

Butterfly Conservation Cumbria Branch



Butterfly
Conservation

Autumn Newsletter 2023 No 47

How do these Butterflies overwinter?

Here are some common butterflies found in Cumbria. Identify them and decide, do they overwinter as **Adults**, **Pupa**, **Egg** or **Larva**?

Answers on p10



MESSAGE FROM OUR BRANCH CHAIR.....

Welcome to our Autumn 2023 newsletter.... our 47th issue since the branch was founded in 2000.

My prediction in the last issue that this could be a 'great Summer' for butterflies and moths did not quite happen! Winter was far too long and Spring had hardly happened when we moved into six weeks of an excessively hot and dry May and June. With the Mediterranean on our 'doorstep', grass turned brown and many plants that lacked shade became desiccated. Rock Rose, the food plant of Northern Brown Argus, crunched to a powder under foot and exposed Cowslips hosting eggs and young caterpillars of the Duke of Burgundy died back to ground level.

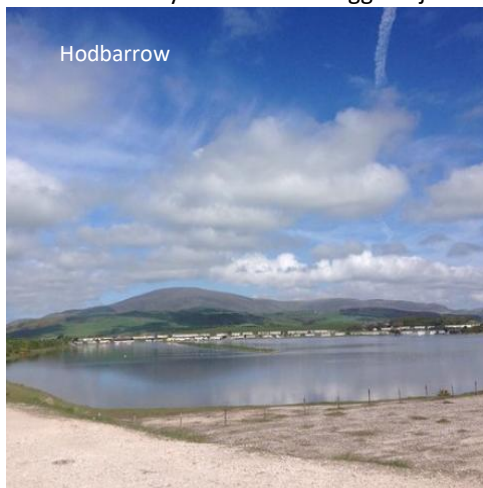
Spring and early summer species suffered the most with emergence often 'out of sync' with their needs. Spring emergence was often late [I did not see a Speckled Wood until early May] but during the heat-wave emergence speeded up so much that Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries emerged by the middle of June.... albeit in low numbers. Apart from 'odd days' of warm sun the rest of summer felt more like Autumn with weather frequently changing from sun to rain within minutes.....temperatures rarely reached above 20oC with late emerging species now appearing as if all the 'slowing down and speeding up' had never happened.

Despite weather issues suppressing butterfly numbers in 2023 some species found a way to do well. Most notable was the Holly Blue which had a brilliant year across the UK. Brimstones have also done well as have Small Blue on Barrow Slag Banks and Marsh Fritillary on most of their 30 plus sites. Most grass feeding members of the 'Brown' family have also held their own, most notably Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper, and Small Skipper and Ringlet continued their spread across Cumbria.... but in slightly less dramatic fashion. Red Admirals showed up well, Comma a little less well, with widespread reports of late Small Copper and Wall. Peacocks briefly flattered to deceive.

As our climate becomes more unstable, more extreme and less predictable we are likely to have far more 'losers' than 'winners'.



Sadly, it is our rare habitat specialist butterflies and moths that are least able to adapt to the 'new normal'. There is good news too! The 'Back on our Map' [BOOM] project, supported by BC and the RSPB, led on a successful translocation of Small Blue from Barrow to RSPB Hodbarrow. Sixty newly emerged adults were taken from the donor site and released the same day in an area of Hodbarrow close to the bird hide over-looking the Tern colony; an area with well-established Kidney Vetch.... the exclusive foodplant of SB. We know they bred and laid eggs as just two months later a second



generation emerged at both Barrow and at Hodbarrow. In Cumbria we only have a limited second generation perhaps once in 3-4 years so to see good numbers flying at Hodbarrow so soon after being released was a particular delight and credit to our friends in the BOOM project.

Another success to report [see the article by Steve Doyle elsewhere in this issue] is that Marsh Fritillaries continue to self-colonise. Overall, the

picture is mixed with some sites doing better than others but the way they have continued to spread is remarkable and exciting. We now know that there is much more Devils Bit Scabious -rich habitat (needed for 'steppingstone' colonisation) than we realised, and that females, once having laid their first batch of eggs, are surprisingly mobile. Also, we did not realise that MF are quite capable of travelling over land up to at least 400m in altitude. Given this, it is clear that if the habitat and food plant are right, they are likely to continue to spread through more of the Solway Plain, along Borrowdale to Buttermere and Crummock Water and in the Swindale and Wet Sleddale areas south of Hawswater. Our friends at RSPB Swindale are delighted to have the nationally rare MF on their site to add to their good populations of Dark Green and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

We are especially fortunate in Cumbria to be able to work with so many brilliant environmental organisations. The RSPB are not just helping MF and SB but once again they helped us at our very successful Members Day and AGM held at RSPB Leighton Moss in July. [See later in this issue]. Equally the CWT continue to do outstanding work on many of their excellent nature reserves specifically for butterflies and moths.... notably at Howe Ridding

Wood for Pearl-bordered and High Brown Fritillaries, at Barkbooth for Small Pearl-bordered and High Brown Fritillaries, at Latterbarrow for Small Pearl-bordered and Silver-washed Fritillaries, at Smardale for Scotch Argus and at Eycott Hill for the recently self-colonised Marsh Fritillary. We are also very fortunate to have butterfly friendly conservation at Arnside Knott, Holme Park Fell, Brigsteer Woods and at Flash Bank by conservation teams from the National Trust. With so many wonderful conservation bodies all working across the 'landscape-scale' areas of Cumbria and Morecambe Bay there is hope that together we can make a real difference.



There have been some changes to our branch committee. David Eastlick has been multi-tasking for many years and after outstanding service to Cumbria for over 15 years will step back from certain responsibilities. He has not retired and will remain branch treasurer and, along with Mark Eastlick, will remain involved with our branch website and sightings page. He will, however, pass on his duties as Health and Safety Officer, Tools and Equipment Manager and part-time Secretary. 'Thank you' David for the truly outstanding contributions you have made to over 600 Cumbria BC members and to millions of butterflies and moths! Rose Thompson is our new Membership Secretary and Steve Malpass, another new committee member, will take over some of the health and safety responsibilities along with Martin Chadwick. John Woodhead, an experienced transect walker, has also kindly agreed to join our committee. We welcome our new committee members but still ask that you consider joining as we have a variety of vacancies and need your support. Please contact Chris for more details. You will find our new work party programme detailed in this newsletter. For further details please also see our website or contact Chris. Conservation work parties really do make a difference.... they are also enjoyable and rewarding so even if you have no experience do come along and find out more. One of the challenges set by Butterfly Conservations strategy is to work on a landscape scale to improve habitat for our most threatened species.....Cumbria is home to some of the UK's most threatened species and this conservation work is now more important than ever. Another part of our strategy is to create an extra 100,000 wild spaces from gardens to

patios to window boxes. Please see the article in this newsletter to help you choose the right food plants for caterpillars and nectar sources for adults. With this issue we have caught up with a small backlog of articles..... now we need your articles for our Spring edition. To get a feel for the wide variety we seek look at back issues of our newsletter on our Cumbria Branch website. Please let Chris or Karen have your articles well before the end of February 2024.

Best wishes without predictions.... I will leave that to the politicians!

Chris Winnick

Cumbria Branch Work Parties 2023/2024

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 branch website

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/events> for further details or contact Chris Winnick, chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk.

Meet at 10:00 at the parking places defined by the grid reference.

Wednesday 6 September 2023 Witherslack Woods, Witherslack

Ride maintenance, clearing and stacking

Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4371

8597 **Contact:** Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk

Sunday 10 September 2023 Halecat, Witherslack

Ride maintenance, clearing and stacking

Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4336

8364 **Contact:** Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk

Wednesday 20 September 2023 Kendal Fell, Kendal

Scrub removal and preparation of habitat prior to planting Cowslip and Primrose plants

This work party may have to be moved to a later date and a substitute inserted for this date. The change will be published on the website.

Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 5099 9263

Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk

Wednesday 4 October 2023 Broad Syke, Graythwaite

Scrub removal and preparation of habitat

This work party may have to be moved to a later date and a substitute inserted for this date. The change will be published on the website.

Directions: for full directions please see website.

