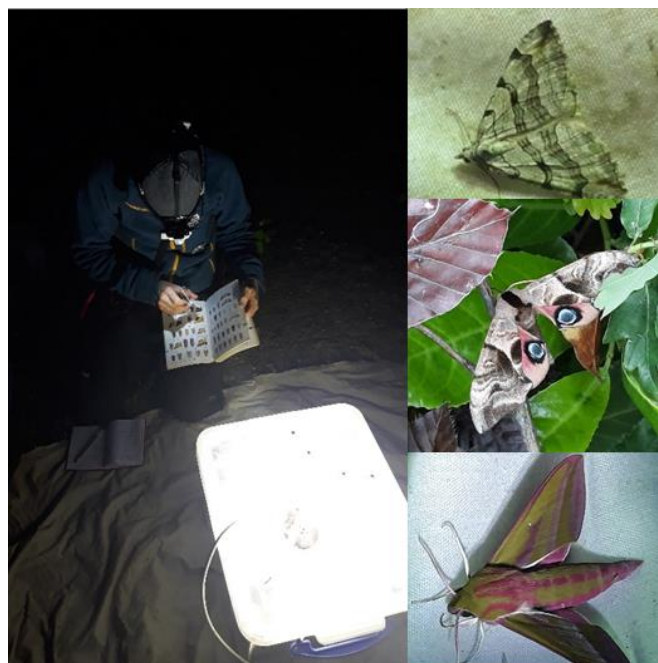


## NBRC Newsletter 16

### Autumn/Winter 2018

We have had a wonderful summer for many species in Northamptonshire; with new rare plant, moth and butterfly finds reported by our county recorders. We are delighted to share reports from John Showers, Brian Laney and David James in this newsletter. Thanks to regional groups, your online submissions and our newly engaged WILDsiders, we are building a better picture of our local natural history.



**James moth trapping during our 2019 Bioblitz held at Priors Hall, Corby – species found: Treble-Moth *Aplocera*, Elephant Hawk-moth *Deilephila elpenor*, and Eyed Hawk-moth *Smerinthus ocellata*.**

This autumn we were joined by two new volunteers, joining our existing and long-term volunteers, with whom Rachel has been working with to deliver historic digitisation projects. The first, digitising and storing Harry Henson's Beetle Records and the second digitising Wildlife Trust record cards. Volunteer support of the NBRC allows us to ensure these records are retained and used – strengthening our information base. We would like to extend a particular thank you to our longest serving volunteer, Carol Wingate who, as of November, has supported us week-in-week-out for ten years!

We are well on our way to having this year's data incorporated with over 75% processed and imported into the database already. Our 2018 Bioblitz at Priors Hall, Corby has proved successful with 448 species records submitted already, with 298 of these new to the sites, bringing the total to 629 species so far with a planned visit over winter by our County Bryophyte Recorder to come. Additionally, the Living Landscape team has conducted new LWS surveys and Nathalie is currently incorporating these and the updated citations into our database. In addition to these newly submitted records, James has been busy working to improve our coverage of species – this month adding an impressive 27,000 bird records covering over 5 years (2016-2011). We are delighted to report that we are now well on our way to 1 million records in the NBRC database! To house our increasing database needs and strengthen our IT infrastructure we have invested in a new server giving us the space needed to grow. You can read all about the NBRC progress over 2017/18 in our Annual Report, which will be available on our website early in the New Year.

**Rosalind Johnston, NBRC Centre Manager**

### Congratulations to our New Drone Pilots!

The rules have tightened over the last few years and the CAA drone pilot test now requires a pass in the non-stabilising ATTI mode. A test for the brave! Building on their theory pass, Nathalie and Rachel undertook many hours both outdoors and using our flight simulator to gain the high level control required and we are delighted to share their success! Both Nathalie and Rachel have been successful in passing their flight tests, despite the less than perfect windy day. They now have permission from CAA and are successfully licenced and insured for commercial drone operation.

This November, Nathalie and Rachel went out for their first project flight to gather survey aerial imagery on an Environment Agency managed site, with two more sites due in the spring and future monitoring flights planned post restoration works. James Skinner will complete further processing and we will be delivering imagery for agreed projects over the next three years including the support of site monitoring and

management of river restoration works conducted in key sections of the Nene valley.

