well.

I spent the next few days back down in south Cumbria. With a good day of sunny weather I decided to firstly revisit the site where I'd joined the guided walk on the first day, and once again managed to find a good number of High Brown Fritillaries. I had some nice close views and got a better look at the underwings of several of them where I could clearly see the diagnostic rusty red circles which distinguish them from Dark Greens. I then headed over to Latterbarrow near Witherslack where the meadows were alive with insects and a good variety of butterfly species were present. With a little searching, I managed to find a total of four Northern Brown Argus which was the main

species I was hoping to see here. A couple of Dark Green Fritillaries, several Commas and Speckled Woods, and many Six-spot Burnet moths were also nice to see among large numbers of Meadow Browns, Small Skippers and Ringlets. Finally I made the short journey over to Meathop Moss where good numbers of Large Heaths were



present with 22 seen in total. These were the *davus* subspecies, different from the *polydama* subspecies seen on the Solway a couple of days earlier, being slightly darker with more prominent markings on the underside of the hindwings. The next couple of days were generally cloudy and not great for butterflies, but there were surprisingly quite a few things flying in Howe Ridding Wood near Whitbarrow with the highlight being some good close views of a couple of Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries.



Finally I decided to head slightly north-eastwards to visit Smardale Gill and Waitby Greenriggs near Kirkby Stephen. The flowers at Waitby were fantastic with hundreds of marsh helleborines and fragrant orchids in flower among many others, but butterflies were also numerous with many Ringlets and Meadow Browns, several Common Blues and both Small and Large Skippers. Many Chimney Sweeper moths were also present along with a few Six spot Burnets. There were a good variety of butterfly species at Smardale too including another five Northern Brown Argus which posed for some good views. Overall a highly enjoyable trip with a nice variety of butterfly species seen including four I'd not seen before.

Tim Wallis

Ed note: Chris tells me that Tim is a fantastic bird and now butterfly enthusiast and is planning more trips north in 2022 to see the Mountain Ringlet.

Answers to our Photographic Quiz

1. High Brown **FRITILLARY** butterfly
2. **HONEYSUCKLE** Moth
3. **PEACH** Blossom moth
4. Northern **SPINACH** moth
5. **LIME**-speck Pug moth
6. **SLOE** Carpet moth
7. **BULRUSH** Wainscot moth
8. **TURNIP** moth
9. **GERANIUM** Bronze butterfly
10. **JUNIPER** Webber moth
11. **OAK** Lutestring moth
12. **BEECH**-green Carpet moth
13. **HORSE CHESTNUT** moth
14. **SALLOW** kitten moth

Butterflies Getting Back on our Map (BOOM)



Greetings from the BOOM project team at the University of Cumbria and thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on our work to support the Duke of Burgundy and Small Blue populations along Morecambe Bay.

My name is Mic Mayhew and I work with Ellie Kent as a lottery funded BOOM project officer. We are fortunate to benefit from the expertise of Martin Wain, Chris Winnick, Dave Wainwright and others from Butterfly Conservation and work together to restore habitat for the Duke with plans to undertake translocations, create new colonies and expand the metapopulation structure.

Although Duke populations were historically much more widespread in south Cumbria, they are now restricted to the Rusland Valley, Whitbarrow NNR and a single small population in the Arnside and Silverdale AONB at Gait Barrows NNR. There is undoubtedly potential to restore many sites with historic records of Dukes but within the 4-year time frame of the BOOM project we have decided to try and maximise our impact by focusing on specific geographic areas.

In summary we are working on the Graythwaite Estate in Rusland with a donor population which we hope to use for a reintroduction to Ludderburn Park on the south-east side of Windermere, and on Whitbarrow NNR we are supporting populations for a translocation to a habitat network which extends from Gait Barrows NNR to Myers Allotment. That said Ellie and I recognise the risks associated with butterfly reintroductions and much of our work is focused on restoring habitat to reinforce existing Duke populations and encourage natural dispersal.

So, what have we been up to in 2021?

The year started with an interesting webinar which we delivered with colleagues from BC describing regional efforts to support the small blue and Duke of Burgundy. However as soon as Covid-19 restrictions eased, we rounded up our wonderful volunteers and were able to restart field work.

In March we arranged several cowslip (*Primula veris*) planting days at Gait Barrows NNR and Myers Allotment where almost 2,000 have been planted out and mapped in



collaboration with BC since the BOOM project started in September 2019. At Gait Barrows the cowslips have been planted strategically along open rides extending out from the current Duke stronghold to encourage natural dispersal around the site.