<p>Grid reference SD 36569087</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Sunday</u> 8 October 2023 Holme Stinted Pasture, Burton-in-Kendal</p> <p>Cutting, clearing and stacking/burning scrub</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website. Entry gate grid reference SD 54516 78401</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Wednesday</u> 18 October 2023 Kendal Fell, Kendal</p> <p>Planting cowslip and primrose plants</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 5099 9263</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Wednesday</u> 1 November 2023 Upper Gillbirks, Whitbarrow</p> <p>Scrub removal and preparation of habitat for planting cowslip.</p> <p>This work party may have to be moved to a later date and a substitute inserted for this date. The change will be published on the website.</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4627 8671</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Sunday</u> 12 November 2023 Holme Stinted Pasture, Burton-in-Kendal</p> <p>Cutting, clearing and stacking/burning scrub</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website. Entry gate grid reference SD 54516 78401</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Wednesday</u> 15 November 2023 Upper Gillbirks, Whitbarrow</p> <p>Scrub removal and preparation of habitat for planting cowslip.</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4627 8671</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Wednesday</u> 29 November 2023 Township Plantation, Whitbarrow</p> <p>Ride maintenance, clearing and stacking</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4538 8841</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Sunday</u> 10 December 2023 Holme Stinted Pasture, Burton-in-Kendal</p> <p>Cutting, clearing and stacking/burning scrub</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website. Entry gate grid reference SD 54516 78401</p> <p>Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Wednesday</u> 13 December 2023 Reserve Day, tbc</p> <p>Reserve-day for earlier weather-affected work parties</p> <p>Directions: for full directions please see website.</p>

Grid reference tbc Contact: Chris Winnick 015397 28254
<u>Wednesday 3 January 2024</u> Farrer's Allotment/Wakebarrow, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance and scallop making, cutting and stacking Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4627 8671 Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Sunday 14 January 2024</u> Farrer's Allotment, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance and scallop making, cutting and stacking Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4627 8671 Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Wednesday 17 January 2024</u> Township Plantation, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance, clearing and stacking Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4538 8841 Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Wednesday 31 January 2024</u> Farrer's Allotment/Wakebarrow, Whitbarrow Ride maintenance and scallop making, cutting and stacking Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4627 8671 Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Sunday 11 February 2024</u> Wart Barrow, Allithwaite Ride clearing, cutting and burning Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 3876 7675 Contact: Martin Chadwick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Wednesday 14 February 2024</u> Hampsfield Allotment Scrub maintenance, cutting and stacking scrub Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4044 8039 Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Wednesday 28 February 2024</u> Barker Scar, Holker Scrub maintenance, cutting and burning scrub Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 33747833 Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Wednesday 10 March 2024</u> Wart Barrow, Allithwaite Ride clearing, cutting and burning Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 3876 7675 Contact: Martin Chadwick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk
<u>Wednesday 13 March 2024</u> Upper Gillbirks, Whitbarrow Continuation of habitat preparation and planting cowslip. Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference SD 4627 8671 Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk

Wednesday 27 March 2024 Reserve Day, tbc

Reserve-day for earlier weather-affected work parties

Directions: for full directions please see website. Grid reference tbc

Contact: Chris Winnick chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk

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, waterproofs and suitable footwear. Tools and gloves are provided 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.

IN SEARCH OF THE HIGH BROWN FRITILLARY

This beautiful fritillary once bred over large areas in Southern England, in the South-West of England, Wales and Northern England. Then a rapid decline occurred from the 1950's which has resulted in the butterfly currently becoming the most endangered UK butterfly. It now only exists in small colonies confined to the southern edge of Dartmoor, a few remote Exmoor valleys, a specific location in south Wales and amongst the limestone fells of the Lake District.



It is worth remembering that the High Brown Fritillary was once far more common than its cousin the Dark Green Fritillary but now the reverse is true. At many sites, both species fly together,

so I will take this opportunity to briefly mention the distinguishing features that separate these remarkably similar butterflies. Identification can be tricky unless you see the underside. The High Brown Fritillary has brownish

crescents around the outer silver patches on the underside of the hindwing, hence its name, but the best field mark is the adjacent reddish brown ringed silver spots. The Dark Green Fritillary has no such markings. Things become even more complicated when viewing the upper wing. The third spot on the upper forewing on the High Brown Fritillary is slightly indented. There are also slight differences in the wing shape, colouration, and markings. I will not go into further detail in this article except to say the High Brown Fritillary is a fast powerful flier and hard to approach except perhaps when nectaring on flowers.



High Brown Fritillary

Unlike the Dark Green Fritillary, the High Brown Fritillary is a very fussy creature. It has very specific habitat requirements that can be met in two slightly contrasting conditions: first, it frequents limestone grasslands where bracken is able to suppress patches of grass sufficiently to encourage growth of dog violet. Second, it can

flourish in freshly coppiced woodland where flushes of violet appear between a mosaic of bare earth, moss, and litter from dead vegetation. In the former, it requires a mosaic of moderate bracken cover with limited grassy patches and scrub situated in dry, warm, sheltered areas with abundant caterpillar food plant, the Common Dog Violet (*Viola riviniana*). Dead Bracken is also vitally important,

creating warm microclimates which help the caterpillars develop. Bracken fronds act like a woodland canopy capable of slowing grass growth and so encouraging violets that would otherwise be out-competed. Temperatures in these microhabitats can be up to 20°C higher than surrounding grassy vegetation, allowing the caterpillar to develop quickly in cool spring weather. The female High Brown Fritillary lays her eggs on dead vegetation that will survive the winter. Caterpillars do not hatch until the following spring when they search for violets.



Dark Green Fritillary

In broad-leaved woodland habitats the High Brown Fritillary prospered in coppiced areas, woodland clearings and rides with good leaf litter and violets. However, fresh coppicing is vital as such sites are usually only used in the first 2-3 years; as soon as re-growth reduces violet cover and lowers ground temperatures, they will seek a new site nearby or risk local extinction. Again, eggs are laid close to the ground and close to [but not usually on] dog violet.

The decline in woodland management (coppicing) and changes in management of bracken habitats caused the decline of many colonies. Abandonment of grazing, and under-grazing can lead to over-domination by bracken and the loss of ground flora on which the Fritillaries depend. Equally, overgrazing can cause an increase in grass cover, which is particularly detrimental to the High Brown Fritillary; violet cannot compete and it makes the microclimate much cooler. In more recent times, climate change and nitrification have provided additional threats. Grasses and brambles grow more vigorously throughout most of the year which can 'swamp' violets and warm patches of bracken litter. The increased shade also reduces the caterpillar's food plant and further lowers ground temperature. In recent years, an additional threat has been pressure from tree planting.

You will recall that last summer was exceptionally hot and many plants, including Marsh Thistle, a particular favourite nectar source for the High Brown Fritillary, became stunted and lacking in nectar. This also made it difficult to locate and record High Brown Fritillaries. This year the heat-wave in late May and early June also restricted the availability of nectar and brought early emergence...sadly a trend that seems set to continue. In addition, our weather patterns now seem to follow a trend. Extended periods of hot weather followed by prolonged periods of wet and cooler weather. The long hot dry spell of weather in June was ideal for the emergence of High Brown Fritillary further south. Unfortunately, in the North this good weather window gave way to a period of prolonged wet and cooler weather throughout late June and early July; just as our High Brown Fritillaries reached peak emergence. It will come as no surprise that emergence was down this year and with the lack of nectar plants and adverse weather it was a challenge to see them.

The Dark Green Fritillary is less of a niche butterfly and more willing to accept a wider range of habitat and climatic conditions. Thus, it is much more numerous and widespread and can be found throughout most areas that support good populations of dog violet. It also appears to be better able to adapt to change than the High Brown Fritillary..... so the majority of 'Large Fritillary' sightings were of Dark Green. That said, three High Brown

Fritillaries put in a welcome appearance on the field trip to Hampsfell. On the second trip, the group struggled to see any at Holme Stinted Pasture and Holme Park Fell with only one confirmed sighting. A few years ago, this was a site where they were virtually guaranteed. The poor return would not have been helped by a period of very heavy rain the night before.

The weather was again poor on another field trip to Whitbarrow Scar and on the final trip to Arnside Knott. Overall, the total seen on the field trips I attended was a worrying 4-5.... although I believe other walks and visits fared a little better.

Despite the lack of High Brown Fritillary sightings this year I will end this article on a positive note. Thanks to scientific studies and targeted conservation management programmes, High Brown Fritillary numbers appear to be stabilising in Devon and South Wales.... with some colonies showing a healthy response to management. However, ongoing habitat management is a key component along with identifying other areas of potential habitat that will enable the butterfly to expand. Techniques to restore suitable habitat include bracken rolling or bruising, bramble and scrub management on bracken/grass mosaic sites together with appropriate grazing. On woodland sites, the focus has been on creating and connecting open space through coppicing, clear-felling, ride widening and ride management.

There is still much to learn about how to achieve the optimum High Brown Fritillary habitat. The same conservation action plan may not be suitable for every site. For example, nitrification may pose a bigger risk at the Lakeland sites than in the warmer, dryer SW of England locations. What is clear is that conservation work needs to continue and to capitalise on all the new research such as reported by Jules Simons in the last issue of this newsletter. The need to maintain and hopefully expand the range of this magnificent butterfly as part of our landscape work in Morecambe Bay has never been greater.

David Phillips and Chris Winnick

Answers to Overwintering Quiz

- 1 Comma - Adult
- 2 Common Blue - Larva
- 3 Purple Hairstreak - Egg
- 4 Small Heath - Larva
- 5 Green Veined White - Pupa
- 6 Small Skipper - Larva

Small Blue Update for NW Cumbria



In 2022 we had a fantastic season for Small Blue butterflies in West Cumbria on the sites around Workington and Maryport. Charlotte and Amelia were seconded to us from Cumbria Wildlife Trust to record Small Blues and other pollinators on a weekly basis during the flight season and they both did a great job. As part of the CWT 'Get Buzzing' Project it also helped us extend and reinstate much more habitat in that area by providing pollinator connectivity corridors between core breeding sites.....this is a VITAL FACTOR IN OUR SUCCESS.

Season 2023 was very different with fewer Small Blues recorded during the flight season. That was mainly down to Spring weather conditions which were wet, cold and windy to start with then it brightened up with at least a two-week spell of hot weather: the emergence of male Small Blues happened very quickly but in good numbers. Females always emerge a few days later and sometimes a week later and by that time the weather had turned cold and windy again. My worry was that males might not have lasted long enough to mate and for the first time I can remember I saw no mating pairs. Anyway, the females did emerge in good numbers eventually but we'll not know if they mated and laid enough eggs well enough until we see the results in 2024 – so fingers crossed. An encouraging sign however is that the Marsh Fritillary has the same flight season and we have had good numbers of larval webs in August 2023 so provided they are fertile then we should be OK – but the Small Blues do not have larval webs so we have to wait until next year.

