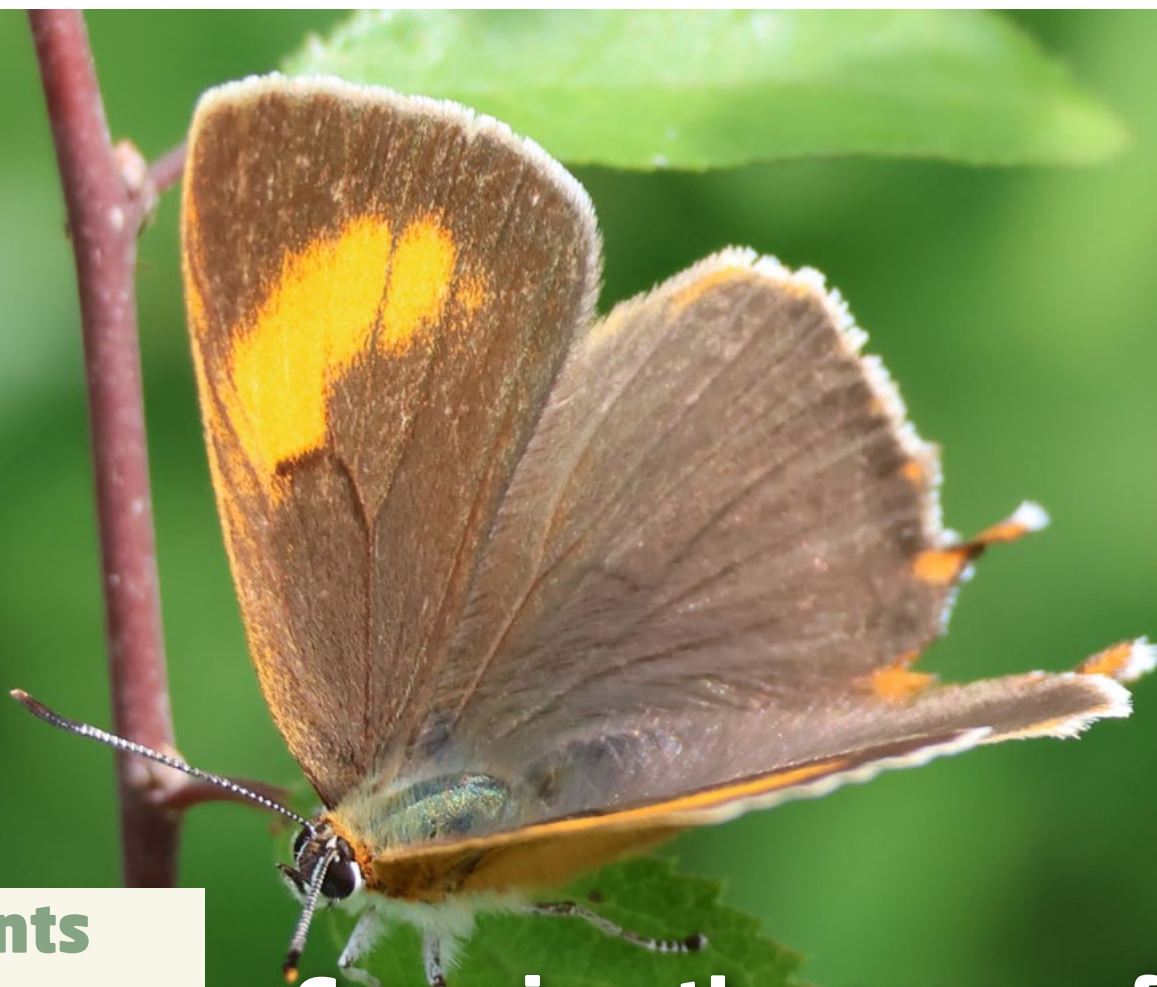


Whippendell & Beyond

The Butterflies of The Watford Area

Part 2: June - November

Brown
hairstreak



Contents

2	June
5	July
10	August
13	September
15	October
16	November
16	Review

Covering the areas of:

Cassiobury Park & Whippendell Woods, Fishers Field, Radlett Road Playing Fields, Merry Hill, South Oxhey Playing Fields, Croxley Moor, St Mary's Church & St Mary's Road and more.

2024 Report

Rick Vickers and Pete Fewell



Common blue



St Mary's Church Yard with plants before and after



Large skipper



Meadow brown

June

01 June

First day of meteorological Summer (and the reason we split the document here) - it doesn't feel like it, so far it has been a dull, damp, grey, year.

Off to **Horsenden Hill**, to man a Stall at the **Festival of Nature**. Good day, fair bit of interest from people and £68.00 raised!

Holly blue x 1

And reintroduced beavers afterwards, just down from where we were parked.

02 June

Finally, a fine day! 24°!

Off to **Hutchinsons Bank** (Croydon), brimstone, small blue, small heath, green hair-streak, peacock, common blue, glanville fritillary, holly blue.

Fox came to see me in the evening, I had barely been in 10 minutes! And she stayed for about two and a half hours, even having a kip at the south end of the Stone Circle for a while. A most relaxing evening.

03 June

The Robin's nest has been raided, material is strewn about and the adults are not to be seen. Probably magpies... (Garden)

04 June

Orange tip cats moving down the plants, and

one looks to be pupating. (Garden)

Fox was about for a while, until it suddenly darkened and rained. I didn't hang around either.

05 June

Cassiobury Park in the afternoon, to trim around the plants we put in. Orchid found by Small Oak Copse.

Then to listen to a talk on Water Voles by Josh from the HMWT.



Common spotted orchid, Small Oak Copse

08 June

Found three more orange tip cats the other day. Two of the originals have gone to pupate. I've found one of them, and it has taken on a most distinctive shape.

14.45 **Croxley Common Moor**, weather a bit dull with a light breeze.

Small heath x 33, Common blue x 1, Red admiral x 1, Peacock x 1

Mostly cloudy, but pleasant when the sun made it through.



Watford Green Market Takeover

09 June

Watford Green Market Takeover. Early start to set the Stall up. The weather was lovely at 07.00 but got worse and colder as the day wore on. Good turn out though, and plenty of interest from people. We were well positioned next to Andy and the Green Christians, and the Friends of Fishers Field.

10 June

To **St Mary's Church** at 14.00, as they were

having a get-together with the local school to build some bug houses and have a bug sweep. We put some plants in afterwards.

Red admiral x 1

12 June

Bad news from Andy: the area where we planted and put the bug houses has been MOWN!

13 June

Looks like the Robins have been raided again. I saw a magpie with what looked like an egg in its beak leave the shack twice. Have now put mesh in front, big enough for the robin to get through, but too small for a magpie.

Went past the Church in the afternoon. The grass has been cut low, we will have to wait and see if the plants have survived. The bug houses looked intact.

Wet evening.

15 June

Dull wet morning. In the afternoon, off to **Whippendell Woods**, 15.45

Large skipper x 1, Meadow brown x 1

We went a bit late and the weather was not as on our side - but it calmed down and was quite pleasant in the evening.

16 June

14.00 along to **Fishers Field**, as they were having a Nature Day. What a lovely reception they gave us, made us feel like Rock Stars!

Sunny day, though a little windy.

Speckled wood x 2, Brimstone x 1, Peacock x 1, Meadow brown x 1, Possible Holly blue and an unknown White.

Afterwards, down to the **River Colne** and Lake, Speckled Wood x 3, Peacock x 1 and a cluster of caterpillars

19 June

All quiet in the garden, other than the bees.

Before work picks up... time to visit **Cassiobury Park** and **Whippendell Woods**.

15.00 Park, nothing until **Small Oak Copse** Meadow brown x 30+

Over the bridge and up the path

Speckled wood x 1

to **Lime Avenue**

Speckled wood x 1

Top Avenue quiet, so on to **Frit Freeway, Junction** and **Avenue**

? White x 1

On to **Camilla Corner** and **Strawberry Fields**

Ringlet x 3, Meadow Brown x 2, Comma x 1

and back towards the **Golf Course**

Red admiral x 1, Speckled wood x 1

20 June Solstice

Garden Flora:

Herb robert, sage, buttercup, common vetch, red campion, geranium, echium, lucerne, hawkbit, Birds foot trefoil, kidney vetch, clover,

cranes bill, garlic mustard, honeysuckle, goats beard, field scabious, alkanet, wood avens, hog weed, salad burnett, bramble, white dead-nettle, hedge wound wort, bell flower.