In April and early May Ellie and I conducted primrose and cowslip surveys to count larval food plants across all our priority sites, and from mid-May onwards we conducted once weekly timed counts of adult Dukes on Graythwaite Estate land and at Gait Barrows NNR. Timed counts were followed by feeding damage surveys in June and July as an indicator of breeding success.

In mid-May we installed a simple release cage on Graythwaite land for 12 overwintered pupae which we had harvested from the same site in June 2020 for a captive breeding pilot project. The release cage with the late-stage pupae was suspended from a tree branch to avoid terrestrial predators and the period of greatest emergence coincided

with the peak abundance of 'wild' adults in the last week of May. Of the 12 pupae, 9 (75%) emerged as adults and 3 perished.

Ellie and I have learnt a great deal this year and I think the fortunes for our Dukes have been mixed. With a maximum weekly count of 8 adults at Gait Barrows and 18 in Rusland, numbers were stable but substantially lower than the last exceptional year in 2019. At some sites such as Gait Barrows it seems unlikely that the population will recover without a reintroduction to increase levels of genetic variation. However, our surveys indicated that there was no surplus of eggs or first instar larvae to harvest for captive breeding and reintroduction at any of our donor sites this year.



We are grateful to Yasmin AliEskandari, a student on the conservation programme at the University of Cumbria, who is studying the genetic differences between the main Duke populations along Morecambe Bay for her dissertation project. Her work will support our reintroduction efforts and we look forward to reporting her findings in due course.

I think there is also plenty of good news and we were heartened to see that as a result of much hard work by BC, BOOM and others, some sites such as Myers Allotment and Gait Barrows now have abundant foodplants and large areas of suitable tussocky mid-successional habitat. Furthermore, larval foodplant survival appears to have been better this year so let's keep all fingers and toes crossed for Duke populations in 2022.

Now over to Ellie for an update on the Small Blue butterfly project as part of BOOM.

BOOM project activities surrounding the Small Blue butterfly are slowly beginning to wind down after a very busy season on the Barrow Slag Banks. There is, currently, a really healthy population of Small Blue residing on the post-industrial slag heaps of Barrow after a translocation to the site in 2015. The nutrient poor limestone slag provides wonderful growing conditions for their one and only larval food plant, kidney vetch, which is a poor competitor and often gets shaded out in more nutrient rich areas. The slag banks has an unusual topography of steep sided slopes and unpredictable mounds of rock which provide pockets of warm air and shelter from prevailing coastal



winds. These slopes alongside a wealth of nectar filled plants, such as bird's-foot trefoil and wild strawberry, abundant kidney vetch and tall grasses upon which the butterflies like to roost, provide the perfect habitat for a large population. Therefore, the slag banks has unsurprisingly been selected as a

donor population site for our Small Blue project and as part BOOM we hope to support the population there through habitat management works, continuous monitoring and kidney vetch planting before conducting a translocation into new sites within the area in the final year of the project.

This spring we kicked things off with a mark and recapture training day provided by Dave Wainwright from Butterfly Conservation. This involved a group of keen students and volunteers being taught the skills necessary to capture Small Blue butterflies and carefully mark them with a particular code of dots which makes each butterfly uniquely identifiable. Not only is this the most accurate method of establishing population estimates but it also provides us with data on the life expectancy and dispersal of the Small Blue. Early analysis of the data (thorough analysis is ongoing) tells us that in fact, there is an extremely stable and large population, with adults living up to 2 weeks, much longer than previously estimated. With this being the first mark and recapture study of the Small Blue that we are aware of, we hope that all evidence we gather will support and contribute to future Small Blue butterfly conservation projects.

With the slag banks being a popular donor location for Small Blue translocation, it is important, that as practitioners, we understand any fluctuation in population size as a result of the removal of adults. By continuing the mark and recapture study in future years we will be able document any fluctuation and hopefully provide evidence of the most sustainable method of translocation, i.e. the maximum number of butterflies that can be removed without causing a population decline.

Kidney vetch is essential for Small Blue butterfly survival. As development of infrastructure continues to increase on brownfield sites and post-industrial areas (where kidney vetch tends to thrive), the available habitat for the Small Blue to



naturally recolonise becomes fragmented, leaving just a few remaining patches on sand dunes and coastal calcareous grassland which are often too isolated for the butterflies to find of their own accord.