We must of course appreciate that there will be good years and not so good years, that is the nature of things as far as weather conditions are concerned but there are other factors as well which are 'human' related. Butterfly Conservation and Cumbria Wildlife Trust do our bit to get the habitat right – that comes first – we manage core breeding sites properly and provide connectivity corridors with pollinator stations along the way. We also have fantastic volunteers who are dedicated to sustainability by working from year to year on those vital factors.

Unfortunately, not all 'human' factors benefit wildlife and some are very much against wildlife. At present we are awaiting a response to a planning appeal (at the time of writing) and if that appeal is approved it will effectively block the most vital urban connectivity corridor in Workington. That corridor has been used for wildlife for over a century when it was a private railway to take materials from an industrial site to the Port of Workington. That industry became lost some time ago but the wildlife corridor has always been and still is used by a wide variety of species which have over time adapted to the changing conditions of the now Open Mosaic Habitat which is a BAP protected species in itself.

At present we are doing our very best for the Small Blues in West Cumbria having at one time not so long ago been on the verge of extinction there. Numbers in 2023 are down on 2022 but should be more than enough to survive if weather conditions permit AND the adverse 'human' factors don't destroy either our core breeding sites or the vital corridors between those sites which allow individual insects to merge with other colonies and thus maintain genetic stability.



Steve Doyle

CUMBRIA BUTTERFLY REVIEW: 2022

National data on butterfly distribution and abundance is only a guide as to how species fared as far north west as Cumbria. By definition, national data is an average calculated from data collected all over the UK; it reflects the national picture but with the caveat that more recording takes place where most people live!

With this in mind, the national report for 2022 states that Spring species such as 'Whites' and 'Vanessids' did well during a favourable spring and that subsequent broods of these species suffered from the extreme summer heatwave. In Cumbria our spring was less favourable and although we also had record high summer temperatures most vegetation remained green and palatable to a hungry caterpillar! As a consequence, while spring numbers were disappointing for some species, late summer was noticeable for its higher numbers of Small White, Red Admiral and Speckled Wood.

JANUARY started quietly with PEACOCK [P] and SMALL TORTOISESHELL [ST] making the occasional brief appearance out of hibernation.... usually inside a house. **FEBRUARY** saw just four singleton records of ST.

MARCH also started quietly then as the weather significantly improved there were numerous sightings from across Cumbria. The first BRIMSTONE [Br]



was recorded in Halecat Woods on 15.03.22 with a RED AMIRAL [RA] seen in Grange-o-Sands on 18.03.22 and a COMMA [Co] in Carlisle on the same day. With all 5 of the adult hibernators having made an appearance the first to emerge from pupation were noted; namely a HOLLY BLUE [HB] in

Grange-o-Sands [22.03.22], a SMALL WHITE [SW] in Carlisle, and both a LARGE WHITE [LW] and GREEN-VEINED WHITE [GVW] in Dalston [25.03.22]. Ten Peacocks and six Brimstones were recorded at Farrers Allotment on Whitbarrow [26.03.22] and the first ORANGE TIP [OT] on the same day at Lindale Recreation Ground.... a well know early site benefiting from shelter and a south-westerly location. So far in 2022 10 SPECIES had been recorded.....5 that hibernate as adults and 5 that 'over-winter' as pupae.

APRIL is often a 'watershed' month with many more species in evidence. **SPECKLED WOOD** [SWo] first emerged in Carlisle at both Stanwick Gardens and at St. Michael's Churchyard [10.04.22] and the first **GREEN HAIRSTREAK** [GH] were recorded at Cliburn Moss NNR and at Meathop Moss NR on 16.04.22 with 20 seen at the latter in warm sunshine on 19.04.22. A single **SMALL COPPER** [SC] was seen at NT Sandscale Haws [17.04.22]. Orange Tip, Speckled Wood and Green Hairstreak numbers continued to build up over the next few weeks without reaching high numbers.....20 OT were noted at King's Meaburn [22.04.22], 17 SWo in a Dalston Garden [19.04.22] and over 20 GH at Roudsea Wood NNR [19.04.22] and 30 plus at Cliburn Moss by the end of the month. Green Hairstreak is one of our specialist butterflies adapted best to Moss and Heathland and especially where there is plenty of Bilberry. An exceptionally early **COMMON BLUE** [CB] was reported from Lindale on 20.04.22 [one of the earliest ever recorded in



the UK] and **DINGY SKIPPER** [DS] emerged on a path near Crummock Water and at Ormsgill Slag Banks [23.04.22]. The Ormsgill site is extremely early and had our first record of **SMALL HEATH** [24.04.22] together with 10 Small White and another Dingy Skipper. **DUKE of BURGUNDY** [DoB] emerged a week earlier than expected at Kettlewell Quarry near Kendal [27.04.22] giving April an additional 7 species with all 17 SPECIES so far emerged on the wing during this month.

MAY started with four new species within 5 days: **WALL** were observed at Sandscale Haws [4.05.22]; **SMALL BLUE** [SB] at Ormsgill Slag Banks [6.05.22]; **SMALL PEARL-BORDERED FRITILLARY** [SPBF] at Arnside Knott [7.05.22] and **PEARL-BORDERED FRITILLARY** [PBF] at Farrers Allotment the following day. These last two sightings are unusual as hardly ever is there such an early record of a SPBF.... they usually emerge well after their look-a-like relative. Another exceptional sighting was to see 10 Small Blue at Sandscale Haws [10.05.22]this is the first record we have from this site suggesting they have colonised from their Ormsgill site 2 miles further along the coast. As spring species built up 25 PBF and 19 Br were recorded on Whitbarrow and nine species were seen at White Scar including 7 PBF and 13 Br. The well-

established colony of SB at Ormsgill reached peak flight with 138 recorded



on 18.05.22 along with 15 CB and 11 SH. CB were also doing well at Sandscale Haws with 32 recorded on 23.05.22. However, the biggest surprise of May was the appearance of a

single DoB at Barkbooth NR [19.05.22] where they have not been seen for decades! It was good to get confirmation that PBF were still present in Halecat Woods after their re-colonisation there four years ago.....5 was seen on 23.05.22. MARSH FRITILLARY [MF] were first recorded a week later than usual at Finglandrigg [23.05.22] and numbers failed to reach former high levels however several new colonisations were reported notably in the Borrowdale and Eycott Hill areas. There was also a report of Marsh Fritillary being seen in Wet Sleddale south-west of Shap where the habitat looks excellent but where we have little evidence of a former colony. May contributed a further 5 SPECIES giving a yearly total of 22....and all 22 could be seen within the month of May.

JUNE started in impressive fashion with no less than an additional 9 species within the first 14 days. SMALL SKIPPER [SS] were first to appear [1.06.22] when 7 were spotted on the slag banks at Ormsgill. On the same day 20 Common Blue were seen at RSPB Hodbarrow and on the following day 65 CB were reported from Watch Tree NR near Wigton. Workington Wind farm hosted 25 Small Blue on 2.06.22 and a further 28 were reported there on 14.06.22. Not high numbers but signs of improvement on recent times. LARGE SKIPPER [LS] first appeared at Bardsea Beach [2.06.22] and a single LARGE HEATH [LH] at Drumburgh Moss a day later. NORTHERN BROWN ARGUS [NBA] appeared at Latterbarrow NR [4.05.22] just 24 hours before 14 MOUNTAIN RINGLET were spotted at Irton Fell.... their earliest UK site. A faded and belated PAINTED LADY [PL] was reported from Brampton [10.06.22], similarly a MEADOW BROWN [MB] and 3 RINGLETS [R] put in slightly belated appearances on 13th and 14th June respectively at Watch Tree. A single DARK GREEN FRITILLARY [DGF] was reported from Yew Tree Tarn near Coniston.....the start of a below par emergence for this beautiful butterfly. SPBF continued to be reported widely across Cumbria including in more remote and hilly landscapes with 30 seen near Grange-in-Borrowdale [5.06.22], 15 at High Tarn near Skelwith Bridge [11.06.22], 20 at Harrop Tarn,



Grasmere [16.06.22] and 31 at Wet Sleddale [22.06.22]. This latter site also saw 24 Large Skipper and 46 Small Heath. High elevation sites generally report later sightings but some low elevation sites still reported low numbers of SPBF well into July with the last from Witherslack Woods [26.07.22]. Large Heath numbers held up well with 15 at Wedholme Flow [19.06.22], 45 at Meathop Moss [29.06.22] and 47 at Foulshaw Moss [24.06.22] however DGF numbers were a little disappointing with 20, 30 and 40

seen at Yewbarrow near Witherslack, Arnside Knott and Farrers Allotment respectively between 21-23rd June. GRAYLING [Gr] emerged at Ormsgill [20.06.22] and SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY [SWF] in low numbers at Roudsea Wood NNR and at Halecat Wood [25.06.22]. This gave June another 11 SPECIES bringing the years total number of SPECIES to 33.