Our DJI Phantom 4 Pro is a professional use drone with full visual range, obstacle sensors and HD camera. We can use this to collect high definition aerial imagery, including 3D and panoramas, as well as 4K video footage. We can also utilise computer software for *Normalised Difference Vegetation Index* image production (as used to remotely analyse coverage of live green vegetation) and for orthomosaic image production (for whole site detailed and to scale images) in conjunction with GIS tools. As shown by drone work completed by our partner, the Wildlife Trust BCN, this new tool has powerful applications for habitat assessment, species surveying, and monitoring change.

<https://www.wildlifebcn.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/Drone%20survey%20summaries.pdf>

We want Northamptonshire to feel proud of being at the forefront of this innovation. We are one of the first counties to benefit from this new tool, with trained skilled operators as part of our record centre service. We hope this will inform & strengthen our county's environmental decision-making.

**To celebrate our new drone service we would like to invite you to 'name the drone'!**



Please send your submissions by the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, to [NBRC@northantsbrc.org](mailto:NBRC@northantsbrc.org). We be in touch with the winner & will share our new drone name in our Spring/Summer newsletter.

Bookings for commercial aerial photo & video projects will be open from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. Please get in touch to discuss your needs [nbrc@northants.brc.org.uk](mailto:nbrc@northants.brc.org.uk)

**Rosalind Johnston, NBRC Centre Manager**

## National Conferences & Record Centre News

Over the last few months, we have been out-and-about, working with the wider recording and conservation community. Starting in early October Rosalind & Nathalie led the latest East of England regional Local Environmental Record Centre Meeting where we discussed our shared working practices, service provision for shared projects for the Environment Agency and Anglian Water, and wider LERC developments.

The following week Rosalind & Rachel joined the National ALERC conference in Birmingham joining workshops on task automation & data manipulation in R and digital cartography using ArcGIS. Rich Burkmar shared the FSC Biolinks QGIS plugin consultation, and LERCs alongside other users have been invited to raise their feedback of this tool and any useful features for its development – you can have your say on the NBN website <https://nbn.org.uk/blogs/nbn-blog/qgis-is-there-something-missing/>. Clare Blencowe, ALERC chair, shared and gained support for plans for the continuation of Recorder6, post JNCC support, funded through the introduction of an annual licence fee from April 2019. The charge would give users access to dictionary updates and new releases as supported by the developers. The set-up costs for a new developer will be additional to this and crowd-sourced.



**Ryan Clark presenting the WILDside project at the NBN Conference 2018**

In November, Rosalind and Ryan headed to Nottingham to the NBN 2018 Conference where Ryan presented the WILDside project as a lunchtime stand. Prof Adam Hart opened the conference, describing his large-scale citizen science projects on wasps & flying ants, species well known to the media *though not always for the most positive reasons*. He utilised the

power of this media attention to drive recording of these groups. In the afternoon, we fed into workshops on biological recording and identification. We were delighted to learn that not only had Ryan been nominated, but shortlisted for the prestigious Gilbert White Adult Award. The awards, held in the evening, celebrate the incredible recorder community and notable work being undertaken by individuals to ensure we have the underpinning biological understanding that informs and shapes our environment; a full list of the winners and runners up can be found on the NBN website <https://nbn.org.uk/>.

Representing Defra, Debora Boobyer described indicator development for the new framework for the government's 25 years plan, as expected to be published in early 2019. Chris Gerrard shared Anglian Water's use of the species & habitat data provided across the East of England (including NBRC data) to prioritise protection and site management of their 7000 sites across the region following 'landscape scale' approach. This work is expected to be shared in a future publication as well as informing 'on-the-ground' action. Martin Lunes presented the Nature Friendly Farming Network, and his fantastic work using Bioblitzes (working with CPERC) to better inform management of their land both ecologically & for improved agricultural productivity. Following her fantastic talk on modelling ecological networks and interrelationships at a community level, Professor Jane Memmott was awarded the John Burnett memorial medal. Key talks, including Jane Memmott's were live streamed on Facebook and are available on the NBN youtube channel. Notably during the second day, in recognition of their work with the FSC Sarah Whild and Sue Townsend were awarded Honorary Membership.