22 June

Dull start, brightening up in the afternoon.

16.00 off to **Whippendell Woods**

Camilla Corner

Ringlet x 10+, White admiral x 1, Meadow brown x 4+, Red admiral x 1

The Camillas have returned! (Pete saw 2 yesterday) - let's hope Summer has also.

23 June

23°+

Fine sunny start to the day. After purchasing Gazebo for Butterfly Conservation, off to **Whippendell Woods** - 14.00.

The Junction

White Admiral x 1, Ringlet x 1

Foxglove Glade

Ringlet x 1

Further along the **Avenue**

Red Admiral x 1

to **Camilla Corner/Strawberry Fields**

White Admiral x 1, Ringlet x 8+, Meadow brown x 8+, Speckled wood x 1

along to the **next clearing**

Meadow brown x 3, Ringlet x 4, Comma x 1

back along the **Avenue**

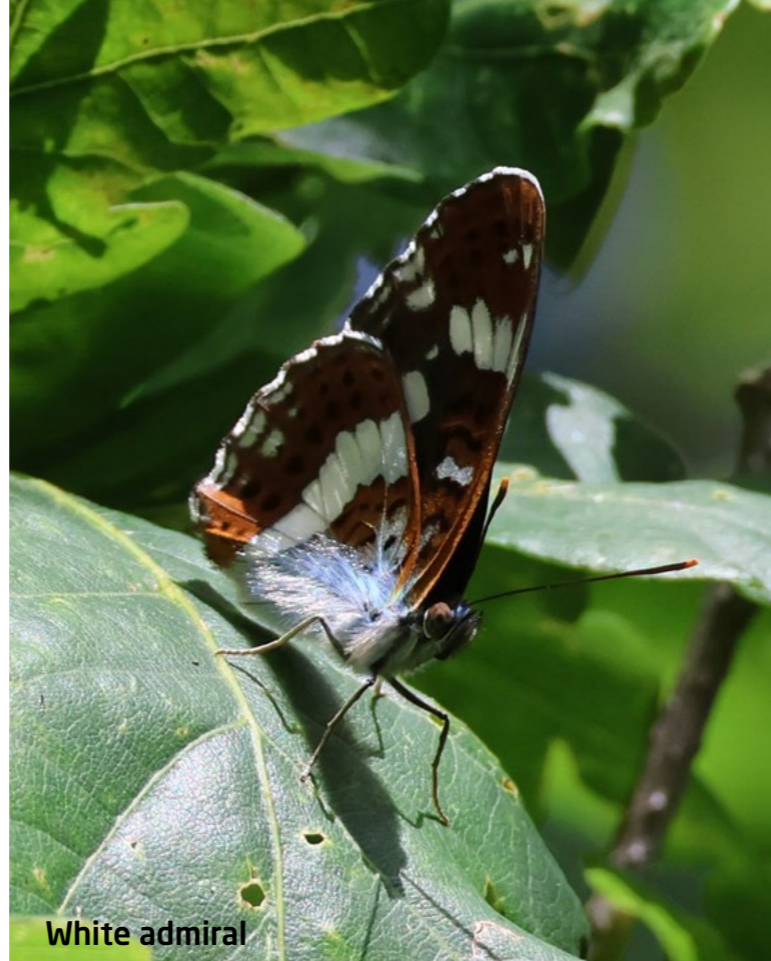
Ringlet x 4, Possible SWF x 1

Back along the top of **Strawberry Fields**

Ringlet x 5+, Comma x 1



Small skipper



White admiral



Purple emperor day, and below the elusive Emperor himself



Ringlet

Way back from **Camilla corner** to the **Junction**

Speckled wood x 1

Junction

Large skipper x 1

Frit Freeway

White admiral x 1, and a rabbit.

27 June Thursday 24°

Nice and sunny - time to go walkabout!

St Mary's Church, all is not lost! the Birds-foot trefoil we planted has survived the mowing! Unfortunately, no butterflies to report.

Going through the Town Centre, no bees or anything to be seen on the planters, not even the ones with lavender and scabious,

Waterfields Park

Red admiral x 1

Along **Colne** by **Radlett Road Playing Fields**

Peacock x 1

Then to **Fishers Field**

Comma x 1, Meadow brown x 8+

It was a bit late in the day, and a little windy - also a bit cooler than the previous few days which reached 28/30°

28 June 19°

Cooler again, and cloudy, with some sunny breaks.

Finally, a butterfly in the **Garden!**

Large white x 1 - it didn't stay long

Just after 17.00, off to **Cassiobury Park** to catch the last of the day's activity.

Meadow brown x 60+, Small skipper x 1

29 June

Lovely sunny day, 13.00 off to **Whippendell Woods**, parking at Grove Mill Lane.

The Rond/Lime Ave

Large white x 1, Meadow brown x 6+, Ringlet x 5+, Purple emperor x 3, Red admiral x 1, Comma x 1

Along **Top Ave**

Large white x 1, Meadow brown x 2+, Ringlet x 2+

Frit Freeway 14.30

Ringlet x 20+, Meadow brown x 20+, Comma x 4, Silver washed Fritillary x 1, Small skipper x 1, White admiral x 1

Junction and Avenue

Meadow brown x 4+, Ringlet x 4+, Comma x 2, Large skipper x 1

Foxglove Glade

Ringlet x 2, Large skipper x 1, Large white x 1

Avenue to Camilla Corner 15.30

Ringlet x 1, Meadow brown x 1

Camilla Corner/StrawberryFields

Ringlet x 40+, Meadow brown x 40+, White admiral x 2

Down to **Small clearing/Big bramble**

Meadow brown and Ringlets, there were lots but it clouded over. Back up to the other large bramble patch near **Strawberry Fields** 17.10

Ringlet x 3, Large skipper x 1

and back along the **Avenue** and up a **side path**

Ringlet x 6+, Comma x 1, Meadow brown x 4+

White Admiral x 1

Back to the **Junction**

White Admiral x 1

and to **Lime Avenue**

Red admiral x 2

30 June Butterfly Walk

Dull start, then it brightened up, then it clouded over just as we set off... 14.05 in to **Whippendell Woods**

Red admiral, Meadow brown, comma, Large skipper, ringlet, White Admiral x 2



Orange tip pupa

July

01-04 July

Mainly dull, wet, and windy...

Garden Flora:

Buttercup, red campion, knapweed, sage, garlic mustard, mint, geranium, herb robert, salad burnett, anemone, ragwort, lucerne, echium, birds-foot trefoil, evening primrose, clover, hawkbit, wild basil, fennel, self heal, cranes bill, verbena, bell flower, kidney vetch, field scabious, alkanet, hog weed, budlejia, wood avens.

06 July

After a dull start, into **Whippendell Woods**

Junction

Comma x 1, Ringlet x 5, Gate keeper x 1

Camilla Corner/Strawberry Fields

Ringlet x 4, Meadow brown x 2

11 July

Garden

Comma x 1, Holly blue x 1, Green veined white x 1

12 July

Sunny afternoon 14.30 off to **Cassiobury Park**, up **RH Path**

Large white x 1, Speckled wood x 1

on to the **Grasslands**

Meadow brown x 32+, Skippers x 4, Ringlet x 2

Over the bridge and up **Lime Avenue**

Meadow brown x 1

Where has the sun gone? It was lovely until I got to the Park!