With help from Butterfly Conservation and the RSPB we have found sites that are considered appropriate habitat for the Small Blue

and we are focussing our efforts on improving the habitat at these sites in preparation. The main recipient site chosen is Hodbarrow Nature Reserve in Millom. We have already had many volunteer work parties out planting kidney vetch plugs and sowing seed and after the creation of scrapes (areas of bare earth for seed germination) and bunds (little mounds of earth that provide shelter) we are well on the way to seeing translocation to this site in a couple of years' time.

As Mic has quite rightly mentioned, the BOOM project has developed some wonderful connections with Butterfly Conservation, local naturalists and conservation groups across Cumbria. Without these partners and the amazing help from volunteers many of our aims and achievements would not have been possible.

Mic Mayhew and Ellie Kent

Brown Hairstreaks at Coldwell Parrock and Gait Barrows nature reserves near Arnside

Inspired by Tom Dunbar's outdoor teaching sessions, Sue and Paul Brindle and myself decided to search for Brown Hairstreak eggs in September 2020, as that is when we were allowed to be outside in the fresh air in our local area. We began searching Blackthorn bushes along the pathways at Gait Barrows NNR, and



have since searched in other areas on the reserve.

Encouraged by actually finding some, we marked them with small pieces of range binder twine, so we could relocate them and follow through their progress. We also visited the Blackthorn bushes and hedgerow on nearby Coldwell Parrock Landscape Trust reserve with greater success. At Gait Barrows we found a total of 16 eggs and 23 at Coldwell Parrock.

In March 2021 we re-visited the sites to check whether the eggs were still present and whether they had hatched. Finding the marked places proved more difficult than in the autumn as the bushes had sprung into growth. In the large, mature hedge bordering one of the meadow areas at the south end of Gait Barrows, I was able to find 5 of the previously marked 7 eggs, although two locations could not be relocated. At Coldwell Parrock, we found 15 out of the previously marked 23 eggs. Searching on a sunny day was not ideal though as the dappled light made spotting tiny eggs difficult. We consider this to be a reasonable survival rate.

Since March we have occasionally visited the marked places and noticed that some eggs



have hatched (**photos**). We have not yet searched for larvae, which are very small and green initially then turning brown in their fourth instar, and will be even more difficult to spot. However, we do intend to be out again from August onwards hoping to see Brown Hairstreaks flying!

This has not been a carefully planned scientific project, but we may continue from late autumn 2021 taking more care with marking places to enable more regular observations.

Both sites are managed with regular ride and path maintenance at Gait Barrows, and grazing at Coldwell Parrock. It is possible that some of our marker strings have disappeared by being cut back, removed or nibbled by grazing animals.

Brown Hairstreaks prefer to lay their eggs on younger, lower Blackthorn bushes according to the literature, but we have also found eggs at head-height of 2m, so it is important to have all stages of Blackthorn succession present, so the butterflies can choose where to lay their eggs.

Lynne Farrell

Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*)

The amount of habitat creation and restoration work we have done in Workington and Maryport in the last two years has been fantastic and has been planned to act as stepping-stone nectaring sites/ connectivity corridors between those traditional core breeding areas in both towns. Those we have created are indeed nectaring sites for a



wide range of pollinating insects many of which are in serious decline, such as bees and butterflies. The manner and places we have created them however has been carefully planned so that most will enlarge extant areas of habitat and hopefully long term establish as core breeding sites as well. I say long term because we can't rush nature – we can give it a helping hand and that is what we have done.

All that work was done thanks to not only Butterfly Conservation Cumbria but also to the Workington Nature Partnership and volunteers and also with immense help financially from the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Get Cumbria Buzzing Project (GCB). Working with others like that is so important when we are all pulling in the same direction.

IT'S NOT ALL PLAIN SAILING THOUGH.

There looks to be no end to the threats faced by the Small Blue in West Cumbria which has for many decades made its home there. It most likely arrived there with raw materials as part of the expanding iron and steel making industries over 100 years ago and is therefore very much part of our industrial heritage. There were four major iron and steelworks manufacturing sites covering West Cumbria and the Furness area and it is no coincidence that is where their preferred breeding habitat is to this day. The problem is that it is almost all what we call 'brownfield' habitat and as such it is regularly under re-development pressure.