JULY and August brought high pressure with lots of bright, dry, warm and even hot sunny weather. Most butterflies enjoyed the conditions with good numbers and lots of morning activity: by the afternoon many were exhausted! HIGH BROWN FRITILLARY [HBF] emerged a little late [1.07.22] at Thwaite Head and were seen at most of their usual locations but in low numbers. Throughout July and early August HBF were noted at Arnside Knott, Hampsfell, White Scar and at Farrers Allotment with numbers ranging from 1 to 5. This is a real concern as HBF remains the UK's most threatened butterfly. However, we have done much to help mitigate against loss of suitable habitat and hope fortunes will change. Also, once in a while a new location is discovered..... this year a HBF being recorded at Tarn Howes.

Was this a wandering male or could it mark a 'new' colony? WHITE-LETTERED HAIRSTREAK [WLH] were first noted at Sainsbury's car park in Kendal [2.07.22]. Although many 'new' colonies have been located in recent years it is more likely that we have got better at staring into the tops of Wych Elm on warm sunny days in July! Several recorders have remarked that Wych Elm is much more widespread in Cumbria than at first appreciated and no doubt there are many more as yet undetected colonies of this localised arboreal species. Some of



the best research has taken place in the North of Cumbria where numerous colonies have been found in the Lanercost, Eden Bridge, Brampton, Carlisle and Wetheral areas.....the highest count produced eight at Lanercost Pack Horse Bridge [10.07.22]. There are also discovered and 'yet to be discovered' sites in the Eden and Rusland Valleys, in the Kendal area and along the river Kent and the old Kendal -Lancaster canal. Your challenge is to find them! GATEKEEPER [G] were reported from Ormsgill [7.07.22] and on the same day good numbers of SS were noted in Rickerby Park [Carlisle] and SWF and MB in Brigsteer Woods. On 9th July notable reports revealed 119 R and 35 SH at Wet Sleddale and 50 SH at Gills Lane Quarry near Crosby Ravensworth. PURPLE HAIRSTREAK [PH] was seen at Edenhall [10.07.22] with further records from Roman Wall Laversdale and Rickerby Park: this is another widespread but under-recorded arboreal species best found in the tops of Oak trees during the late afternoon or early evening. Grayling numbers built up at White Scar [33 seen on 10th July] but without reaching the very high numbers of recent years. However, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Gatekeeper numbers all excelled with peak counts of 100 MB on Arnside Knott [13.07.22 and again on 29.07.22] and 80 at RSPB Campfield Marsh [31.07.22], 100 R at Swindale [12.07.22] and 100 G on Arnside Knott [29.07.22]. SCOTCH ARGUS [SA] first appeared on Kendal Fell [11.07.22] and reached a peak of 22 on Arnside Knott [29.07.22] historically a very low figure. Silver-washed



Fritillary had a modest year with 8 recorded at Flash bank and 9 in the adjacent Brigsteer Woods while 19 were seen at Roudsea Woods [14.07.22]. In late July White Scar can host over 20 species;

this time 17 species were seen [16.07.22] including 59 Gr, 5 HBF, 23 2nd generation Brimstone and 3 very late NBA. Equally impressive a walk through Witherslack and Howe Ridding Woods revealed 14 species in each wood but with a combined species list of 18.....including a first ever sighting of WLH. The 18th July was one of the hottest with temperatures above 30oC however a Quarry Pond Orton Scar recorder saw 20 CB, 20 R, 50 SH and 50

SK. On the same day 100 SK were seen at Kings Meaburn. As July came to a close the heat continued. Second generation Small and Green-veined Whites came out in some profusion and the month ended with our final UK bred species.... the BROWN HAIRSTREAK [BH].... first seen on Arnside Knott [29.07.22]. This gives us another 6 SPECIES from a July emergence and a TOTAL of 39 species seen for the year.

AUGUST can so often fade through the month into a disappointment of variety and abundance.... but not in 2022! 13 W and 133P were recorded at Bowness on Solway [10.08.22] and two days later 145 P were feeding on Knapweed along the Forestry Track at Sleetbeck, Carlisle. The migrant CLOUDED YELLOW [CY] put in a number of appearances starting with Arnside Knott [8.08.22] and then singletons mainly along coastal sites up to Allonby..... and as late as 30th August at Ormsgill. Smardale Gill is a wonderful site for seeing Scotch Argus. Numbers had been building up for two weeks until reaching a peak count of 232 [9.08.22] well down on last year but still a very healthy population. On 14th August 12 species were seen on Arnside Knott including one female and two male BH feeding near the hill top on the abundant Hemp Agrimony. 35 Common Blue were reported from Ormsgill [16.08.22] and 8 from the same site as late as 30th August. 25 Painted Lady were seen on Bardsea Beach [24.08.22] and MB, HBF and even DGF lasted until the end of the month. However, the main feature of the last two weeks was the steady build-up in numbers of SWo, RD and to a lesser extent SW. The total number of SPECIES seen had now reached 40. [Or 42 if we count two species almost certainly released onto restricted sites.]

SEPTEMBER usually marks the end of the 'butterfly season' for most species but after a long hot summer many second-generation species did particularly well. Speckled Wood achieved notable counts of 70, 98 and 112 in a Dalston Garden on the 7th, 11th and 15th of the month. Nine species were recorded in a Penrith Garden [SWo, SW, LW, GVW, ST, SC, RA, PL, and P] and the wonderful Holehird gardens near Windermere are excellent at providing late summer nectar.... especially for those adults wishing to hibernate



through the winter. On 5.09.22 Holebird's Hemp Agrimony, Verbena and late flowering Buddleia provided sustenance to 21 RA, 24 ST, 10 SW and 18 P while Beetham Garden centre was particularly attractive to SW. Bardsea Beach hosted 25 SW [17.09.22] and even in dull weather 57 SWo were reported from just a small part of Whitbarrow [21.09.22]. Other species of note included Wall and Small Copper and the last reported Clouded Yellow at St. Bees. [15.09.22]

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER and DECEMBER saw the usual drastic fall off in sightings as most species entered their 'over-wintering state' be it egg, caterpillar, pupa or hibernating adult. In October the highest counts were 5 SW on the 4th, 5 SWo on the 5th and 14 RA on the 22nd of the month. LW and SC were also recorded and on 28.10.22 three Brown Hairstreak eggs were found on Blackthorn on Arnside Knott. RA was the most recorded November butterfly with just a few single ST and P also briefly coming out of hibernation on the occasional warm day.....however December weather was so unsuitable that not a single record was received.

Chris Winnick

Introduction to North West Conservation Manager

It is with great excitement that I have joined Butterfly Conservation (BC) as Conservation Manager for the North of England. Growing up in Cumbria and having worked in Northern England most of my career, it is fantastic to be putting my energy into lepidoptera conservation in a region I know so well.

Firstly, a little bit about my career to-date so you know where I've emerged from...

After studying geography and geology at the University of Edinburgh one of my first interactions with BC was when I was a young volunteer at Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT). I helped a then University of Sunderland master's student with a mark and recapture of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary in the Durham Dales. Needless to say, a deeper passion for lepidoptera began there but my career went in a different path. My first few jobs in the conservation sector were running river-based conservation projects aiming to preserve habitats for water vole, otter and other aquatic mammals around Country Durham, Northumberland, and the Tees Valley. I inadvertently specialised in aquatic ecology as a result, training as an aquatic ecologist and I would later go on to establish a water vole reintroduction to Cumbria. My goal at the time however was to manage nature reserves and in 2013 I got that opportunity, taking on DWT's western nature reserves including sites such as Hannah's Meadow, an upland hay meadow; Hedleyhope Fell, a stronghold for Green Hairstreak and Low Barns near

Witton le Wear...which is now my office again funnily enough. From there, like many of us in the conservation sector, chasing a permanent contract and more stability, I went into more senior, management-type roles. First as manager of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's south operational area, including Potteric Carr (Doncaster), a site that supports Scarce Vapourer moth among other rare and wonderful species, where I stayed for the next 5 years. Then, after over a decade with the Wildlife Trusts it was time to gain experience elsewhere and I moved charities to take on the post of Head of Conservation at the Eden Rivers Trust in 2020. There I became part of a senior leadership team for the first time, thriving with the ability to influence the direction of the organisation, involved in everything from writing funding bids and



reports to Trustees, to river-catchment plans and landscape-scale recovery projects. I developed several conservation projects aimed at improving biodiversity and restoring rivers to their natural condition, as well as setting up a farm cluster group in the Pennine foothills and a riparian woodland project. My highlight however was helping set up a water vole reintroduction in the Lake District which finally came to fruition this year. I've joined Butterfly Conservation, however, from Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT) where I was their Conservation Manager on

maternity cover for the past 12 months. Moving from a local charity to a national charity was a great move for my career albeit temporary from the start, but it has been the perfect stepping-stone for this new role. In that position I worked closely with BC as ReThink Nature Partners particularly in Carmarthenshire (South Wales) and on the Species on the Edge project in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland. Species I specialised in were the Great Yellow Bumblebee, Shril Carder Bee (SCB) and upland species including Bilberry and Heath Bumblebee. I developed a new habitat monitoring strategy and helped write two species recovery plans (for the moss carder

bee and SCB respectively). I am excited to bring this experience, and that of my career to date, to this exciting role.