Top Ave 15.45 Nothing, so on to **Frit Freeway**

Meadow brown x 2, Comma x 1

Junction and Ave to Foxglove Glade

Red admiral x 1

Camilla Corner/Strawberry Fields

Ringlet x 10+, Meadow brown x 3+, Small skipper x 1, Essex skipper x 1

Not really a butterflying day, but they are few and far between lately

13 July WildFest

Cassiobury Park with plenty of other Stalls

Red admiral, Ringlet, Meadow brown, skippers, Gate keepers., Large white

After the event, to **Whippendell Woods**

Comma x 1, Red admiral x 1

14 July Emperor Day

Fine day to start - off to **Whippendell Woods** for the Purple Emperor Experiment, we made a stink but no joy luring His Imperial Majesty - very few flies either...

Lime Ave

Meadow brown, Ringlet, Large white, Red admiral

So we gave up after a couple of hours and went round **The Woods** instead

Meadow brown, ringlet, whites (L&G.V), Red admiral, Gate Keeper, Silver-washed fritillary, Comma, Large skipper, Small skipper

16.30 **Dell Wood** and into **Merlins Wood** and back. Unfortunately, nothing else seen, other than a Violet ground beetle

Violet ground beetle





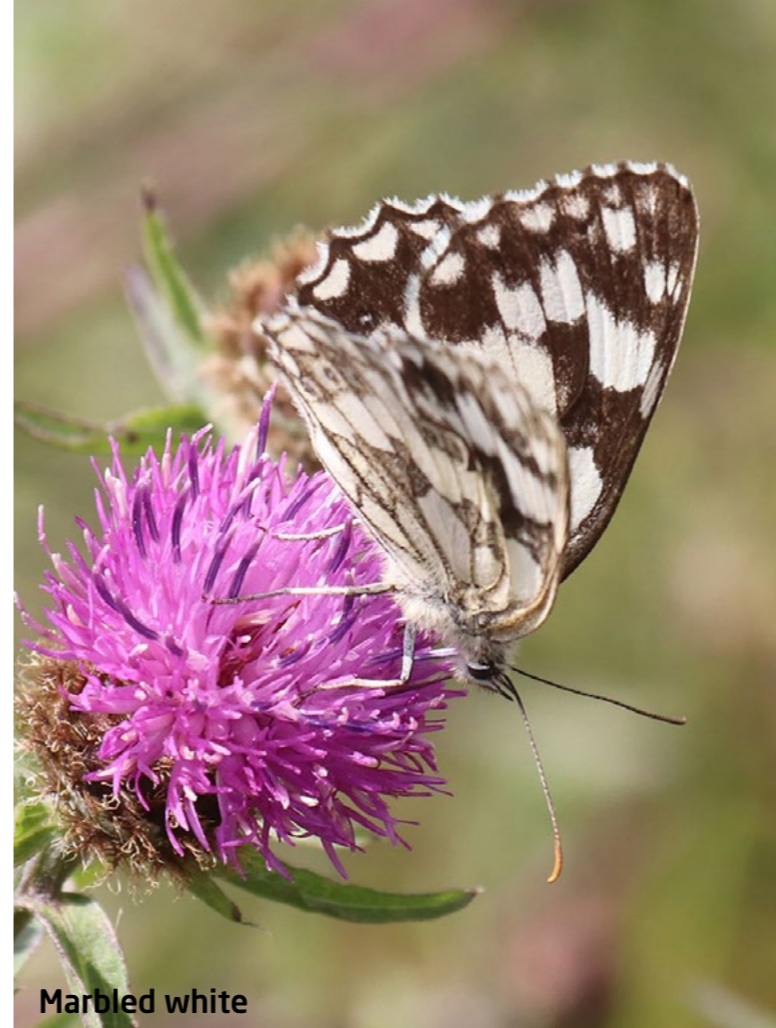
Gate keeper



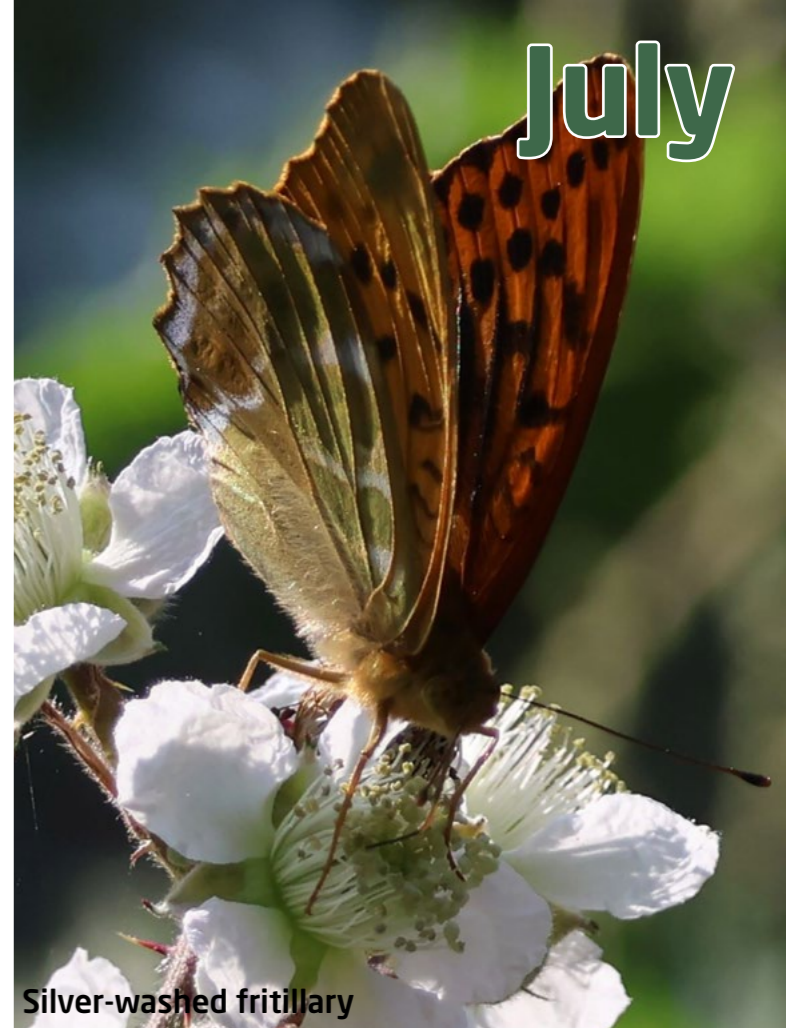
Top of The Parade



Essex skipper



Marbled white



Silver-washed fritillary

15 July

Pleasant start to the day
Gate keeper x 1 (Garden)
then it rained all afternoon

16 July

Mild again, Garden.
Gate keeper x 1, Comma x 1

17 July

Fine sunny start to the day
Gate keeper x 1 (Garden)
12.00 Walkabout, **St Mary's Church**
Large white x 1, Comma x 1
Walked up through Town looking at the
planters x3 Bees seen, up to the wild Verge at
the top of the **Parade** by the LP Café
Essex skippers x 6+

Birds-foot trefoil, black medic, roses and self
heal growing there amongst other things.
Then down to **Radlet Road Playing Fields**
along the **River Colne**

Meadow brown x 1, Whites x 8+, Red admiral
x 3+, Comma x 4, Marbled white x 1, Essex
skipper x 4+, Gate keeper x 3

Over Link Road to the **Pond/Lake** and round,
as the sun went in...

Whites x 5+ (including Large), Comma x 1, Gate
keeper x 1

Onwards to **Fishers Field** 14.25
Comma x 3, Gate keeper x 50+, Whites x 10+
(including Large), Small skipper x 12+, Marbled
white x 6+, Meadow brown x 6+, Burnett moth
x 3+, Speckled wood x 1

Clouds of Flying ants on the way home.
Green-veined white x 1 (Garden)

18 July

A lovely sunny day. After a meeting at the
Church with the Council (proposed is a re-do of
the High street end, and hopefully a wild bit by
the Car Park), it was off to **Cassiobury Park**
14.40

Large white x 6+, Speckled wood x 10+,
Ringlet x 20+, Meadow brown x 30+, Small
skipper x 8+, Gate keeper x 20+, Essex skipper
x 10+, Comma x 3

That was a hot day! I'm not used to those this
year!

Later I sunk and filled a Pond/washing-up tub from
HMWT that they were giving out at WildFest.

Around midnight Foxy came in to show me
she'd caught a rat and then trotted off!