Having survived a major threat to two of our better breeding sites in Workington in 2021 by being constructive and decisive in our action those two sites were avoided and the plans were diverted away from those sites. It is perfectly clear that but for the diligence of Butterfly Conservation Cumbria those sites would have gone the same way as others have done over the last few decades and hastened the local extinction of the

species. If B.C. Cumbria did not oppose these things and encourage others to do so – then who else would?

The latest threat being objected to by B.C. Cumbria right now is not so much a Small Blue breeding site (though it does still breed there as well) but it plans to destroy another huge section of an urban wildlife connectivity corridor about a mile long in its total length and which is more than 100 years old and used by a wide variety of wildlife species and not just butterflies. The planning authority of course have to balance the needs and value of wildlife with the needs and value of humans and in that respect we can only hope they do regard that 'corridor' very much as part of our local heritage and agree that yet another fast-food outlet (at least the fifth one on that stretch of road) among other things is not more important.

THE 2021 FLIGHT SEASON.

Despite all the aggro this tiny butterfly has to put up with and its loss of habitat, where it has appeared in what is left of its various satellite colonies it has actually done quite well in 2021. Much lower numbers than what we used to record, that is for sure but whilst that is somewhat comforting we must at the same time realise that will not continue indefinitely if core breeding sites are lost and 'connectivity corridors' which connect sites are also lost thus cutting off vital genetic breeding strength between one breeding colony and another. That is not rocket science it is commonsense of the sort we have already experienced in Cumbria (e.g. Marsh Fritillary extinction in 2004 before our nationally acclaimed reintroduction project). In my opinion the Small Blue might well also end up at the point of no return if all we are left with are isolated satellite colonies.

SEED RE-CYCLING

In my comments above I heaped deserved praise on the Workington Nature Partnership (WNP) and Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT). The latter through the GCB Project have provided the finance to not only do the groundwork preparation but also to purchase the wildflower seed necessary to seed all the newly created and restored



habitat. The WNP (and me) got out there and spread that seed a year and more ago. This year there was simply a riot of colour in those wildflower patches which number between 60 and 70. More than that we were all out there at the start of August this year collecting seed to re-cycle on other sites which needed it and of course as we did so we also helped much of that seed to fall on site at the time in the places we wanted

it – a double success but one which was very much part of our strategy. The public who saw and spoke along the way were massively supportive with only one person thinking it was a waste of time. I can honestly say I had at least one Small Blue on every new patch in one well established area along with several other species – and they never used to be there! We can't rush nature but we can give it a helping hand and we might persuade others to do the same and that is what we are doing.

BC Cumbria along with our friends in the Workington Nature Partnership will do our best to conserve and protect this tiny little butterfly with others such as Cumbria Wildlife Trust but we must strengthen what we already have and that very much hinges on challenging those who seek to do otherwise. Yes, there is a case for expanding its range if we can BUT our priority is to conserve and strengthen what we already have in what is the traditional and heritage heartland of the Small Blue butterfly.

Steve Doyle

The Lapsed Lepidopterist reports a lapse in lepidoptera'

Dateline: 21.08.21. Moth trap at Beech Cottage. 39 specimens, 17 species. Alright, towards the end of August, temperatures can dip at night and this might not seem a terribly poor catch looking through past records – but with a minimum temp of 14 degrees, I had hoped for better.

The year started slowly with the greetings from the Earlies – Grey and Thorn along with the usual mix of Characters, Quakers, and moths March, all in pairs or singletons. The sunny days meant chilly nights latterly, but gave cause for my heart to leap as a harbinger of spring, not seen before this far north, brightened our garden with it's butter yellow reflection – a male Brimstone (my Mum's favourite) dallied on an early



primula. After a sighting in the village last year by a friend and two more reported after my garden visitor, a northern push may be on for this beauty, following in the footsteps of the Comma, one of which I saw in Keswick the day before. So, my tail was up and things looked good. Indeed early butterflies

were to enjoy a spell of warm weather as were we – only spoiled by my slight guilt for city dwellers as we took advantage of the empty roads and fells of lockdown 1. Never again will my daughter be able to dance and cartwheel down the middle of the A66! The warm days meant cold nights however and cold they were! April produced a frost nearly every night. That started the poorest year for moth recording I have had in my decade of Cumbrian trapping. Two attempts in April resulted in 3 and 6 moths. May wasn't much better: a stunning 3 moths (!) turned up at Dubwath to excite people on a dawn chorus walk on the 22nd; the top result for the month was 14 moths, and that was on a double figure temperature night on the 31st. How this will affect next year's early species we will see, but my scant knowledge of the facts of life (though I do have a daughter!), tells me that no flying equals no mating equals no offspring, and those that did manage a night of passion then found no leaves or frosted buds to offer their youngsters. Certainly this last spring some bird families suffered through lack of larval nourishment.

