

## FRIENDS OF RALEIGH PARK A.G.M. 2018 - BUTTERFLY SURVEY REPORT

Nick Bowles from the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation arranged with the Friends of Raleigh Park and Andy Gunn, BBOWT, to undertake a site visit and do an initial survey of butterflies in Raleigh Park on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018. The intention was that a self-organising group would form & carry out three further surveys in June, July and August.

I heard about the event via an email from Nick to local members of Butterfly Conservation, and Leon & I joined with about 8 other people in the Park on a sunny afternoon and spent 2 hours walking through a variety of habitats, spotting butterflies and learning a lot from Nick such as:

- White butterflies on the wing in early May could be one of five different species, most are difficult to tell without close observance
- Blue butterflies here are likely to be either Holly or Common Blues, identifiable to some extent alliteratively by their flight pattern:  
Holly Blues fly at head height  
Common Blues crawl at lower levels

On that first survey, we saw 18 individuals of 7 different species including a few typical spring butterflies: fresh new Orange Tips and Holly Blues and a couple of dusty Peacocks that had overwintered. We decided to arrange our next survey for three weeks later and followed this pattern throughout the summer: we have completed 7 surveys and may hold another one if the warm weather holds until the end of September.

Our surveying group has ranged between 5 and 12 people, with a mode of 7, and a different mix of people every time. Nobody claims to be a butterfly expert, but everyone brings knowledge, sharp eyes and enthusiasm – the survey walks are really enjoyable.

We walk the same route each time, taking about an hour and recording every butterfly we see whilst we are in transit. This method is unlike the methodology of a static survey such as the Big Garden Birdwatch, we don't record the highest number of a species seen at one time. Leon uses an app. from Butterfly Conservation that identifies and records a sighting electronically so that the figures can be saved and added to a spreadsheet with ease. I use a pen & paper, luckily it didn't rain on any survey!

What have we seen? Please see attached table for full data, here's a summary:

18 species in total over the 5 month period, from the typical spring species mentioned above, through the summer flushes of Skippers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Ringlets to the late summer emergence of Small Coppers.

The lowest count was on 21 May when only 7 individuals were seen, which I believe ties in with the phenomenon of an early 'June Gap' when the first generation of spring butterflies have died out and later generations and species are yet to hatch.

The highest count was in early July with 162 individuals counted, although we quite possibly missed as many. The air was full of Ringlets and Meadow Browns, so all being well there will be a great number of eggs to bring about a healthy population next year.

The most exciting butterfly of the year was not spotted during a survey, but the day after one when David saw a female Brown Hairstreak on the blackthorn stand at the east end of the Park.

What might be helpful for next year:

If it's agreed that butterfly surveying continues, it would be good to start the surveying season in April if the weather is warm enough (i.e. above the 12 degrees centigrade required by butterflies to fly).

Perhaps next year we may be able to invite butterfly and moth experts to join us on our surveys to help us see what we're missing and expand our knowledge, especially regarding larvae and egg identification.

There's much to be celebrated about the way that the landscape and plant array is being managed in the Park to provide for the variety of butterflies that currently use it. For example: the open area around the pond has been rich in Lady's Smock / Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) in the spring and was busy with Orange Tips, in late summer it's full of Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) and is a rich site for Common Blues. It's great that a Brown Hairstreak found her way to the blackthorn and exciting to think of being able to encourage more species in by specific planting.

Barbara Witkowski  
September 2018

		08- May	21- May	12- Jun	02- Jul	23- Jul	13- Aug	03- Sep	Total of species seen
<b>Comma</b>	<i>Polygonia c- album</i>				1	1	1		3
<b>Common Blue</b>	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>			1		6	18	7	32
<b>Gatekeeper</b>	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>					10	1		11
<b>Green Veined White</b>	<i>Artogeia napi</i>	1			4		1		6
<b>Holly Blue</b>	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	3		2	1				6
<b>Large Skipper</b>	<i>Ochlodes sylvanus</i>				1				1
<b>Large White</b>	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	2		2	11	28	9	4	56
<b>Marbled White</b>	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>			1	1				2
<b>Meadow Brown</b>	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>				61	10	6		77
<b>Orange Tip</b>	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	2	4	3					9
<b>Peacock</b>	<i>Aglais io</i>	2	1	2					5
<b>Red Admiral</b>	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>				1				1
<b>Ringlet</b>	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>				52	4	1		57
<b>Small Copper</b>	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>					1		4	5
<b>Small Skipper</b>	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>				7				7
<b>Small White</b>	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>			1	15	17	11	7	51
<b>Small Tortoiseshell</b>	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	1							1
<b>Speckled Wood</b>	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	7	2	7	8	12	16	4	56
<b>Unspecified Fritillary</b>						1			1
<b>Unspecified White</b>								2	
<b>Total seen that day</b>		18	7	18	162	83	45	21	