19 July

Another lovely warm one
Large white x 1 (Garden)

Time to go out and about again
South Oxhey, Old Pitch and Putt Course

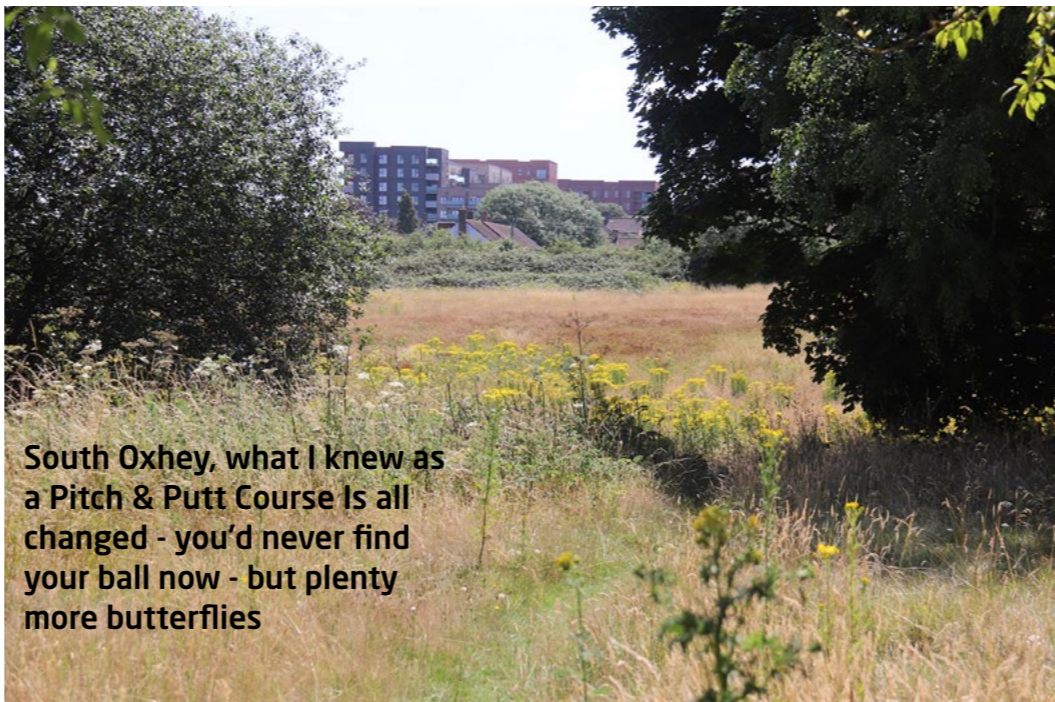
26-28°

Meadow brown x 80-100+, Gate keeper x
80-100+, Essex skipper x 40+, Small skipper x
40+, Large skipper x 1

After a pint of cider at The Partridge (a very
long time since I'd been there!), a wander
through the **Cemetery Woodland Walk**
Speckled wood x 2, Large white x 2, Comma
x 1, Holly blue x 1, Meadow brown x 1, Gate
keeper x 1

Then on to **Merry Hill**, where I met up with Pete
Meadow brown x 100's, Small skippers x 100's,
Gate keeper x 100's, Ringlet x 1, Marbled white
x 10+

After, Grog and Foxes.



**South Oxhey, what I knew as
a Pitch & Putt Course is all
changed - you'd never find
your ball now - but plenty
more butterflies**

20 July

Cooler and a bit dull. Full Moon.

21 July

Pleasant day, so a bit further afield today.

Aldbury Nowers

Ringlet, Meadow brown, Whites, Comma,
Skippers, Gate keepers, Marbled white, Chalk-
hill blue, Dark green fritillary, Red admiral, Small
heath

24°+

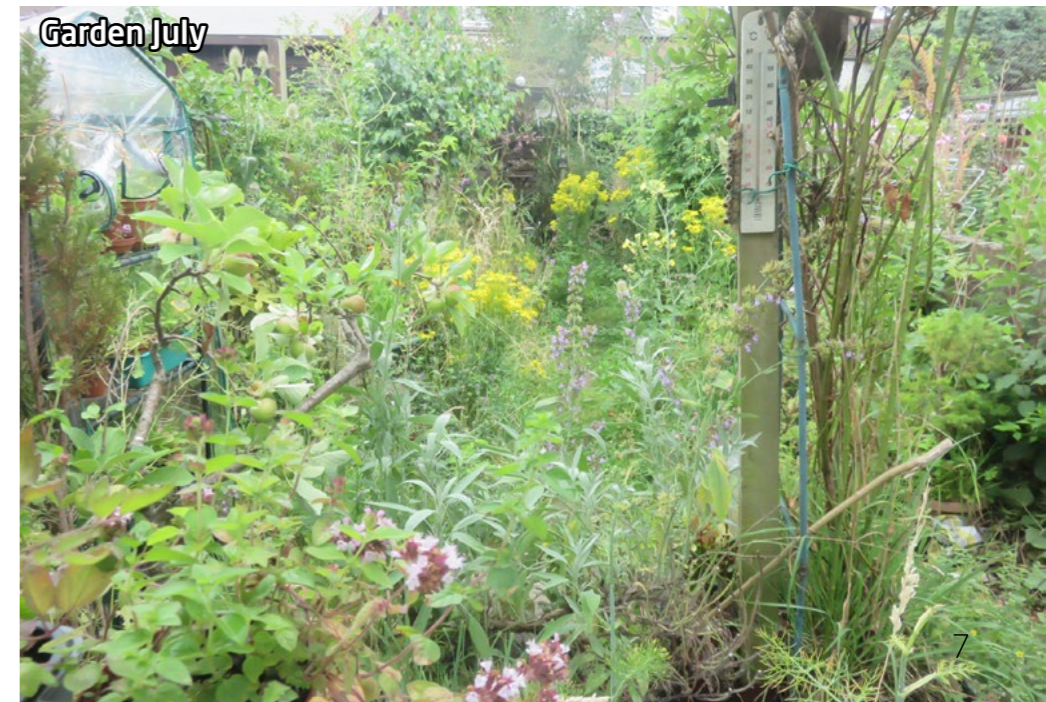
Garden Flora:

Mint, herb robert, nasturtium, chives, sage,
ragwort, marjoram, scabious, wild basil, wood
avens, lemon balm, geranium, anemone, carrot,
fennel, marigold, red campion, toadflax, birds-
foot trefoil, lucerne, evening primrose, globe
thistle, buttercup, self heal, alkanet, budleja,
teasle, hops, clover, jasmine, bramble, roses,
chamomile, common vetch, echium, musk
mallow, enchanters nightshade

22nd July

Bunkers Park open space TL 0845 0599

Garden July



off Bedmond Road. The weather had brightened
up a bit to see: Small Skipper 8+, Gatekeeper 6+,
Six-spot Burnet moth 4, Marbled White 4(tatty),
Silver-y-Moth 1, Comma and large White and
other Whites were on the wing. But the first
and only Painted Lady I got a photo of in 2024
turned up and a fresh-looking one too!