The last three months have not produced anything out of the usual at all. Work (yes,



there has been some!), weather conditions and my increasing unwillingness to turn out at dawn to prevent a bird from devouring a Larger Yellow Underwing (top score of 33!), has meant I have not been out and about quite so much. The best catch was on 14th July at the other Braithwaite garden with 247 of 72 species recorded including Saxon; and 343 of 56 species turned up at a garden under Latrigg just outside Keswick on the 31st, with a Square-spotted Clay and a Red Carpet amongst them - a better show for Keswick Naturalist Club guests than the May dawn chorusers! The

only other specimen of note has been a Garden Dart, a first for Beech Cottage that turned up three nights ago. A formerly abundant species that is on the decrease. So there were we are. From this enclave of the county, not an encouraging year. In fact, I've become so depressed I've even started to look at micros!

Peter Macqueen

High Browns and high hills.....My “Bike for Butterflies” through Lancashire and Cumbria

A week after getting home from John o’Groats my legs were still hurting: 1,200-miles in 30 days on a bike had taken its toll.

I set off from Land’s End on 22nd June and reached Manchester on the 4th of July in the teeming rain (sorry, Manchester). My route then was via Whalley, the Forest of Bowland (429m at the Cross o’ Greet), Silverdale, Kendal, Penrith, and Carlisle. This took me through stunning landscapes, and I experienced every type of English summer weather: sun, drizzle, torrential rain, and wind - always a head wind of course. At least it wasn’t cold!



I detoured to take in the best wildlife sites, and I was given superb support and hospitality by both Lancs and Cumbria Branches, especially Jane Jones and Chris Winnick who kindly put me up - and up with me.



In Accrington, I met Gemma McMullan and Chris Atherton at Milnshaw Park wildflower meadow. I was enormously impressed by what they’d achieved since starting the project in 2018 - already 18 species of butterfly present. The meadows were flowering gloriously, and the sun came out enough for us to see some butterflies. This is an inspiration, an example of what could be done in any urban park up and down the country.

The next day took me to the Bell Sykes Farm Coronation Meadow in Slaidburn in the Forest of Bowland. Rain kept most of the butterflies away, but it was great to see these wildflower meadows being cared for and extended.

I was at Myers Allotment to celebrate its 10th anniversary as a BC reserve (see page xx), and managed to cycle up to Holme Stinted Pastures, where I was able to see a few High Brown Fritillaries, thanks to Martin Wain.

Next day, I played truant with Chris Winnick for a tour of some wonderful sites around Whitbarrow by car. I was able to see Northern Brown Argus, Grayling and Large Heath. In fact, this was the only place I saw Large Heath on the whole trip.

As I left Kendal, I took Chris's advice and popped-in to Sainsbury's, and picked up a few White-letter Hairstreaks doing their stuff at the top of the elms in the car park. It was then a long haul up to the top of Shap Fell (426m), but I was rewarded by a lovely wildflower bank on the way into Carlisle that was teeming with Small Tortoiseshells.



With support from hundreds of people, fundraising has more than doubled the original target. We've raised well over £30,000 - and we're not finished yet!

It was a great adventure, and I will always remember the passionate, generous and big-hearted people that I met on the way. They helped me when times were tough, were endlessly hospitable, and gave freely of their time and knowledge. It's people

like this who make Butterfly Conservation special, and who really make a difference for wildlife. My thanks to you all!

You can see more details on www.bikeforbutterflies.org.

Simon Saville

EYED HAWK MOTH 'STEALS THE SHOW'

Have you ever walked on Ormsgill Slag Banks to see the wonderful array of butterflies to be found there? Just off the A590 road into Barrow [if you get to Asda you have passed the entrance] you pass two huge ex-steel works slag heaps: the one to the left is landscaped and grassed but the one to the right might look 'ugly' but is home to superb populations of Dingy Skipper, Common Blue and the very special and localised Small Blue. This is at present the only major Cumbrian site for Small blue outside the NW coast.