Thoughts on the job so far:

I only started on the 3rd July but already it feels fantastic to be back in the North of England and working with the Northern Branches. In my first few months I have been lucky enough to get out on site with some of you and I have been blown away with the depth of knowledge we have in our midst. Whether it was the vital knowledge of where to find Marsh Fritillary webs in Cumbria having a guided tour around Myres Allotment Nature Reserve in Lancashire; helping with habitat assessments for Large Heath in Northumberland; or searching tirelessly for a glimpse of the Dark Bordered Beauty in North Yorkshire, the breadth of knowledge and enthusiasm in our volunteer branches is incredible and unique. Having worked in the sector for so long, the volunteer-led nature of Butterfly Conservation is unique and exciting, allowing us to really work together in different ways than I have in the past. How I best position myself to support the branches, will be a dynamic I will have to perfect and hopefully I'll get there with your help and suggestions. In the North of England, we have Cheshire and the Wirral, Lancashire, Cumbria, Yorkshire and North East voluntary branches...and one me. I will be really interested to meet you all at upcoming meetings and events and find out how I can make sure you feel supported and valued whilst understanding my limitations too, but also gather from your knowledge where you feel the best use of my time (and indeed yours) will be, and whether the focus of our work now, and in the future is going in the right direction.

My initial thoughts from a month in the role is that we have several objectives that jump out. Firstly, we need to understand some of the issues (both good and bad) facing our northern species better. Why for example are High Brown Fritillary and Large Heath struggling in habitats that on paper, should be perfect, and where they have previously thrived? Do we know enough about our focus species, where are the gaps in knowledge and where do we need to focus our monitoring? And is the list of 71 focal species the correct ones for the north of England? If yes, is it just a case of maintaining momentum?

Are there opportunities/a need to give certain species a helping hand? The Marsh Fritillary seems to be doing so well in Cumbria 10 years on, could we see other species flourishing elsewhere? Are there species that are doing well that we are simply not monitoring enough, in the right place? For example, one of the highlights of my first few weeks was trapping a Yellow Ringed Carpet at Haweswater and I caught a glimpse of what could be a

second brood of White Spotted Sable at Marble Quarry (both Cumbria). Do we know enough about these species and where they are?

Am I working with the right landowners, other NGOs and DEFRA Group partners to make sure we [BC] are having the right influence on management in the right places. For example, some sites seem to be thriving whilst others have become damaged through over grazing in some areas, or lack of in others.

These are just some of the questions already swirling around my head as I get to grips with the role but I hope these questions will turn into answers through time, and as I learn my job.

Working on a landscape scale will be key to delivering results for some of these species and one of my first tasks this autumn will be writing landscape recovery plans for the north of England regions. I hope this is something I can share and receive feedback on from the regional branches as I get stuck into this work in the autumn. There's plenty to do that's for sure and I am delighted to have joined an organisation that is truly volunteer-led and I'm excited to learn from, and work with everyone involved in the branches as I get to grips with my new role.

Michael Rogers Conservation Manager Northern England

Email: mrogers@butterfly-conservation.org Mobile: 07485 372233

A 'Holly Blue year' at Cumwhitton



After a good year in 2020 (see NL41), the dearth of subsequent sightings - none in 2021, one in 2022 - seemed a bad sign. But not so. 2023 sightings began on 15 April (male photo 6 May). They became a daily feature of the garden during the often-sunny days in May, lasting in the fine weather into early June. Most appeared to be males, searching rapidly and erratically over tree and bushes. Only once did I ever

see two in the air at once in spring. The habit of this species of only rarely settling, and then with closed wings, made checking the sexes rarely possible. However, females were definitely present. The first of the presumed summer generation, a male, was seen on 8 July. The frequency of sightings was almost daily thereafter in better weather - often several times daily. Presence of females was not confirmed until 1 August, but they may have

been present long before. Sightings continued daily throughout July and August – unprecedented in such frequency.

Two individuals were seen at once on several occasions. A female was photographed laying a single egg on a developing flower-bud of Ivy on 26 August. The egg was deposited on the underside of a small bud, well-hidden and doubly so with its colour and textured surface blending well with that of the bud. The egg was minute – only some 0.20mm diameter. By late August, prospecting males were little in evidence. A female nectaring on 29 August was quite a dusky blue on the upper-side, though the normal colour below.



Other Eden valley observations I heard of in 2023 were from the



Wetheral/Great Corby area. More remarkable, the species was present in a garden at Skinburness, on the Solway coast, from late July. There are no previous records from that area. It will be fascinating to see what future years bring.

David Clarke

Rare Find at St Bees

Although we have regular records of the stunning Hummingbird Hawk moth, the adults are immigrants from the continent and it is rare to find evidence of successful breeding in Cumbria. Thankyou Roger Holme for sending in the



caterpillar photo and news:

Here is a photo of a Hawk moth larva I took at St Bees 3

days ago, it was on cliff top grassland just south of the main beach there (NX9611). The large green larva, with white horizontal stripe, and that distinctive blue spike with yellow tip keys out as a Hummingbird Hawk moth larva. It was feeding on Lady's Bedstraw. I see the adults from time to time in Barrow, but I never seen a larva before. I didn't realise they bred in Cumbria? By coincidence, another member of the wider group I was with saw an adult nectaring on St Bees station flower tubs the same day!

Roger Holme

Cumbria Branch Summer Field Trips 2023

This year has been packed with field trips in Cumbria and adjacent Lancashire. I am sure all of you will join me in giving a huge vote of thanks to all those who led these outings. Out of 15 events, Chris Winnick led no less than ten and deserves the special thanks for his dedication and skill in sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with all of us. Thanks also to Martin Chadwick, Helen Wallace, David Wrigley, David Jackson and Peter Boardman for their contribution. As a leader in former days, I know how much work is involved in researching a route, considering our safety, planning car parking, and praying for reasonable weather.

Although I have been on only a few trips this year, I would like to share some special photographs taken on these outings. Having a good leader and so many pairs of eyes at work, greatly enhance the chance of getting some exciting shots.

Halecat area Witherslack 24.5.23 with Martin Chadwick

The major excitement was the discovery of a new site for Duke of Burgundy



and a lovely fresh Pearl- bordered Fritillary, something that's increasingly hard to find in recent years.

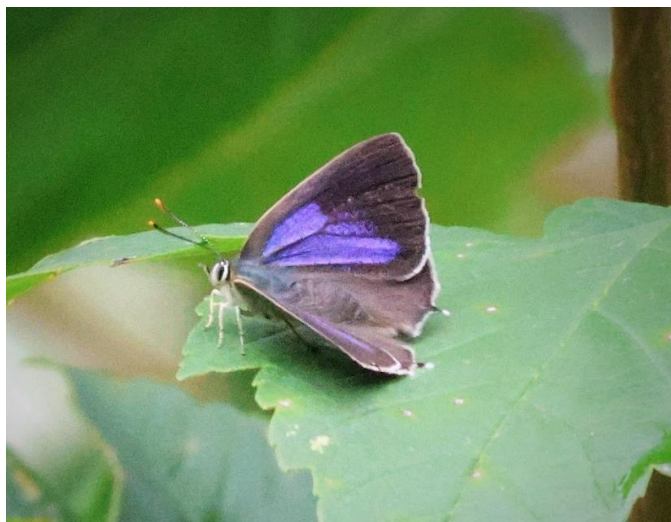
Heysham Moss on 24.6.23 with Chris Winnick

We were lucky just to see and net just one example of our target species, the Large Heath. The recent heatwave had brought the flight period to an early end. Just to liven things up I deployed a pheromone lure in the woodland edge and within 2 minutes, we were rewarded with a lovely example of a Lunar Hornet Moth .



Myers allotment 8.7.23 with Dave Wrigley

Dave Wrigley is reserve manager of Myers Allotment and despite rain, ten of us were keen to see the results that Dave and his volunteers' winter work

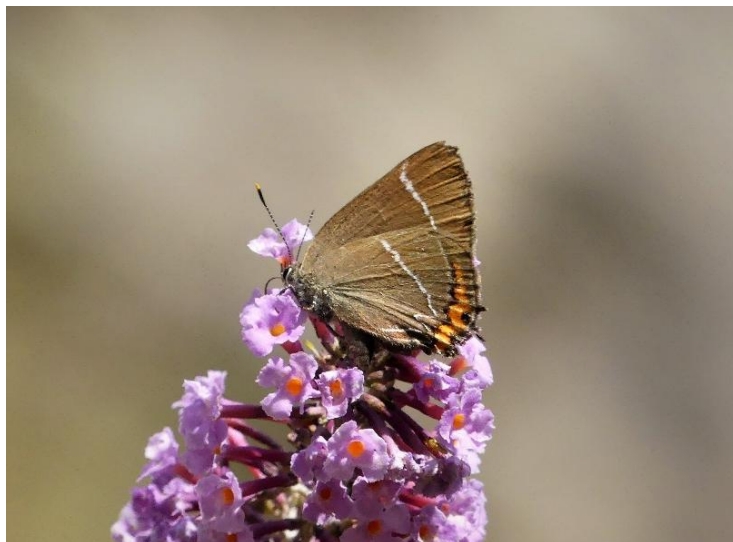


parties had achieved. It was raining when we arrived, so I left my camera in the car. What a mistake. The sun came out briefly and it brightened a little. Someone spotted this female Purple Hairstreak basking. This

was quite the best view I have ever had of a fresh specimen with wings open in over 20 years of Butterfly watching in our area. I am grateful for Jay Patil

for sending me his lovely photo. The flowers were looking wonderful in the clearings and despite the doubtful start we had plenty of the regular species. Unfortunately, we could not reproduce the wonderful sighting of a mating pair of Silver-washed Fritillary seen by Sue Brindle a few days earlier. That's a rarity south of the Kent estuary and raises the possibility the reserve will host it as a resident species before long.