27 July Sunny Sunday

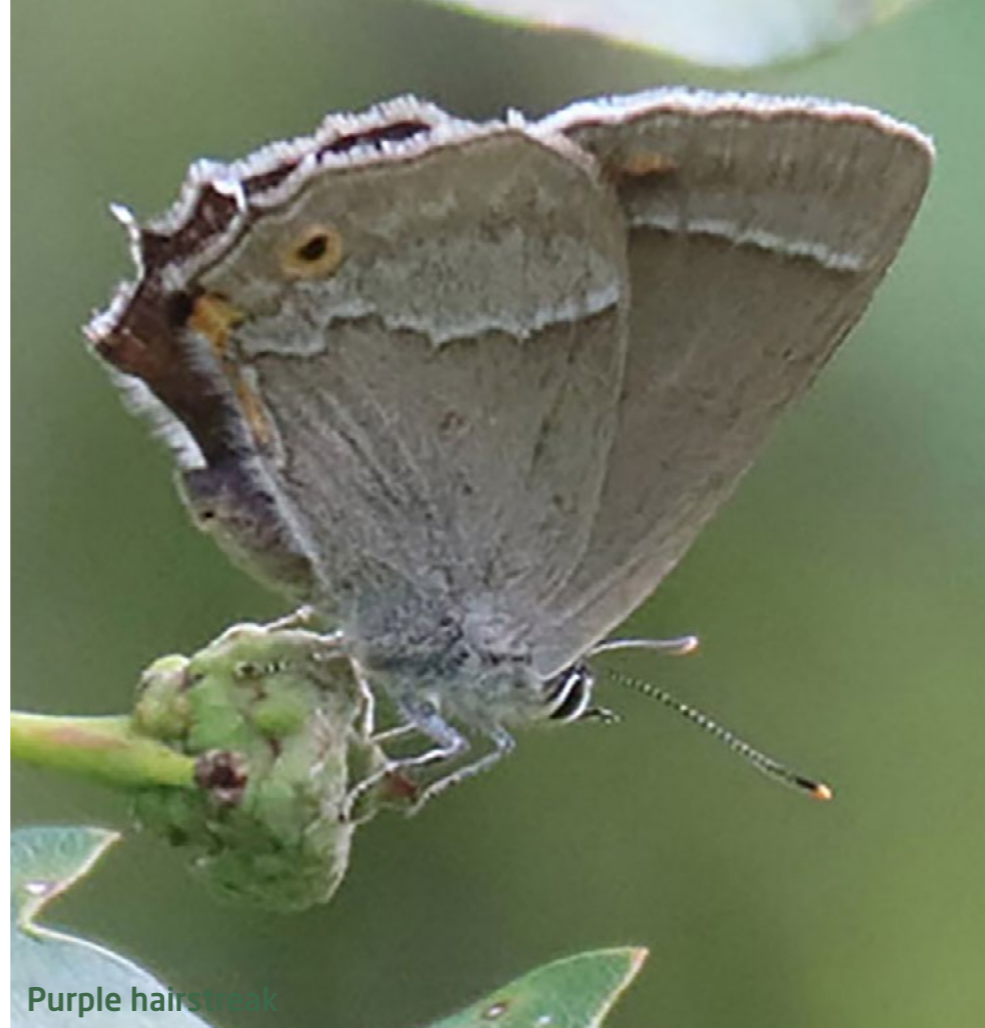
Lovely day, slight breeze.

Large white x 1, Peacock x 1 (Garden)

Dragonfly patrolling over the garden, which is
a-buzz with bees etc.



Silver washed fritillary



Purple hairstreak



Brown hairstreak



Brown hairstreak egg

Cassiobury Park - 14.40

Speckled wood x 3, Meadow brown x 50+, Gate keeper x 40+, Large white x 1, Small skipper x 4+, Essex skipper x 3+
Over the bridge to **Hole 16**

Purple hairstreak x 1

Lime Avenue

Large white x 1, Meadow brown x 1, Gate keeper x 2

on to **Top Avenue**

Silver washed fritillary x 1, Whites x 2 - including Green veined, Meadow brown x 2+, Comma x 1

Frit Freeway - 16.00

Comma x 2, Gate keeper x 3+, Ringlet x 3+, Whites x 2 (Including Large)

Junction

Green-veined white x 1, Meadow brown x 1, Gate keeper x 1

Unfortunately, the further into the Woods we walked, the less the sun shone, and the wind picked up...

Camilla Corner was quiet, so on to the large **Bramble Patch**

Silver washed fritillary x 2, Purple hair-streak x 1

back along the bottom of the **Avenue**

Ringlet x 1, Purple hairstreak x 1

and up again to **Strawberry Fields - 17.50**

Ringlet x 1

Bottom of **Footpath 31** by Rousebarn Lane

Comma x 2

Tee 17

Purple hairstreak x 10+

28 July

26°+

Fine start to the day.

Comma x 1, Peacock x 1, White x 1

That was just in the **Garden**, so off to **Merry Hill - 15.00**

Meadow browns, Gate keepers and Small skippers were seen in good numbers and also:

Common blue x 3+, Marbled white x 5+, Large

white x 4+, Brimstone x 1, Speckled wood x 1, Brown hairstreak x 2, Purple hairstreak x 1

Brilliant day, and we got the first sighting of an adult Brown hairstreak in the county for 25 years!

29 July

29°

Lovely day, potted in the **garden**.

Gate keeper x 1, Comma x 1

30 July

29-30°+

Another lovely day.

Comma x 1, Large white x 1 **(Garden)**

12.30 Walkabout, first going to **St Mary's Church**

Comma x 1, Large white x 1

up to the top of the **Precinct/LP Café**: all quiet along the grass verge

Next stop to Radlett Road Playing Fields along the **River Colne**..

Whites x 7+ (including Large), Speckled wood x 1, Gate keeper x 4, Comma x 1

Over Link Road to the **Pond/Lake**

Whites x 3, Comma x 1

Back along Link Road, checking for Brown hairstreaks amongst the Sloes and Ash trees along the way to **Fishers Field - 14.25**

Gate keeper x 15+, Common blue x 2, Whites x 4, Burnett Moths x 6+, Meadow brown x 1, Purple hair-streak x 3, Peacock x 1, Speckled wood x 4+

That was a hot day's walking - the butterflies had more sense than me and mainly stayed hidden.

31 July

29°

Again, hot and sunny.

15.30 Croxley Common moor

Meadow brown & Gate keepers in good numbers, Small copper x 12, Small heath x 12+, Common blue x 7+, Whites x 5+ (Including Green-veined & Large), Small skipper x 3, Speckled wood x 1, Peacock x 2



Fishers Field, showing a fine bit of mowing, that makes it both usable by people and beneficial for insects and other wildlife

Brown hairstreak - the success story

20 years ago no one imagined seeing a Brown Hairstreak butterfly in Hertfordshire. However since 2016, the butterfly has literally spread its wings from the southernmost part of the Branch area close to the River Thames in Middlesex and into south Hertfordshire. Although there were historic Hertfordshire records the butterfly was thought to be extinct. However around 2010 we started to become aware of a major spread northwards through Surrey and this was almost certainly the origin of these first records.

The adult Brown Hairstreak is an elusive butterfly that flies relatively late in summer - like most of the Hairstreaks it spends a lot of time in the top of trees feeding on honeydew and only occasionally comes down to nectar. Therefore one of the best methods to survey for the butterfly is to find the tiny white eggs in the winter on blackthorn and/or members of the prunus family. Searching for these eggs as a winter pastime becomes quite addictive!

And this is what happened on the 4th February 2024 when Liz Goodyear & Ian Watts decided to visit Merry Hill in Bushey a site owned by the Woodland Trust and to their amazement found 14 eggs! They had got extremely close two days before looking along the London Loop walk just north of Stanmore Common when they found 2 eggs within a few yards of the Harrow/Herts border, hence why they returned to look at Merry Hill - adults were also seen this summer. Also searching for eggs was Rohan Harris who had already got very close when he found eggs at Stanmore Country Park and Brockley Hill. Since then the species has been confirmed at Prestwick Road Meadows, Carpenders Park, Moor Park, Croxley Common Moor, King George's Field Holywell, South Oxhey Playing Field as well as Composters Park in Elstree and a site close to Borehamwood. The probability of more sites being found in 2025 is very high!