Discussed at the AGM were several changes to the NBN board, including the announcement that after several years at the helm Prof Michael Hassell is stepping down as chairman. Lastly, the British Trust for Ornithology announced their support for high-resolution data sharing for Record Centre use – this welcome news will mean we can greatly strengthen our bird dataset & use of BTO data in decision making across the county. Working with the Northants Bird Group, and with confirmed permissions, we intend to start incorporating this data into our database and update annually.

**Many of the presentations are available online**  
<https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/nbn-conference-2/nbn-conference-2018/nbn-conference-2018-presentations-and-photographs/>

## WILDside Update

What a summer we have had! The weather has been extraordinary and is likely to have benefitted some species more than others. Biological records help us to understand and conserve the natural world around us so I am very glad to see how WILDside is growing and more and more people are helping us to map out species in Northamptonshire.

We are now at the end of our second main field season of the project and we are getting all the records generated over the last year into our database so they can be used to influence decision-making and conservation in Northamptonshire and beyond.

### Talks and Workshops

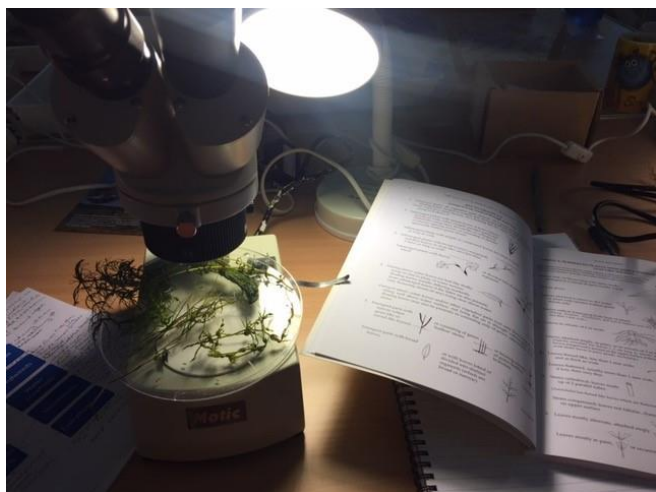


**John Wakely, vice county recorder for Bedfordshire, taking part in our aquatic plants workshop, led by Nathalie.**

We have done a lot of talks and introductory workshops to various groups over the last year or so, this has been really rewarding as it has helped those with a passion for nature generate records for the species they are seeing and help conserve species in this way. We really cannot conserve species if we do not know where they are and what they are doing! It



has been great to meet so many wildlife enthusiasts in the county and highlight how we can support them.



### **Classroom session from the aquatic plants workshop**

#### **Equipment**

Just a reminder that we have a wide variety of books and ID guides which can be borrowed. We also have a wide range of equipment that can be used at Lings such as a stereo and compound microscope with projection capabilities. Please contact us for more information.

#### **Join in!**

Our Facebook Group now has over 160 members and is a great community of people interested in recording Northamptonshire's wildlife. There you can get help with identification along with keeping up to date with events and see what other people in the county are seeing! You can also keep up to date with the project by emailing me and asking to be added to the mailing list. This project is all about supporting recorders in the county, so if there is any way we can support you or you have any questions, please drop us an email at [WILDside@northantsbrc.org.uk](mailto:WILDside@northantsbrc.org.uk)