White Scar Whitbarrow on the 24th July with Chris Winnick



This produced the hoped for Dark and High Brown Fritillary on the numerous Buddleia bushes, but someone's sharp eyes spotted this completely unexpected White-letter Hairstreak at eye level on a Buddleia spike. It fed contentedly and everyone who had a camera took full advantage of this great photo opportunity. In over 20 years of recording this was only the second time I have had such a close encounter.

Marsh fritillary larval web counting in the Killington area 13th August with Chris Winnick

We found plenty of larval webs but the highlight for me was the spotting of a blue spotted variant of the Small Copper (*Caeruleo punctata*) by Lindsey Gould. It is not rare but looking through my photos of Small Copper I have never recorded one before. It's said to be more frequent as you go further north in the UK and only usually occurs in the second brood. It was a treat to see this uncommon variant.



No wonder guided walks are so popular with such knowledgeable leaders, the chance to chat with fellow enthusiasts with a high probability of seeing something you would never see on your own. I was not the first to see any of the above butterflies.

Long may these group outings continue and we are so grateful to the leaders who share their enthusiasm with us.

Brian Hancock

BUTTERFLY GARDENING: WHY IT IS IMPORTANT AND HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL. PART ONE.

In the first of a two-part series I look at why we should spend a little more time gardening for butterflies, moths and associated garden wildlife.

Butterflies are a 'biodiversity canary in the coal mine' and crucial for pollination.....they are also beautiful and brighten the day. In part two I will discuss the practicalities of how we can do this successfully.

I have a confession to make: I have been fascinated by butterflies and moths since childhood. I found and fed a Privet Hawkmoth caterpillar and watched it transform from an 'eating machine' to a pupa and then to undergo the even more incredible metamorphosis to a stunningly beautiful adult. Since moving to Kendal 12 years ago I have had more time to indulge in my love of both countryside and garden: it has been a delight to do so in such a special part of the country. However, over the years I have been shocked to see that some of the best places in the UK for butterflies have either been built over or have suffered a change in land use or management that has severely limited opportunities for wild life.....and this includes gardens.

Living in the SE of England until the early 1970's I would visit Morecambe Bay on holiday. In those early days it was wonderful to see herbaceous flower beds being given increasing prominence....after a time of lingering post war shortage when too many gardens were 'good for fruit, vegetables, a well-tended lawn and, if time, cut flowers'. Even then most forms of

wildlife in the garden were considered pests. Almost as many books were written on how to eliminate garden pests and 'weeds' as to how to garden. As for 'wildlife areas' these would be untidy, a waste of productive land and encourage pests and criticism from neighbours!

In the 1960's and 1970's butterflies, moths and other pollinators were still plentiful both in gardens and in the wider countryside. How times have changed. Butterfly, moth, bee and hoverfly numbers have plummeted..... as have the number of songbirds and other species dependant on them for



their food supply.....and all accelerated by a common agricultural policy that rewarded food production irrespective of any damage it might cause to the environment. This, together with the resultant exponential increase in insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers, removal of hedgerows and coppices, draining of marginal land and general intensification of production has continued at pace for the last 50 years.

This has led to loss or degradation of most of our wildflower-rich hay meadows and heathlands and in the Lake District, a doubling in the number of sheep since the 1950's [to over 2 million] with resultant catastrophic loss



in biodiversity in our uplands. Moorlands turned over to 'game bird' production for shooting have also been a disaster for native wildlife. In addition, we continue to lose countryside every year equivalent to the size of Bristol to urban growth; as one of the most densely populated countries in the world pressures on limited resources are mounting.

This worrying picture has been made significantly worse by the near cessation of coppicing and woodland management in our broadleaved woodlands with closure of rides, glades and loss of light penetration leading to an impoverished woodland



understorey and ground flora. With 40% of broadleaved woodland lost [the UK is one of the most woodland impoverished countries in Europe], 98% of our flower-rich meadows removed and 200,000 miles of hedgerow replaced by fencing then the challenge for us all is clear.

However there is a further threat to our flora and fauna.....climate change. It is true that climate has always changed and wildlife has always adapted, but through the continued rise in harmful

greenhouse gas emissions our wonderful plant and animal life simply cannot adapt at this pace without severe decline and loss. [Plants face the same problem with the RHS recently announcing that they will move some of their southern collections to Harlow Carr.]

Environmental charities like Butterfly Conservation, the RSPB, the NT and the Wildlife Trusst are doing herculean work in the countryside to try and maintain biodiversity in key areas; however this is not enough. We need a change in the way payments are made to landowners and managers and here we can be more optimistic, as in future government payments will recognise not just food production but soil and water quality, biodiversity and carbon sequestration. We also need to value our precious land more and manage for the wellbeing of all.

As gardeners and lovers of gardens we can play a huge role in helping to maintain great gardens and a thriving population of at least 24 of our 58 species of butterfly that regularly breed in the UK.....and most are in South Lakeland! We can also help our populations of moths, [a gardener in Kendal has recorded over 600 species of moth in his urban garden over recent years] bees, hoverflies and other fauna that contribute so much to the vital need for pollination. However, gardeners beware...there are some worrying trends and pressures that we must resist!

At a time when our gardens and parks have never been more needed in helping maintain biodiversity we are urged to turn our front gardens into car parks, our back gardens into decking, chippings and plastic grass and if we really need to buy plants then to buy ones that have had all the nectar and pollen removed or made inaccessible to insects. Gardens cover more than a



million hectares of land in the UK and in urban areas [where 85% of the population reside] can represent half of all green space. However, gardens remain under attack: in 2005 7% of front gardens were completely paved but today, as we are urged to 'drop the curb' by programmes like 'Homes Under the Hammer' it is near to 40% that are paved and covered in parked cars.

Four species of butterfly and over 60 species of moth have become extinct in the UK during the last century and research by Butterfly Conservation shows 75% of all UK species of butterfly had declined in abundance or

range over the last 40 years.....some by up to 90%. Of the 58 species that regularly breed in the UK we can broadly divide them into two groups: habitat specialists and wider countryside species. The former is usually rare and localised being adapted to niche habitats that tend to have their own special climatic, micro-climatic and geologic and topographic conditions that create a specialist assemblage of plants. These butterflies are usually single brooded, have caterpillars that feed on only one or two specific plants and as adults rarely fly far from their known colony. In short they are very 'fussy' and least likely to survive rapid change or being pushed out of their comfort zone and least likely to visit gardens.

South Cumbria and Morecambe Bay is the country's leading area for many of these rare specialists with nationally important populations of Fritillary butterflies including the UK's two rarest butterflies [the High Brown Fritillary and the Pearl-bordered Fritillary] together with the Silver-washed, Small Pearl-bordered and Dark Green Fritillary. All these butterflies rely heavily on woodland glades with abundant dog violet although the last two will also fly in more open areas. The North West is also home to the rare Marsh Fritillary, the Duke of Burgundy, Northern Brown Argus, Large Heath, Mountain Ringlet, Scotch Argus, Brown Hairstreak, Green Hairstreak, Dingy Skipper, Grayling and Small Blue. All of these species require habitats that would make garden visits unlikely unless a garden was next to a woodland glade or species rich limestone grassland.

The good news is that Morecambe Bay is also home to 24 species that could much more readily be tempted to visit a butterfly friendly garden and these include members of the



Pieridae or 'White' family [Large and Small Whites, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Clouded Yellow and Brimstone]; the Satyrinae or 'Brown' family [Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Small Heath and Wall] the Lycaenidae or 'Blue/Hairstreak/Copper' family [Common Blue, Holly Blue, Purple and White-letter Hairstreaks and Small Copper] the Nymphalinae or 'Vanessid' family [Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma and Painted Lady] and the Hesperidae or 'Skipper' family [Large and Small Skipper].

Most gardeners know that these wider countryside species have their favourite garden plants that allow better access to good supplies of nectar.....crucial food to provide the energy they need to live longer and have more opportunity to mate and produce fertile eggs for future generations. However, there are some simple guidelines on how you can help turn a butterfly neutral garden into a haven for butterflies, moths, bees and wildlife without too much work or expense.....and have a lovely garden. In part two of this article, I will provide a range of tips on how you can really make a difference no matter whether you own a large garden or a window box!

Chris Winnick



The Marsh Fritillary Update

It's now 17 years since we reintroduced Marsh Fritillaries back into Cumbria after they became extinct here in 2004. In those 17 years of breeding and emergence in the wild there is no doubt in my mind (although I'm not a



geneticist!) that a new strain of Cumbrian genetics has developed. At first there was a strong influence of genes from Scottish stock which were cross-bred with what was left of the Cumbrian stock so that those genes were not completely lost forever; as it turned out the Scottish stock fared much better and there was a very strong feeling that Scottish stock was probably at least 90% in those which survived in Cumbrian habitat and conditions. My own feeling is that as we are 17 years down the line, that 90% as was in 2007 has now become truly Cumbrian through ongoing evolution.