Liz Goodyear, Branch Organiser, Secretary and Events Organiser, Hertfordshire & Middlesex Branch Butterfly Conservation

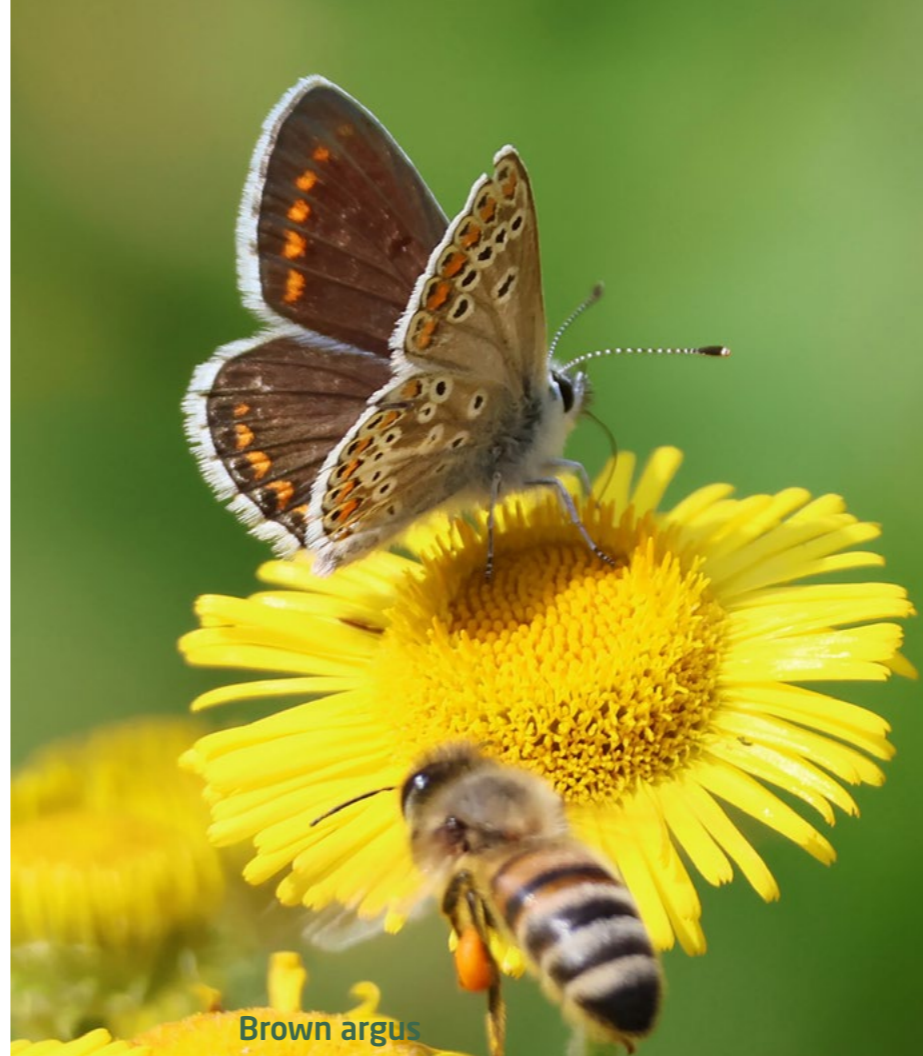
August



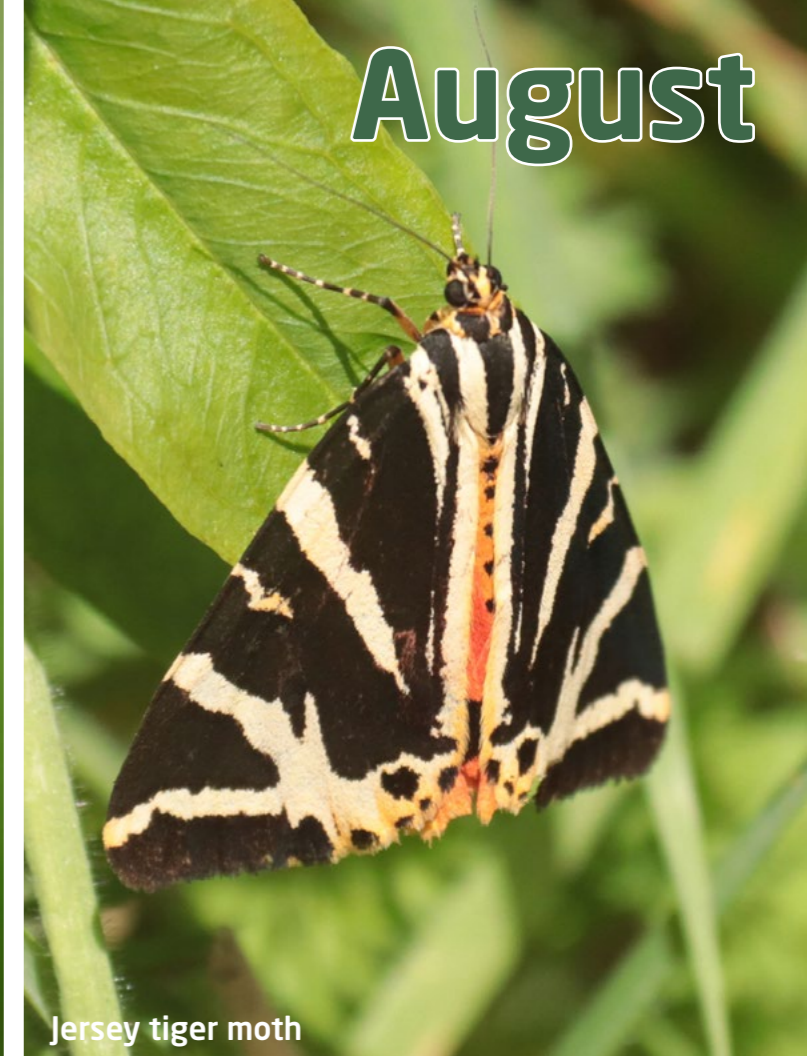
Burnett moth



Wasp spider



Brown argus



Jersey tiger moth

August

03 August 26°

Cloudy, after a mixed start, with a light breeze

Merry Hill 15.20

Meadow brown & Gate keeper in fair numbers, plenty of Burnett Moths, Small skipper x 2, Speckled wood x 1, Purple hair-streak x 2

06 August

LWT Brown hairstreak walk in **Ruislip**

Purple hair-streak, Meadow brown, Brown argus, Small white, Common blue, Small copper, gate keeper, Green-veined white, Large white, Ringlet, Brown hair-streak, Small heath, Holly blue, Red admiral, comma

Garden Flora:

Mint, sage, marjoram, lemon balm, wild basil, bell flower, geranium, anemone, hawksbit, ragwort, marigold, toadflax, red campion, carrot, Birds-foot trefoil, lucerne, fennel, teasel, echium, musk mallow, alkanet, hemp agrimony, wood avens, budlejia, hops, nettles, self-heal, scabious, willowherbs, enchanters nightshade, white dead-nettle,

11 August Sunny 30°

Glorious sunshine and grasshoppers!

Meadow brown x 1, Large white x 1, Mint moths x 12+ **(Garden)**

14.45 Whippendell Woods

Speckled wood x 3+, Whites x 9+ including Large and Green-veined, Peacock x 2, Brimstone x 1, Gate keeper x 2, Comma x 3, Silver-washed fritillary x 3, Meadow brown x 1, Holly blue x 1

17.45 Cassiobury Park

Small copper x 2, Gate keeper x 3+, Skipper x 1, Meadow brown x 4+, Speckled wood x 1

12 August Merry Hill

Red admiral x 1, Large white x 1, other Whites x 7, Speckled wood x 8, Meadow brown x 20+, Gatekeeper x 8, Brown hairstreak x 1 (male), Brimstone x 2, Jersey Tiger moth x 1. (pete solo).

16 Aug

Speckled wood x 7, Gate keeper x 4, Meadow brown x 30+, Brimstone x 3, Small heath x 5, Large white x 2, other whites x 3, Brown argus x 1. (Pete solo).

17 August 24°

Fine day, **14.40 Hexton Chalk Pits**

Meadow brown, Chalk hill blue x 25+, Burnett

Moth, Common blue x 5+, Small heath x 1, And one Wasp spider

Then on to **Pegsdon Hills - 17.30**

Gate keeper, Meadow brown x 20, Burnett Moth, Chalk hill blue, Small heath, Common blue

19 Aug

Dull and windy, Full Moon.

20 Aug

Dull start, brightened up in the afternoon.

St Mary's Church - 14.00

No butterflies seen, but grasshoppers heard.

On to the top of the **Parade/LP Café**

Also nothing, but it had clouded over.

