

UPPER THAMES BUTTERFLIES

Organised Survey team Volunteers: butterflies and moths need YOU!

Members of the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation (UTB) undertake several types of survey in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. These allow everyone a chance to get involved: some require very little time and are suitable for absolute beginners; others are more demanding. All are opportunities to learn.

Though all recording is very useful to the branch, survey work is the most helpful to conservation. Surveys take place on land where we are invited by landowners wanting to improve conditions for butterflies and moths, especially scarcer species. Our surveys inform the changes that may be made to land management.

We are seeking volunteers to join the survey teams and to enjoy themselves whilst making a worthwhile contribution. The survey types are:



- **Single Sites** - the owner is seeking feedback on what is present and how the numbers fluctuate according to management.
- **Transects** - a national scheme, along fixed routes, following standardised techniques, counting butterflies and day flying moths weekly from 1st April to 30th September (often on nature reserves but always where the owner welcomes feedback).
- **Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey** - a national scheme at randomly selected sites, along fixed routes and following transect techniques, counting butterflies and day flying moths at least 2 x per year, several weeks apart.
- **Key Species** - for locally scarce butterflies and moths where the principal aim is to seek only that species (possibly in various life stages) allowing comparisons in management outcomes between sites, and recording population change overtime.
- **10 km Square Champions** - for butterflies across a 10x10 km grid as marked on OS maps, allowing an overview of the changing nature of occupancy by various species.
- **Churchyards** – recording butterflies across UTB 4 x per year or according to recorder opportunity, some with reports back to the churchyard managers. Each churchyard is usually recorded by a single surveyor.

All these surveys run **in addition** to casual recording at any time (e.g. garden recording).

How do we record?



UTB video guidance about survey techniques and recording options (among other training videos) can be found at: https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/online_events

All those recording using the UKBMS survey methods will need to also register with that website. All other volunteers will need to register with Butterfly Conservation's Assemble app to be fully supported (email volunteer-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk for help with that); but if you are registered with the UKBMS then you'll be added to Assemble by Butterfly Conservation.

We run **training courses in survey methodology** (see Events section https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/event_calendar) and there is a PowerPoint that explains these surveys for those that can't make the events, or want a refresher:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/78lhk4ijl9cp3ehhvlhx1/Recording-B-M-2025edit.pptx?rlkey=i0b4z2r67gxzzkn790k74e4ae&st=w300dwlc&dl=0>

(This is a very large file and will take a minute or so to load)

Butterflies

- Single site surveys, 10km squares and casual observations are best recorded using the **iRecord Butterflies** app, or the **Butterflies for the New Millennium** software. See text guides to those recording methods here <https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/recording>
- Transect and Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveys (WCBS) have a dedicated recording website at the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme <https://ukbms.org/>, which requires user registration. For more information about UTB transects contact transect-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk and for WCBS wcbs-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk
- Guidance and information on standardised surveys plus feedback and interpretation of previous nationwide results <https://ukbms.org/>

Moths

- Site surveys and casual observations are best recorded with the free-to-use National Moth Recording Scheme or the **iRecord Moths** section of **iRecord** (select 'Moths' under 'Species Group Forms' in the *Record* dropdown menu), or go direct with <https://www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord/enter-moth-sightings>.
- County moth recorders also accept records in other forms, for information contact:
Berks. Martin Harvey cmr-berks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk
Bucks. Martin Albertini cmr-bucks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk
Oxon. Martin Townsend cmr-oxon@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

All surveys must be conducted following Butterfly Conservation's Health and Safety advice. Please never place yourself in any danger to walk a survey. **All surveys require the landowners' permission.**

Where can Surveyors Help?

Single Site Survey Locations

The list **below** indicates the rough position of sites where single site and single species surveys take place. If there is no site close to your home, please check back as new sites are constantly added. If you are unable to see any near you, or if you would like to know more about volunteering for UTB surveys please contact Peter Philp at volunteer-coordinator@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Many landowners don't want their sites' positions publicised. Site names and locations will only be made available to registered surveyors.