In 2023 we found that Marsh Fritillaries are breeding at places they themselves have found, but more than that they are cropping up at a much greater altitude than we thought they would do, provided there is suitable habitat. We suspected this was the case in 2021 and 2022 but in 2023 it has become clearer that this is likely to be because of those 17 years of development of a new Cumbrian genetic strain. We are still very much on a learning curve but bearing in mind our Marsh Fritillary Project has been so successful and one of the best reintroductions the UK has seen, I think we can justify our thoughts and continue our learning curve which is the best way to understand what this species requires to be successful going forward. To recap on where we are at present, we reintroduced captive bred stock, an Anglo/Scottish stock, in 2007 to 4 pre-prepared sites and to another 3 sites two and three years later. Altogether 120,000 captive bred larvae were released over those 7 sites with some having been topped up in the early years when we found numbers of webs dwindling. The latter did the trick well and we have not released any more for a number of years. Our strategy was to release huge numbers of larvae on our original sites where we knew there were smaller suitable sites within 5km radius..... this would allow some adults to move, especially males to find new territories and hopefully

allow females to lay a secondary batch of eggs on a satellite site. Nature takes its own time but now 17 generations later this is where we are. In 2023 we still have the original 7 deliberately reintroduced sites BUT we also have at least 26 additional sites where confirmed breeding has occurred. In 2023 it might now be even more as at the time of printing the number of confirmed sites is still increasing. We only confirm a site as a breeding site if we find and record at least one larval egg batch and the habitat looks big enough to sustain an ongoing colony.

Going back to our original strategy devised by Dr. Keith Porter (now retired from Natural England) and carried out by us in Cumbria, that strategy was to think big, release captive bred stock in huge numbers on original and favourably managed sites to encourage self-colonisation. They know best and can find suitable habitat themselves, sometimes they fail, and sometimes they succeed but given we only helped them on 7 sites they have found 25 sites and counting. With that knowledge we can expect those self-colonised sites to be more natural and not require as much man-power or intervention.

Overall then, with climate change and other factors to contend with such as Stewardship Agreements and Government Strategy towards nature and habitat, we have reason to believe that here in Cumbria we have given one of our key species a good start to at least ride out a poor spell of fortune. Cumbria will carry on recording and managing in the best way possible as this has become one of the best reintroductions the UK has seen.

Steve Doyle

MEMBERS DAY AND AGM held at RSPB LEIGHTON MOSS on Saturday 29th July 2023



We had a very successful members day held at RSPB Leighton Moss this year. We were delighted with the 40+ turnout and the programme of events which included ...opening of over-night moth traps, presentations by Jules Simons on the High Brown Fritillary, by Dr. Rosa Menendez on specialist 'Northern Butterflies' and by Martin Wain [given by Chris Winnick] on Martin's recent work for BC in the Morecambe Bay area.

After a brief AGM and lunch with chance to look at RSPB Leighton Moss we met at Arnside Knott for a guided walk of the site with Craig McCoy [senior warden], Dr. Rosa Menendez and Chris Winnick. The AGM is summarised below.

Minutes of Butterfly Conservation Cumbria Branch 2023 AGM

- 1 Introduction & apologies for absence. Chris Winnick welcomed 40 members. Apologies were received from Martin Wain and Peter Boardman. The minutes of the 2022 AGM and the officers' reports were available at this AGM.
- 2 The Minutes of the 2022 AGM were proposed as a true record by Helen Wallace and seconded by Ann Goss
- 3 Matters arising – There were no matters arising
- 4 The Chairman's Report is appended and raised no questions. The chairman thanked David Eastlick for his huge contribution to the functioning of the branch and made a presentation on behalf of the committee.
- 5 The Treasurer's Report is appended and raised no questions.
- 6 The Membership Report is appended and raised no questions.
- 7 The Moth Report is appended and raised no questions.
- 8 The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey Report is summarised in the appendix and raised no questions.
- 9 Appointment of Officers and approval Ian Goss proposed the re-election of the current committee en bloc and this was seconded by Sue Brindle. This motion was carried unanimously. The following were thereby elected; Chris Winnick (Chair), David Eastlick (Treasurer), Martin Tordoff, Rose Thompson (Membership Secretary), Martin Chadwick (WCBS Co-ordinator), Peter Boardman, Wendy Nelson, Helen Wallace, Bill Grayson and Lynne Farrell, along with Karen McLellan (Newsletter editor). The election of previously coopted members Steve Malpass and John Woodhead was proposed by David Eastlick and seconded by Wendy Nelson. Their election was approved by the meeting.

Committee Reports

4 Chairman's Report-Chris Winnick

First, I am delighted to welcome you all to our 2023 Member's Day and AGM and a special welcome and thanks to all who have helped so much with this event, Brian Hancock and Irene Mower for their moth traps, Jules Simons for her HBF presentation, Dr Rosa Menendez for sharing some of her latest research into our 'Northern Butterflies' and Martin Wain for sending us a summary presentation on some of his recent activities. I must also thank Craig McCoy [Senior NT Warden] who will meet us at Arnside Knott and not least RSPB Leighton Moss for their continued kindness and support in letting us use their excellent facilities.

I am also delighted to share the AGM with many of our committee members who work so hard through the year running the branch and contributing so much to our extensive work party and guided walks programmes. A special welcome to Rose Thompson as our new Membership Secretary, Steve Malpass who will be helping us with our work party organisation and to John Woodhead who is already doing a transect for us in Witherslack Woods.

We have been fortunate in Cumbria in having several committee members who have served for many years and many have multi-tasked. None more so than David Eastlick. David has kindly agreed to remain as branch treasurer and will continue to help Mark look after our website and in particular our sightings page. He has even agreed to continue with some secretarial duties! However, after incredible service for many years he will step back from being our Health and Safety Officer and the man who looks after our tools and equipment for work parties. His work behind the scenes is remarkable and the whole branch are indebted to his hard work and commitment.....our habitats and butterflies are pleased too!

I would like to present David and his wife Marg with this small token of our appreciation.

Many of you will know David Wainwright as our long serving BC Northern Office. He Has been promoted to 'Head of Conservation England' but Michael Rogers has been appointed to take on the 'Northern Officer' role. He sends his apology as he is still in Glasgow but hopes to move back to the Eden Valley or to North Lancashire, especially if someone can help him find a berth on the Lancaster and Kendal Canal for his barge!

I was delighted when BC recently appointed an Ecologist for Northern England and Ryan Clark hopes to be with us for part of the day.

One other person who is too often not mentioned at our AGM's is Steve Doyle. Many will remember how he set up the Cumbria Branch in 2000 and was chair for many years. You perhaps knew him when he ran the Milnthorpe post office until he retired 15 years ago and you may also know that having moved to Carlisle, he keeps us up to date in our newsletter with his ongoing work for the Marsh Fritillary and the Small Blue. What you might not know is that a year ago Steve became unwell. He has made a great recovery but as you would expect is not 100%. However, he is still working

hard for Cumbrian butterflies. We wish him well and thank him for all that he continues to do.

For those who like a long and detailed review of the year from a chairs report..... one that runs deep into lunch time and delays the whole programme.....well not this year! However, please look out for my yearly review in our next issue of our Branch magazine.

5 Treasurer's Report-David Eastlick

Only major income and outgoings are presented and are rounded up or down. I will talk to them at the meeting.

Opening balance	£4948	
Income	£2316	
Printed newsletters		£958
Postage newsletters		£184
Committee expenses		£50
Power tools repairs and fuel		£177
Supported student moth survey		£250
First aid course (3 yearly)		£241
Member service, postage printing£		£100
Plants		£421
Closing balance		
Dedicated fund training, tools etc	£1219	
Dedicated Primrose fund	£386	
Dedicated Kendal NHS fund	£210	
Unrestricted funds	£2927	

- The branch had support from the Green Recovery Fund administered by Martin Wain. Work party tools and protective clothing were bought at £454 and primrose and cowslip. The invoices were paid directly from the Fund.
- Dedicated funds are ring fenced by the treasurer for the purpose of the title. Movement of funds is at the discretion of the committee.
- During the last year, attempts were made to spend £1000 on contractor work at Hampsfield Allotment and the balance of the primrose fund, £386, but they came to naught.
- A balanced budget was prepared for 2023/2024.

6 Membership Report-Rose Thompson

This is my first report to the AGM as I only became membership secretary a couple of months ago.

New members are welcomed each month and there were 4 new members during June.

Current membership is 572 for the Cumbria Branch from 417 different households. This is an increase of 31 new members at 28 new addresses in the last 12 months. Cumbria Branch membership can be from members who live in Cumbria or in other counties. 446 of our members live in Cumbria and 126 live outside the area. There is a half price membership offer at the moment to coincide with the Big Butterfly Count (14th July – 6th August).

7 Moth Report-Martin Tordoff

Cumbria Branch Moth Officer – vacant position

I announced I'd stand down as the branch's Moth Officer around a year ago, but agreed to help keep things moving until a successor was found. No-one has yet seized the opportunity and as a result we've held perhaps fewer moth events than we might have done over the past year – see following paragraph. If any of today's guests would consider stepping into this role I'd give them every possible help and encouragement. It's not at all a demanding job – usually just running a scattering of moth events through the season, answering the occasional moth ID query from BC members and the general public and penning now and again a mothly article for the branch's bi-annual newsletter. But an enthusiastic and focussed individual could make much more of the role! Our active branch membership, and the events we run, have long had something of a southerly bias in the county, and we feel we've perhaps had to neglect other areas, so we'd welcome members' offers to host public events elsewhere in Cumbria to be held under the BC banner from 2024. Please contact me or Chris Winnick if interested in taking on a countywide, or perhaps just an area, Moth Officer role.