Then to **Radlett Road Playing Fields/River Colne**

Green-veined white x 2, Comma x 2

The big willow where we sometimes sit has come down - looks recent.

Large white x 1

Over Link Road to the **Pond/Lake**

Large white x 2, Comma x 1

Fishers Field - 16.15

Purple hair-streak x 2, Speckled wood x 1

21 Aug 21°

Bit cloudy, but time to go walking again. 13.00,

a later set off than intended, to **South Oxhey Playing Fields - 13.45**

Speckled wood x 1, Meadow brown x 1, Brown hair-streak x 1

Then to the old Pitch and Putt Course, but it had been cut, along the Railway line to Watford Heath and a brief stop at the Royal Oak.

23 Aug

After a wet and windy day and night, all is now a bit calmer, hopefully the storm has passed...

So, as the weather is slightly better, off for some fresh air, first stopping at **St Mary's Church**

White x 1

Then on to **Merry Hill**, coming in from Haydon Road

Speckled wood x 10+, Meadow brown x 20+, Whites x 2, Small heath x 14+

After scouring the hedgerows for a good while and no sign of any BHS, time to head back as the wind was picking up and the clouds were coming over, The Royal Oak broke the walk home up nicely.

25 Aug

Yesterday was wet, today is windy...

Jersey tiger x 1 **(Garden)**

26 Aug

Bank Holiday Monday. Windy start, but it calmed down in the afternoon when we went out.

Painted lady x 1 **Garden**

Then to **Merry Hill** - 14.15

Whites x 2, Speckled wood x 8+, Meadow brown x 7+, Brown hairstreak x 1 **TQ 13057 43835**, Small heath x 1

20°+

27 Aug

Dull and windy.

Red admiral x 1 **Garden**

28 Aug

Fine day.

Whites x 1, Comma x 1 **Garden**

29°



Merry Hill

August



Small heath



Scabious, Oak Copse



Willow emerald damselfly



Comma

September



Large white

Garden Flora:

Mint, nasturtium, campion, marjoram, field scabious, sage, bell flower, fennel, wild basil, lemon balm, lucerne, hawksbit, globe thistle, ragwort, anemone, marigold, budleja, hemp agrimony, ribwort plantain, herb robert, alkanet, echium, white dead-nettle, hops, birds foot trefoil, yellow toadflax, willow herbs, geranium, red bartisia

29 Aug 23°+

Fine day, cooler than yesterday.

Large white x 1, Comma x 1

Garden

14.00 off to **Cassiobury Park** - down RH Path

Speckled wood x 8, Green-veined white x 1, Comma x 1, White x 1

Also dragonflies and hornets

Out to **Oak Copse** and **grasslands**

Scabious and Birds foot trefoil doing well

Speckled wood x 2, Large white x 1

Along the River through **NR1**

Whites x 2, Speckled wood x 2

More dragonflies

Over **Lock 76** and into **Whippendell Woods**, up to Grove Mill Lane

carpark: all quiet, down to the **Junction**

White x 1

Quiet up the **Avenue**, as was **Frit Freeway**, back through the Golf Course - **Tee 17**

Purple hairstreak x 2

Back into the Park and a walk around the wetlands and the bits I don't usually visit.

30 Aug 22°

Fine day **Garden**

Whites x 4 (Including Large), Red admiral x 1, Painted lady x 1, Comma x 1

Merry Hill (Pete)

Whites predominantly Large 6+ Small Heath 12, Meadow Brown 18, Brown Hairstreak (female egg laying **TQ13507 4119**) 1,

'I could not believe it: a brown hairstreak egg laying 20 minutes walk from my flat!' **Pete,**

Speckled wood x 2, Red admiral x 1, Small copper x 1.

September

01 Sept

First day of Meteorological Autumn, otherwise a lovely day.

Large white x 1, Red admiral x 1, Comma x 1, Small white x 1 **Garden**

14.00 time to go out, **Riverside Road Playing Fields** along the river (obviously).

Whites x 6, Speckled wood x 1

where a Willow Emerald Damselfly settled

Along **Ebury Way**

Speckled wood x 1, White x 1

Detour along **Footpath** to **Hampermill Lane**

Whites x 2

and back up the **Ebury Way**

Speckled wood x 2, White x 1

Fields near Croxley Moor

Whites x 4, Comma x 1

Croxley Moor

Whites x 12+, Red admiral x 5, Holly blue x 5, Small copper x 2, Speckled wood x 1, Meadow brown x 15+, Small heath x 30+

Back along **Ebury Way**

Speckled wood x 1

Although we saw no Brown Hairstreaks, it was good to check along the hedgerows, there was

plenty of blackthorn, so it's only a matter of time...

06 Sept

Mostly cloudy, but warm and close **Garden**

Large white x 2, Red admiral x 1, Small white x 2

07 Sept

Warm, but overcast **Garden**

Red admiral x 1, Large white x 1, Small white x 1

Just after midday, off to **Therfield Heath,**

21°

plenty of whites and a red admiral on the way. After a brief stop in Royston Museum, to the Heath 14.30

Whites, Meadow brown, Brimstone, Adonis blue

Also a 4-spotted orb weaver and wasp spider

14 Sept

A pleasant start to the day.

Large white x 1, Small white x 1

14.40 - Merry Hill

Whites x 20+, Red admiral x 1, Comma x 3, Small heath x 1, Small copper x 1

End of the day: Merry Hill



September



Small copper



Hummingbird hawkmoth



Red admiral



Painted lady

17.18 Sept

Full Harvest Moon.

Garden Flora:

Mint, lemon balm, nasturtium, campion, bell flower, salad burnett, anemone, marigold, red bartsia, hawkbit, lucerne, wild basil, wood avens, toadflax, fennel, evening primrose, hemp agrimony, ragwort, musk mallow, budleja, echium, marjoram, globe thistle, forget-me-not

21 Sept Equinox 21°

It's supposed to be stormy, but not so far... just a bit cloudy...

In the **Garden**, Large and Small whites flitting

by, Comma x 1, Brimstone x 1

14.15 - Croxley Moor

Whites x 8+ (Inc: Green veined and Large), Meadow brown x 3, Small copper x 48, Comma x 1, Small heath x 8

Storms have still not shown up...

...finally heavy downpours in the early hours

25 Sept 17°

After a couple of dull, damp days - finally a moment of sun mid-day, and...

Comma x 2, Large white x 1, Small white x 1

28 Sept 14°

Occasional bursts of sunshine - but WHAT is

going on in the **garden!**?! it's all aflutter.

Comma x 2, Hummingbird hawkmoth x 1, Holly blue x 1, White x 1

After a good start to the day, off to **Cassiobury Park** 14.00

Whites x 8+

and a couple of possible Speckled woods.

Then to **Whippendell Woods** 15.30

Speckled wood x 1

30 Sept Garden

Mostly dull.

Comma x 1

Croxley Common Moor



October

02 October

Again, mostly dull.. Red admiral x 1 (**Garden**)

03 Oct Garden 16°

Pleasant day, mild but sunny

Red admiral x 1, Large white x 1, Painted lady x 1

Garden Flora

Mint, nasturtium, anemone, bell flower, forget-me-not, marigold, purple toadflax, wild basil, evening primrose, red campion, hemp agrimony, marjoram, budleja, musk mallow, ragwort, wood avens

05 Oct

Sustainable Watford meeting at **St Mary's Church** - we went to the socials afterwards, good to see everyone and show we are still keen on a Wilder Watford!

After, grog in the garden with bees, hoverflies, caterpillars and foxes.

09 Oct

After some dull, damp days, off to **Cassiobury Park**, Wetlands, 1 x white.

10 Oct

Dull, damp morning, pleasant afternoon, back to **Cassiobury Park**, for some scraping and planting (thanks to Alex for the extra pair of hands). We got the Yellow Rattle in and some more Birds-foot Trefoil, also a couple of Marjoram.

16 Oct 20°

A fine but hazy day, which was warmer than it looked.

14.00 to **St Mary's Church** to join the Eco Ambassadors from St John's School for a Bug Hunt. We also got some plants in; red campion, marjoram, St John's wort, and toadflax.