It was the venue for a guided walk lead by Helen Wallis on a dull and damp 3rd June when despite the weather 33 SB and 10 CB were spotted by the 8 who attended..... however, our butterfly sightings were upstaged by the splendid appearance of an Eyed Hawk moth. Sitting in the grass with forewings folded down over its hindwings it looked like a large slightly dull moth that wanted to be left undisturbed until the weather



improved. And to be almost embarrassingly honest we did not really know what it was until someone 'poked it' and then what a delight as it lifted its forewings to reveal a pair of stunning blue, white and black eye spots on a pink background; designed to be 'flashed' to scare off would be

predators. We stared at the moth and it appeared to stare straight back!

The Eyed Hawk moth is not rare in Cumbria but it is still not often spotted at close quarters in this way.....the experience was the highlight of the day. The Small Blue and the Common blue are still a delight [you really do need to go and see them on this special site] but on this dull day the Eyed Hawk moth really did 'steal the show'!

Text Chris Winnick and photo Lynne Farrell

Ed. Note. The best time to see CB and SB flying together on this site is the last 10 days of May and the first 10 days of June.

Update Snippets from the Green Recovery Project

The Green Recovery of Morecambe Bay Woodlands Project team have made a tremendous start to this exciting project. Too much has been achieved to include all the details here, but see below for a flavour;

We were able to complete management at the following 7 sites:-

- Holme Stinted Pasture, 2 rides, and scrub management across 0.5 Ha to create and restore habitat for High Brown Fritillary butterflies.
- Burntbarrow, 0.25Ha coppice coup cut for butterflies.
- Upper Gillbirks SSSI, Approx. 0.3 Ha of open mosaic woodland created for butterflies including High Brown Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy.
- Wakebarrow SSSI, approx. 0.25 Ha of sunny open early successional woodland clearing habitat created for High Brown Fritillary and Pearl-bordered Fritillary.
- Marble Quarry SSSI, approx 0.3 Ha of woodland scrub cleared to link up 2.5 Ha of mosaic open limestone habitat for a range of butterflies and wildflowers
- Hutton Roof SSSI, approx. 0.25Ha coppice cut, and 0.3 Ha of limestone pavement cleared of scrub to create open mosaic habitat.
- Howe Riding SSSI, 0.5 Ha of coppice cut

In addition , we have also used these sites extensively for community engagement, training young people, education links, research and monitoring species.

Woodbanks

We are using Woodbanks as a delivery mechanism to initiate and develop sustainable woodland community groups at several sites.



A member of Dalton woodbank cycling home with his well earned wood.

- Dalton Crag – one of our woodland management delivery sites, we have run 4 Woodbank events and have established a group of about 18 people who attend meetings. We have terrific support from the landowner, Forestry Commission, and we recently agreed to further develop this group with 4 additional work sites on Dalton Crag.
- Roudsea – we developed a

new project with Natural England to create a Woodbank at this National Nature Reserve site.

- Witherslack Woods – we remain confident that there is community interest in a project here, and we are organising an event in August/September at this site to promote the development of a Woodbank .

Events

Alongside our well-being events, we have also offered a number of public engagement events, including workshops in butterfly and moth identification, guided walks and moths and meadows family events. These have been very well received.



A group from The Lighthouse bagging up charcoal they'd learnt how to make.

Young people from ACE planting primrose seeds to be planted out on site as plug plants.



Eve Grayson and Martin Wain

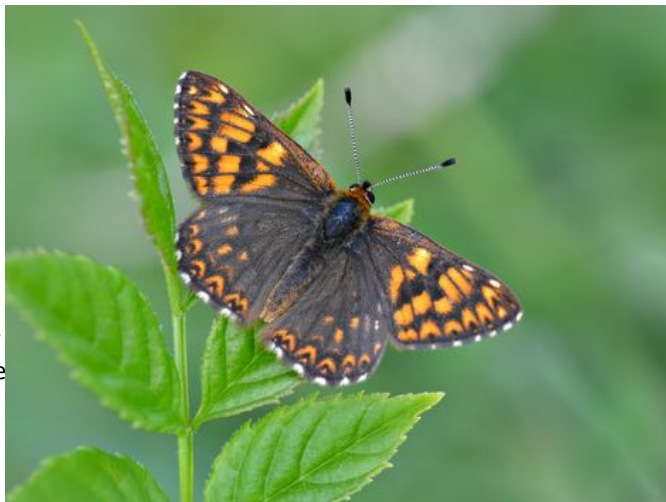


Haverigg Prison learning how to use a two man saw at Burntbarrow

The Duke of Burgundy Butterfly in North Yorkshire

The 'Duke of Burgundy' *Hamearis Lucina* which is one of England's rarest butterflies can be found on the southern edge of the North York Moors.