Site close to	County	Survey type	As part of a team	
			together	separately
Crowthorne & Camberley	Berks	Site survey (i.e. all species)	yes	no
Pangbourne	Berks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Ashridge Estate	Bucks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Dagnall	Bucks	Site survey	yes	no
Lane End	Bucks	Site survey	yes	yes
Leighton Buzzard	Bucks	Site survey	yes	yes
Lillingstone villages	Bucks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Princes Risborough	Bucks	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Arncott	Bucks & Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no

Between Oxford, Bicester and Waddesdon (BOR)	Bucks & Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Beckley	Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	no
Brill	Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Charlbury	Oxon	Site Survey	yes	no
Newnham Courtney	Oxon	Site Survey	yes	yes
Sparsholt Firs	Oxon	Site survey and key species survey	yes	yes
Lambourne - Ashbury	Oxon & Berks	Site survey	yes	yes


Single Species Surveys - Butterflies

- Please note that maps are only indicative of range.


Black Hairstreak

	<p>We have the greatest concentration of Black Hairstreak colonies of any BC branch and probably the largest numbers of the butterfly, too. The Species champion for the Black Hairstreak, Stuart Hodges black-hairstreak@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk would be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the flight period (June and July) searching for adults, and from those willing to undertake night time UV torch larval searches in May and early June.</p>
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Brown Hairstreak

	<p>There is a rapidly expanding colony of Brown Hairstreak in the north of Bucks and Oxon and the beginnings of a tiny colony in Berks. The Species champion for the Brown Hairstreak, Dave Wilton brown-hairstreak@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk, will be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the flight period (July - October) searching for adults, and from those willing to undertake the rewarding task of winter egg searching from October to March.</p>
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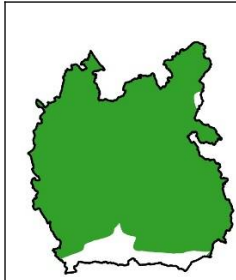
Duke of Burgundy

	<p>We have a very few colonies of Duke of Burgundy in the UTB area. There are 3 species champions: Peter Ogden in the Bradenham area duke-of-burgundy-bucks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk, Nick Bowles in the Ivinghoe area nick.bowles@ntlworld.com and Aga Bogucka duke-of-burgundy-berks@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk in the Sparsholt Firs area of the Berks/Oxon border. They will be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the flight period (May and June) searching for adults and from those willing to undertake egg and larvae searching from June until August.</p>
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Silver-studded Blue

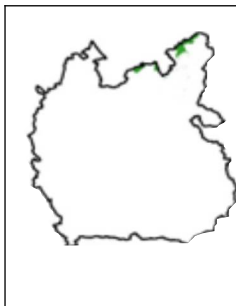
	<p>There is a tiny number of very small colonies of Silver-studded Blue in Berks, but the species is lost from Bucks and Oxon. The Species champion for the Silver-studded Blue Grahame Hawker silver-studded-blue@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk would be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the flight period (June to August) searching for adults. Grahame can help with access to some MOD sites with no public access.</p>
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White-letter Hairstreak



This species suffered badly when Dutch Elm disease killed most of the trees in which it was breeding. Recently it has re-appeared, breeding on sucker regrowth and on a few Wych Elm trees that seem to be better able to resist the disease. Unfortunately, the wide distribution hides a very low abundance and we are very keen to know exactly where the butterfly is breeding and how the population size is changing. The Species champion for the White-letter Hairstreak is Peter Cuss white-letter-hairstreak@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk He would be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time spotting living Elms above 2m high, looking particularly for those in flower. Once their locations are noted we hope that surveyors would return during the flight period (late June – early August) searching for adults. It is also possible to undertake the rewarding task of winter egg searching from late October to February. The larger Elms usually flower from mid-February, which makes the eggs easier to spot. When the eggs hatch the larvae then crawl inside the flower buds, vanishing from sight.

Wood White



We have a very tiny number of very small colonies of Wood White along the border of Bucks. with Northamptonshire, but the species appears lost from Oxon. The Species champion for the Wood White, Nick Board wood-white@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk would be very pleased to hear from anyone that can spend some time during the flight period (May to Sept) searching for adults. Nick can help with access to some private woodlands, but please do not trespass to survey as it causes trouble with owners who are considering work to help the species.

