

# **The Bexley Lepidopterist**

**Issue No. 5 (as at 31 July 2018)**



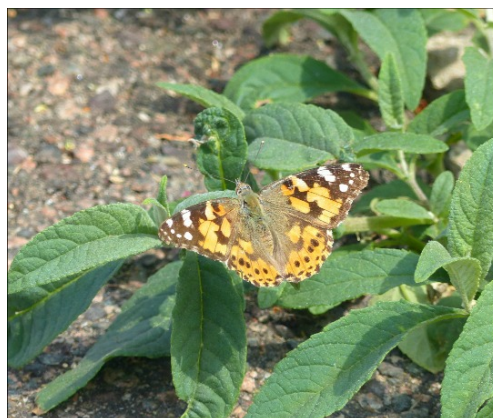
Compiled by Mike Robinson ~ August 2018

There have been Recorded Sightings of 29 (twenty-nine) Butterfly' Species in the London Borough of Bexley during 2018. Butterfly' Species seen:

**Brimstone** (first seen 16 March)  
**Brown Argus** (first seen 18 May)  
**Comma** (first seen 14 March)  
**Common Blue** (first seen 11 May)  
**Clouded Yellow** (first seen 12 July)  
**Essex Skipper** (first seen 21 June)  
**Gatekeeper** viz. (first seen 15 June)



**Green Hairstreak** (first seen 19 April)  
**Green-Veined White** (first seen 14 April)  
**Holly Blue** (first seen 19 April)  
**Large Skipper** (first seen 31 May)  
**Large White** (first seen 20 April)  
**Marbled White** (first seen 18 June)  
**Meadow Brown** (first seen 7 June)  
**Orange-Tip** (first seen 5 April)  
**Painted Lady** viz. (first seen 19 April)



**Peacock** (first seen 10 January)  
**Purple Hairstreak** (first seen 28 June)  
**Red Admiral** (first seen 19 January)  
**Ringlet** (first seen 20 June)

**Silver-Washed Fritillary** (first seen 25 June)  
**Small Copper** (first seen 17 May)  
**Small Heath** (first seen 18 May)  
**Small Skipper** (first seen 15 June)  
**Small Tortoiseshell** (first seen 17 February)  
**Small White** (first seen 26 March)  
**Speckled Wood** (first seen 19 April)  
**White Admiral** (first seen 23 June)  
and **White-Letter Hairstreak** (first seen 22 June)

**Marbled White** Butterflies have again been seen on the Holly Hill Open Space and single individuals were also seen in Braeburn Park and on Foots Cray Meadows. A **White-Letter Hairstreak** was seen in a Private Garden.

The 2018 Butterfly' Data Set contains 1,980 (one thousand, nine hundred and eighty) Lines of Records as at 31 July 2018.

Of the 2018 Records, around 21% (twenty-one percent) relate to Sightings on the Crossness Nature Reserve and Surrounding area and 19% or so (nineteen percent) to Sightings in Gardens (at Home).

### COULD IT HAVE BEEN?

*5<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Foots Cray Meadows just north of Five Arches, another fine sunny day. Approached by a lady walking her dog, who must have noticed my binoculars and camera .....*

She asked if I knew anything about butterflies. Said I knew a little, hedging my bets in case it was going to be a tricky one. She then went on to describe a butterfly she'd just seen that was 'dark brown with a yellow border'. As you can imagine I got quite excited by this. I asked how big it was and she said 'quite big'. As big as a Red Admiral maybe? She hadn't heard of a Red Admiral! I asked if she'd noticed any blue spots but she hadn't. Not too bothered though: with a fleeting glimpse you wouldn't. So in the absence of any further information I hurried to the place where she'd seen it. Spent a long time scouring the area and elsewhere, but to no avail. Very frustrating. So I guess we'll never know.

But .....

Interestingly though, I discovered that about 10 days earlier on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, a Camberwell Beauty was seen and photographed at Bury Hill in West Sussex. So who knows, had there been a mini-influx? Or was it the same insect!

Either way it appears that the Holy Grail of British butterflies had eluded me.

Jim Butler

2018 Butterfly' Sightings have been Recorded from 55 (fifty-five) Locations (including Gardens at Home as a single Location).

**Garden' Butterflies:** there is no need to traipse o'er Hill and Dale to see Butterflies locally. The Data Set identifies 21 (twenty-one) Species of Butterfly as being seen in Private Gardens during 2018: namely, **Brimstone, Comma, Common Blue** viz.