This very small butterfly can be found from late April to early June in sheltered clearings where its foodplant either cowslip or primrose is present. The males boldly hold territories waiting for female butterflies to mate. The lighter coloured females are less conspicuous searching for primula plants on which



they lay small numbers of creamy white eggs. These hatch in about two weeks and the caterpillars feed at night on the primula leaves creating typical 'shot holes' on the leaves (see below). The caterpillars pupate after a few weeks in tussocky grassland litter and overwinter as pupae before emerging as adults the next spring.

The Duke of Burgundy was historically a butterfly of coppiced woodland where it would occupy new coppice clearings with primroses, moving on to fresh clearings as each site become overgrown. The decline in coppicing in the twentieth century threatened the survival of the species but at the same time many of the chalk and limestone grasslands traditionally used for sheep rearing were ploughed up to grow cereal crops. The butterfly moved to colonise scrubby hillsides with cowslips which were too steep to plough. The English strongholds of this butterfly are the chalk downlands of southern England but it can also be found on the limestones of Cumbria/Morecambe Bay and on the Jurassic limestone 'Tabular Hills' on the southern edge of the North York Moors. These extend for over thirty miles from Sutton Bank in the west to Scarborough in the east but most historic Duke of Burgundy records come from two limited areas-one north of Pickering/Thornton Dale and the other north of Helmsley where the butterfly can still be found. These areas have deep valley systems and have been less damaged by intensive farming and forestry than the rest of the Tabular Hills.

The Duke of Burgundy butterfly appeared to be limited to two or three remaining sites in the Helmsley area by about 1992 but intensive survey work coordinated by Butterfly Conservation between 1992 and 1999 identified fourteen new colonies on unimproved limestone grassland habitat north of Helmsley-North Yorkshire then had about 10% of the remaining national colonies of this rapidly declining butterfly.

The sites near Helmsley were on ungrazed limestone grassland which is subject to succession to hawthorn and hazel scrub and ash woodland. These sites have been subject to a programme of intensive management by volunteer work groups and contractors and a programme of annual monitoring of butterfly numbers on all sites.



Despite this input the butterfly went into a period of decline from 2000 onwards with several sites becoming extinct. The butterfly was only recorded in six locations in the Helmsley area in 2017 but fortunately there is evidence of recovery since then; it was recorded at fourteen locations in 2018 including one extinct site. No doubt the hot weather in 2018 and 2019 will have helped and we hope this trend will continue. Fortunately, numbers on the four largest sites in Helmsley have increased since 2000 with peak counts of over 100 butterflies on one site in 2019 and another in 2020 (the highest ever records for this species in Yorkshire).

The butterfly was recorded historically in a number of locations in the Pickering /Thornton Dale area including Gundale, Newtondale and on Ellerburn Bank YWT reserve but by 1995 it was only being recorded on one rapidly growing conifer plantation in Newtondale. The butterfly appears to have survived in this area by colonizing areas of recently planted forestry and moving on as the area gets shaded out by growing trees (similar to the coppice cycle described above). The butterfly was found again in a nearby area of newly planted deciduous plantation in 2011 and Butterfly Conservation was able to get permission from the landowner-the Duchy of Lancaster-to establish a clearing and have since managed to create larger areas of new habitat by widening rides and creating new areas of coppice which have been colonised by the butterfly. Butterfly Conservation has therefore been successful in managing to maintain and develop a small number of interlinked Duke of Burgundy colonies in lower Newtondale. In 2019 single butterflies were found on two former sites up to three miles away and there is evidence from the 2020 recording programme that one of these sites is in a process of re-colonisation.



Underside of Primula Leaf showing Duke of Burgundy eggs, a recently emerged caterpillar and typical 'shot hole' leaf damage.

Unfortunately, modern farming and forestry practices do not provide suitable habitat for this delightful butterfly. Its survival in North Yorkshire appears to be largely dependent on the careful management of the sites where it is now found. Butterfly Conservation doesn't publicise the location of sites most of which are on private land in order to maintain the cooperation of key landowners.

Robert Parks

Photographic Quiz – Vegetative Lepidoptera!(cont)





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