Single Species Surveys - Moths

Clearwings

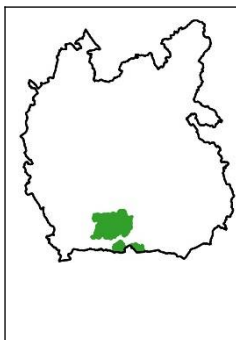


Clearwings are small, day flying bee or wasp mimics, which are easily overlooked and very under-recorded. They are best surveyed using pheromone lures – chemical scent bags that smell like female moths to males of the species. These can be used in real time, often attracting males within minutes, or placed into small traps and left in situ for longer. Lures are available at £8.50 each, <https://www.angleps.com/pheromones.php>

Dusky Clearwing, which was 'regionally extinct', was found in our area in 2023.

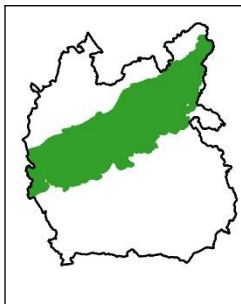
For more information about using lures locally contact Peter Cuss priority-moths@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Drab Looper



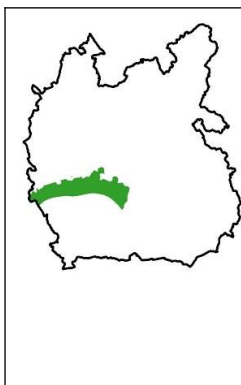
Now restricted to just a small area of central, southern Berks, surveyors help to assess the condition of its habitat and the amount of the larval food-plant, Wood Spurge, within the woods in which it occurs. In the future we hope landowners will be able to help the moth by improving/creating habitat, once we have a better idea where the moth is found. To join the survey team, contact Peter Cuss priority-moths@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Forester Moth



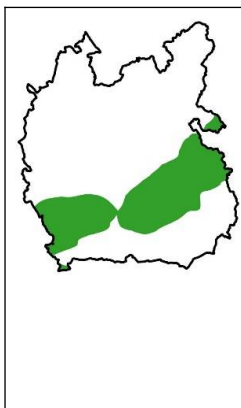
This metallic green, day-flying moth had been reduced to just a few favoured haunts, is now encountered in small, widely separated colonies within the areas of Bucks and central Oxon shown. In southern Bucks there are strong but tiny colonies, more widely separated, that do not show up on the map. It can be found where the larval food-plant, sorrel, is growing in semi-natural grassland. To join the survey team and stay abreast of where the moth is being seen, contact Peter Cuss priority-moths@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Four-spotted



Another day-flying moth that has dramatically retracted its range and is now found in very few places just north of the West Berks/Oxon border and only in small numbers. The moth larvae eat field bindweed but only survive where the plant grows on patches of bare soil – and the edges of arable fields are ideal. These are places that are rarely visited by most surveyors, so the moth could be more widespread than is realised. There are indications that the moth is recolonising parts of NE Hertfordshire and spreading west. If you live within its current range or in the very NE of the Chilterns and walk the footpaths through arable fields you might be able to find the Four-spotted. To stay abreast of where the moth is being seen, contact Peter Cuss priority-moths@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Striped Lychnis



This night flying moth is rarely encountered at light traps. It is best sought by searching for the distinctive larvae, during the day, whilst they feed on the flower spikes of Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigra*. We have established that a very large proportion of the moth's UK population lives in the Chilterns and it could be more widespread in the Berkshire Downs than previously known. We want more surveyors to help with larval searches in the Chilterns and new surveyors to begin looking for Dark Mullein and Striped Lychnis in Berkshire.

To help survey for this moth by searching for the Dark Mullein foodplant and its larvae, contact Ben who will explain the techniques involved striped-lychnis@upperthames-butterflies.org.uk

Additional Opportunities

From time to time, other groups contact the branch seeking surveyors and these are advertised in Hairstreak and on the website. One example is **Chalk, Cherries and Chairs** in the Chilterns. [Tracking the Impact | Chalk Cherries and Chairs \(chilternsaonb.org\)](http://www.chilternsaonb.org). BBOWT reserves also need surveyors at times, contact colinwilliams@bbowt.org.uk

Updates on the results of surveys will be provided to all recorders.