**Essex Skipper, Gatekeeper, Green-Veined White, Holly Blue, Large Skipper, Large White, Meadow Brown, Orange-Tip, Painted Lady, Peacock, Red Admiral, Silver-Washed Fritillary, Small Copper, Small Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell, Small White, Speckled Wood** and **White-Letter Hairstreak.**

**Butterfly Walks:** the Fourth of the Scheduled **Butterfly Walks** took place on 5 July on the **Southern (Erith) Marsh**. Butterfly' Species seen: **Brown Argus, Comma, Common Blue, Essex Skipper, Green-Veined White, Large Skipper, Large White, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, Ringlelet, Small Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell** and **Small White.**

And the Fifth **Butterfly Walk** took place on 14 July on the **Holly Hill Open Space**. Butterfly and Moth Species seen: **Essex Skipper, Gatekeeper, Green-Veined White, Holly Blue, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Peacock, Ringlelet, Small Copper, Small Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell** and **Cinnabar Moth.**

There will be another Series of Butterfly' Walks during 2019: details to be finalised.

**Box Moth Alert** (per Chris Rose. Source: The Telegraph):

This new alien species can seriously damage and kill Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) plants.

I had a single common form of the adult moth (white and black) in my garden in Barnehurst a few weeks ago and the other day found larvae chewing up my two Box bushes. A lot of the damage - which looks at first sight more like grazing of the leaf surfaces rather than taking bites out of the margins - is around the base of the plant or, where higher up, beneath the extension growth and so initially out of sight. I've cut some of the damaged material off and killed the rather luridly-coloured caterpillars found and am going to trim all over both plants soon to try and get rid of any more. A specimen of the dark form was seen in nearby Bexleyheath by Jason Steel recently as well. Box is a naturally-occurring species in some parts of the country, mainly on chalk, so it's not a matter of one non-native killing off another.

Pheromone traps (chemical lures) can be used to check for and capture the adult insect.

A Moth Trapping Session at the Thames Road Wetland has added many new Species to the Data Set: including the Nationally scarce **Reed Dagger** and **Webb's Wainscot Moths**.

We are indebted to Chris Rose for the following Commentary:

**A FIRST MOTH-TRAPPING SESSION AT THAMES ROAD WETLAND, BARNES CRAY.**

Chris Rose, Thames21 volunteer Thames Road Wetland Site Manager.

There seems to have been relatively little attention paid to the moth fauna of the Borough, despite there being way more species than of butterflies, and no night-time moth trapping session has been run at Thames Road Wetland since it was constructed in late 2007. I was therefore very pleased to be able to arrange for experienced moth recorder Andrew Lawson, from nearby in Dartford, to come over and run both his mercury vapour and actinic traps on higher ground, immediately adjacent to the site, on the night of 21st-22nd July (picture 1):



We recorded 120 species, all but 4 or 5 of which (that are also day-flyers, or easily disturbed from vegetation) are new site records.

Early arrivals at the lights were a **Brown Hawker Dragonfly**, a kind of **Dung Beetle** and an unhelpful number of male **flying ants**, but the moths soon started coming in. Wetland specialists that turned up included 2 **Reed Dagger** and 5 **Webb's Wainscot** (both nationally scarce, Notable b species), 2 or 3 **Bulrush Wainscot**, **Silky Wainscot**, and **Small China Mark** and **Water Veneer** moths. **Smoky Wainscot** and **Common Wainscot** were also present.

The more spectacular species, size-wise, were **Oak Eggar**, **Dusky** and **Early Thorns**, **Swallowtail**, **Elephant Hawk** and **Poplar Hawk** (picture 2 ~ a **Poplar Hawk** moth):



Particularly colourful were three **Gold Spot** moths (picture 3. a **Golf Spot** moth):



plus ten or so **Jersey Tigers**. Also present was **Tree Lichen Beauty**, a recent UK colonist.

Amongst the species with some of those fantastic names that moths can have were **Flame Shoulder**, **Cream-bordered Green Pea**, **Bright Line Brown Eye**, **Brown Eye Bright Line** (yes, this isn't an error, these last two are different species), **Maiden's Blush**, **Coronet**, **Cloaked Minor**, **Rosy Minor**, **Scalloped Oak**, **Uncertain**, **Nut Bud**, **Scarce Footman**, **Small Fan-footed Wave** and **Spectacle**.

Five Underwings were captured, **Lesser Yellow Underwing**, **Least Yellow Underwing**, **Large Yellow Underwing**, **Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing** and **Copper Underwing**.

**Mother of Pearls**, common in the TRW nettle beds, were numerous (picture 4. of **Elephant Hawk**, **Ruby Tiger**, **Straw Dot** and **Mother-of-Pearl** moths in the Trap):



A number of micros, some of which lack common names, were caught.

Several adult **Caddis flies** were also attracted to the lights.

Huge thanks to Andrew, his two children and their friend who came and helped and who could ID more moths than I can, plus Martin Burke of Bexley RSPB and senior Thames21 volunteer Ray Hudson for joining us. Andrew and I carried on until just after 2 a.m. Even then, new species were still coming in .....

Once we have had time to check through the list for any errors in my note-taking at the time, it will be published in full on the 'Bexley Wildlife' website, with the link to it flagged up on the Bexley Butterfly and Moth Group Facebook page.

Acknowledgements: with thanks to Chris Rose for Pictures 1, 2 and 4: and Andrew Lawson for Picture 3

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