Recent and forthcoming events

For reasons unknown, no date for a National Moth Night (NMN) has been announced this year and now seems unlikely to be. This celebration of all things mothly – organised jointly by BC and Atropos - has been held annually since the late 1990s, and we've usually seized this as an excuse to run a couple of public events. But not so alas in 2023. Attendances aren't always great but guests' interest and enthusiasm more than makes up for this. In the absence of a NMN date, Martin Chadwick and I have decided to run a moth evening at Latterbarrow Nature Reserve on Friday 18 August. Details will appear on the branch website shortly. All welcome – just turn up. What can we add to the 225+ species already recorded there at such events? Martin tells me he represented the branch a couple of nights ago helping with the annual moth event at St Catherine's National Trust site at Windermere – a Netted Carpet speciality site. Seven of that species were caught but not a lot else. (Our branch has run this event on NT's behalf almost annually for over 15 years, and it's great that two young people Jade and Isaac have now taken over its running.) Martin also helped host Grange Natural History Society's event at Castle Head in May, and may become involved in some intensive moth recording shortly to be held at Foulshaw.

Two forthcoming and exciting micro-moth field guides

There's great news on the micro-moth field guide front – the imminent publication of two new guides, both now on pre-release offer at discounted prices. These are (i) a second edition of the ever-popular Field Guide to the Micro Moths of Great Britain and Ireland, by Phil Sterling and Mark Parsons, due in December but can be ordered now for around £30. This will have updated distribution maps, some additional species, ABH species numbers, and the newish species vernacular names (the latter not welcomed by most serious moth-ers!); (ii) A brand new Guide to the Pyralid and Crambid Moths of Britain and Ireland, by Mark Parsons and Sean Clancy, partly photo-illustrated, due late Summer, about £45 on pre-order. If you're one of the moth recorders who's yet to tackle most of the micros, the first of these would be absolutely invaluable, while the second covers the two groups including such well-known species as the China-marks, Mother of Pearl, Small Magpie and Garden Pebble (these vernaculars long-established). So start saving up now, or put one or both on your Christmas list, and make 2024 your year of the micro-moths.

8 WCBS Report-Martin Chadwick

Participation and coverage this year was very good. Of Cumbria's 43 allocated random squares 26 were walked. Nearly all were surveyed in both the core months of July and August with some squares being covered in earlier months as well. Nineteen volunteers did a total of 66 visits. My thanks to all of them, with triple thanks to those who do three squares each summer and who walk them every year. Data from this scheme is vitally important in monitoring UK butterfly trends and long sets of data from the same observers are particularly valuable.

Our Cumbria squares yielded 2302 butterflies of 20 species. The most numerous were;

Meadow Brown 741

Ringlet 488

Green-veined White 188

Small Skipper 178

Small White 162

Small Tortoiseshell 111

Surprisingly only 8 Large Skipper, 5 Small copper and 4 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries.

Looking forward I feel that we are unlikely to increase coverage due to the inaccessible nature of the remaining random squares that are distant from where the majority of our membership and volunteers reside. The "holiday squares" scheme does not seem to be generating any interest in butterfly watchers holidaying in the Lake District. Next year I will be losing one of my previously lauded volunteers who has been doing three squares in the area east of Lake Windermere. These are accessible and have some butterflies so if anyone wishes to know more and join the band of WCBS butterfly counters please contact me.

Our Cover Star: Emperor Moth



On the cover is a male Emperor moth, here is the female. This fabulous dayflying species is a widespread but never very common moth of heathland, moorland, sand dunes, woodland rides and grassland scrub. A

very large moth with the female having a wingspan up to 10cm, both sexes are on the wing during April and May. The male have feathery antennae with which to detect the female pheromones.

This is the only member of the silkworm family native to the UK.



The caterpillars feed on woody plants such as heather, bramble and blackthorn and overwinter as chrysalides, sometimes for 2 winters.



I have been lucky enough to see Emperors on High Pike in the Caldbeck Fells and at Jockey Shield in Geltsdale. Memorable encounters indeed!

Karen Mclellan

THE BUTTERFLIES OF THE ARNSIDE AND SILVERDALE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

The Arnside and Silverdale AONB is one of the best butterfly areas in the UK. In recent years, the UK has suffered species decline in abundance, variety and distribution. Almost every 'corner and crevice' of the country has faced such decline as our countryside is degraded by removal of hedgerows, coppices, marginal and so called 'unproductive' land and by the intensification of agriculture with drainage, liming, application of chemicals, insecticides, herbicides and a lack of management for 'public good'.

Fortunately we still have one of the most varied and valued landscapes for wildlife in the UK with many nature reserves and other areas of habitat suitable for butterflies and moths: the AONB is still in the 'premiership' when it comes to enjoying

these 'scaley winged' insects.

The AONB hosts 4 'Fritillary' species including the two rarest and most threatened butterflies in the country....

the High Brown Fritillary and the Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

The former is reduced in range but still breeds

successfully on Arnside Knott.....surely one of the best places to see butterflies

and enjoy a stunning view! The latter is now down to just one colony on the almost equally brilliant

Warton Crag. Both require either freshly cleared plots of woodland or bracken covered hillsides where

violets can grow in profusion. Their close

relatives the Dark Green and the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary are more tolerant of grass and cooler conditions at ground level but also require access to significant areas of violet to keep their caterpillars well fed.

Other habitat specialists include the Scotch Argus which in England is only found on the Blue Moor grass of Arnside Knott and Smardale Gill, [There are other sites where SA has been more recently introduced, mainly in Yorkshire, with qualified success] and the colonising Brown Hairstreak that was most



likely released 20 years ago and is now spreading where it can lay eggs on Blackthorn.... notably in the Gait Barrow [NNR] and Arnside Knott areas. The Duke of Burgundy, also a rare specialist, having lost many former colonies in the AONB is now limited to Gait Barrow where work to create semi-shaded woodland clearings rich in Primrose has maintained a small population. Less rare, but increasingly localised, the Wall and the Grayling like the coarse grasses, exposed limestone scars and crags of Warton Crag and Arnside Knott. Also less rare and probably under-recorded are the 3 remaining 'Hairstreaks' found in the NW; the Purple Hairstreak [PH] likes to fly at the top of Oak trees in the late afternoon and early evening sun of July, the White-letter Hairstreak [WLH] which only lays on Wych Elm [also an arboreal species found in late June and July] and the more widespread but equally elusive [and well camouflaged] Green Hairstreak [GH] whose caterpillars eat gorse, rock rose and bird's foot trefoil. PH are doing well in Butterfly Conservation's Myer's Allotment reserve opposite RSPB Leighton Moss, WLH can be found in Trowbarrow Quarry, Yealand Hall Allotment and Arnside Knott and GH are on the wing much earlier in the year [April-May]



on Warton Crag.

Dingy Skipper, Small Heath and Northern Brown Argus are also specialists that are not uncommon but local and rarely seen in a garden setting. All three are spring and early summer emergers and generally do well on Warton Crag during May and June in warm, sunny and usually short-turf environments. Their caterpillar food plants are Bird's Foot Trefoil, shorter grasses and Rock Rose respectively.

The above 15 species of butterflies make the Arnside and Silverdale area a special place for butterflies, but in fact a total of 35 out of 59 breeding UK species can be found there..... and with Silver-washed Fritillary and Large Heath almost within sight to the north and possibly others such as the Essex Skipper getting closer from the south who knows!

Chris Winnick

Since this article was written a pair of mating Silver-Washed Fritillaries has been photographed in BC reserve Myers Allotment..hopefully the start of a new colony.

Cumbria Branch Officers



Branch Chairman

Chris Winnick
The Old Vicarage,
Queens Road,
Kendal, LA9 4PL
01539 728254

chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk

Conservation Officer Treasurer

Done jointly by the Branch Committee.
David Eastlick, 16, Highfield Road, Grange over Sands, LA11
7JA, 015395 32076
dt.eastlick@gmail.com

Moth Officer

Martin Tordoff, 1 Fletcher Drive, Kendal, LA9 7DL
01539 735935 mtordoff42@gmail.com

Membership

Rose Thompson
membership@cumbria-butterflies.org.uk

Committee

Peter Boardman	Wendy Nelson	Bill Grayson
Martin Chadwick	Lynne Farrell	Helen Wallace
John Woodhead		

Newsletter Editor

Karen McLellan, Collin Ford, Great Corby, Carlisle
CA4 8NH karenmclellan28@outlook.com

Webmaster

Mark Eastlick

Nationally

Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth,
Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP

Regional Officer

Michael Rogers
mrogers@butterfly-conservation.org
07485 372233

Morecambe Bay Officer

Martin Wain mwain@butterfly-conservation.org

Martin Chadwick (WCBS co-ordinator for Cumbria)

martin_chadwick@hotmail.com

Equipment Officer

Steve Malpass

Health & Safety Officers

Martin Chadwick & Chris Winnick