17 Oct Full Moon

Garden flora:

Mint, nasturtium, bellflower, anemone, marigold, wild basil, ragwort, marjoram, budleja, redcampion, fatsia japonica

20 Oct

Windy as Storm Ashley passed by

26 Oct

The **garden** is getting quieter, but still a few bees and hoverflies around. There are plenty of wasps though, scouring the foliage for prey.



The pair of foxes, relaxing at the bottom of the garden

November/Review

Prestwick Road Meadows

November

It has been a mostly dull start to the month. The Brown hairstreak egg hunting season has begun. We have heard they have been found in a few places, including Prestwick Road Meadows, a new place for us to check out.

15 Nov

Super full, Beaver moon.

16 Nov

Time for us to have a look at **Prestwick Road meadows**, and check the hedgerows that hadn't been looked at. We found plenty of yellow and green egg markers, and added a couple of purple ones to the count.

22 Nov

Wet and windy as Storm Bert went past. The greenhouses took a tumble, but I think the contents are mostly unharmed, and what was a leafy birch tree on Friday is now bare.

28 Nov

Another storm went past but not really noticeable here, just frosty.

30 Nov

A mild day for the time of year. In the afternoon off to **Croxley Common Moor** for a BHS egg search. We found one, **TQ 08509 94942**.



Garden, late November

Review

The start of 2024 was often spent slopping around in mud looking for Brown Hairstreak eggs which turned out to be quite an adventure during the year for this species in Hertfordshire! 2024 was not a good one for butterflies on the whole, and our planned butterfly walks over the year were a disappointment with the poor weather conditions thrown at us during the scheduled dates. Malcolm Hull didn't fair up much better with the walk at Bricket Wood that I attended which was eventually rained off, but we did at least get to see a White Admiral.

At the beginning of the year we also had a few meetings with Andy Roby at St Mary's Church and the rest of the crew, to help develop the "Green Heart of Watford" project. With the aim of improving bio-diversity at the church. Since those early meetings a good plan is now developing to include wild flowers beneficial to our pollinating insects and also connect people with the development and assist with knowledge and understanding of our pollinating insects. Look out for further developments with St Mary's Church in 2025!

The first of the trio of stalls attended for Butterfly Conservation was at Horsenden Hill on the 1st June, it was rather cool for the time of year, as were the stalls at Watford Market Takeover and the Wildfest in Cassiobury Park. We were delighted to introduce some cards made by our friend Emma to our stalls. Her original artwork printed onto cards certainly helped with keeping people interested in visiting the stall, and we were able to raise a few quid for Butterfly Conservation and the Green Heart of Watford Project too. Although we didn't get rained off our stalls Emma's artwork has the ability to brighten up a dull day!

Since monitoring butterflies in Cassiobury Park some years back it was noted that Common Blue, Small Copper and Brown Argus have been seen over several seasons in an area Rick named "Small Oak Copse" as a reference point (see maps section 3). It was noted that apart from sorrel, the caterpillar food plant of the Small Copper of which is reasonably abundant, there was a curious lack of plants suitable for Common Blue and Brown Argus caterpillars. So far we haven't touched on cranesbill plants for Brown Argus but have been concentrating on improving conditions for the Common Blue. By planting out the birds-foot trefoil plants that were grown in the autumn of 2023 some flourished last summer and produced flowers. Although there was some weather trouble from a late season heatwave in 2023 a few of the field scabious plants that were planted did survive and flowered in this section of the park, which are a welcome nectar source for pollinating insects.

With the help of Alec Thomas, (editor of Friends of Cassiobury Park newsletter "Park Life") yellow rattle seeds were sown in the autumn of 2024 in an attempt to thin out the grasses to allow a more diverse range of suitable plants for butterflies, such as the Common Blue and other pollinating insects. By increasing the available nectar sources we hope to see butterflies such as the



Marbled white

Marbled White return as a regular species. We shall monitor and note developments in this area with a progress report for 2025.

In October 2023 we hooked up with Nick Furtec and Ian Watts from Butterfly Conservation in a search and rescue mission for Brown Hairstreak eggs over at Ickenham as the area was due to be cut back. After some hours of searching we rescued a number of eggs between us. These eggs had to be returned to the same site due to legal reasons at a later date.

Most of the eggs were stored in Ricks garden with Nick looking after the rest. The eggs stored at Rick's were re-established in the area on the 9th of March 2024. We found a few of the eggs that Nick had already returned during the process. On the 18th of May another visit was conducted to see if we could find any of the returned eggs to check if any hatched. All of the eggs we tagged and relocated had hatched including the double eggs in the photo. More research is required to determine whether a rescued hatched caterpillar can make it to a blackthorn bud.

As December approached a second egg rescue was carried out at Prestwick Road Meadows South Oxhey, a new site in Hertfordshire for Brown Hairstreak. With the initial egg search conducted by Rohan Harris shortly followed by Liz Goodyear's egg search a good number of eggs were discovered. These eggs were marked and plotted onto a map by Liz which made it relatively easy to relocate the eggs that we needed to rescue. That gave us some extra time and several more eggs were found in the areas due for cutting back. This giving a total of 23 eggs rescued. It would seem we now have a golden opportunity in 2025 to find out whether egg rescues are worthwhile and hopefully see if a rescued egg can produce a caterpillar that reaches a bud! Caroline Craing from the Countryside management service has been very supportive with the egg rescue and we hope to engage with Caroline on their return to Prestwick Meadows.

Common Blue and Brown Argus in particular had a bad year in 2024. Sightings of White Admiral were well down on previous years in Whippendell Woods and numbers of Silver-Washed Fritillary were also low. Much of this was probably down to the bad weather. However some species did at least have a reasonable year with Ringlets, Meadow Brown and the Gatekeeper seen in good numbers on several sites.

Gatekeeper butterflies are similar in size and colour to a Brown Hairstreak and can be a mis-identified from a distance.



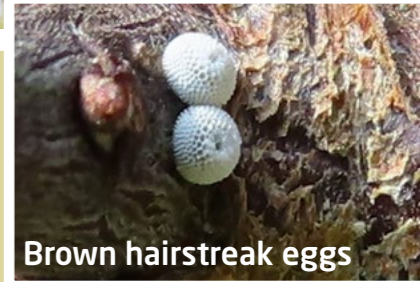
White admiral

At Merry Hill this butterfly gave us a problem at times as their flight time co-incides with the beginning of the Brown Hairstreak flight period! The Small Copper looked like it was going to have a poor year and few were seen with early generations. However their numbers picked up at the end of July and a late season generation produced some extraordinary numbers at Croxley Moor along with other sites in Hertfordshire as visited by Malcolm Hull. Following Malcolm's first report of over 60 recorded at Croxley Moor our follow up survey sightings came up just shy of 50. But with estimated projections of the areas we didn't cover the likelihood is that there must have been well over a 100 on the wing at Croxley Moor on the Autumn Equinox 2024! It was a great year for Brown Hairstreak in Hertfordshire with egg finds as mentioned as well as our sightings of adults at Merry Hill.

Rohan has done some fantastic egg searches and most recently 2 eggs were discovered in the Leavesden area of North Watford the furthest north in Hertfordshire so far!

Although the Comma had a reasonable year along with Red Admiral. Peacock numbers were down and the Small Tortoiseshell had the worst year I have known in Hertfordshire. This butterfly used to thrive along the river Gade in Cassiobury park with good numbers seen until about 2018. Their numbers went into steep decline after and no sightings were recorded in Cassiobury Park and few elsewhere in Hertfordshire during 2024. There are lots of possibilities for the course including predation and climate change. The nettles that the lava feed on may well be taking in toxins by low lying areas and waterway's which is contributing to the decline. Whatever the reason this well known garden butterfly is now the most threatened species in our county. Fingers crossed with more research the cause can be identified so that measures can be put into place to reverse their decline

Hopefully 2025 will be a better year for butterfly sightings. Where ever you encounter butterflies in Herts and Middlesex during 2025 if possible please do post your observations to Butterfly Conservation's news page .



Brown hairstreak eggs

**Pete Fewell
Jan 2025**