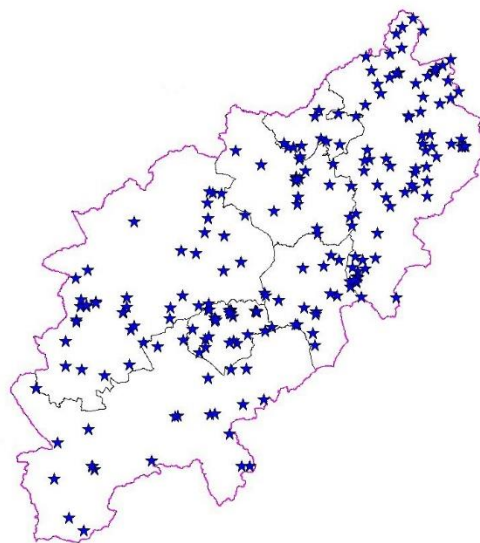
#### **Gaps on the Map**

Many of you have been getting really involved in our ambitious and exciting project to help us fill in gaps on the map. There are hundreds of 1km squares in Northamptonshire for which we do not hold a single record in our database. This map will soon be available online but drop us an email if you wish to see which squares are close to you, and help us fill in some of the gaps on the map. Thank you to everyone that has helped with this survey so far!

#### **Rabbits!**

Our most recent seasonal survey is asking you to report sightings of rabbits! Yes, you read that correctly. Despite being widespread, we have relatively few records of rabbits for Northants so would like your

records. For more information, and to submit your records, please see our [‘Look Out For... Rabbits’](#) survey. Why not help us spread the word? Share the survey poster (on the back of this newsletter) with local groups & help us get everyone involved.



**This map shows our current records for rabbits. We know rabbits are much more widespread in Northamptonshire than this! Help us with your rabbit records.**

#### **Celebration Event**

Next autumn we will be having a celebratory conference to highlight the work of biological recorders in the county. There will be an opportunity to have displays focussing on groups you are passionate about, opportunities to talk with other recorders and to hear about why your records really matter. There will of course be cake too! We will be announcing the date of this free event soon. In the meantime, do let us know if you are thinking about wanting to do a talk / have a display.

#### **The Rest of the Project**

We now have a year of this project left. We are packing in as much as we can, in order to support as many biological recorders as possible! We have planned so far:

- Lots more workshops on biological recording and species identification, including some over the winter
- Local Wildlife Site surveys to hone your recording skills
- A series of talks at the Northamptonshire Natural History Society starting in January, these will cover a wide variety of different topics.
- Much, much more.

Thanks to everyone that has got involved with WILDside so far, and the Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting this project.



**Recording event at Fineshade where we matched up skilled recorders with less experienced recorders for a day of shadowing.**

**Ryan Clark, WILDside Project Coordinator**

For more information about the WILDside project or to sign up for updates, please email [WILDside@northantsbrc.org.uk](mailto:WILDside@northantsbrc.org.uk)

## Lesser Stag Beetle kindergarden

John Hunt from Spratton contacted us in February to ask some advice about re-homing Lesser Stag Beetle larvae *Dorcus parallelipedus*. They were found in a well rotted Ash tree stump that a neighbour was digging out. He saved quite a few pieces of the wood with larvae in them as well as a dozen or two of the larvae themselves. After checking the identification and taking details of the location to enter the record in our database, we suggested that it would be a good idea to keep them safe from the frost in a garage or in a garden shed especially as the weather forecast was set to snow for the following weeks.

We were very pleased to receive an email from John again two months later letting us know that “the babies have hatched”. John said that he kept a dozen or two larvae, which he rescued from the removed rotted Ash tree stump, and he put the loose ones in a bucket with some of the rotted soil/wood and shavings. He also saved some of the wood in a wheelbarrow which he kept in a shed through the cold weather. He was delighted to see that not only had a number of larvae survived in the bucket but that at least 8 had turned into beetles and were out of the pieces of wood. Not very far from where they were

found, there is a closed cemetery which was established as a Pocket Park. Of course no one knows how many were left in the wood but they made a wood pile with the remaining pieces and covered them with sticks in the hope that Woodpeckers and others will keep away.



**Hatched Lesser Stag Beetle *Dorcus parallelipedus***

We are delighted that the Lesser Stag Beetle larvae survived the cold weather with a little help from John and that they are now in a safe place thanks to Dave. Although they are a common species in the south of the UK, we only have a handful of records for Northamptonshire. So keep on eye out for them! We are certainly hoping to get more Lesser Stag Beetle records from the pocket park next year but we would also very much welcome any other records from Northamptonshire. Dead wood is a very important habitat for many other species. Please keep this in mind when tidying your garden.

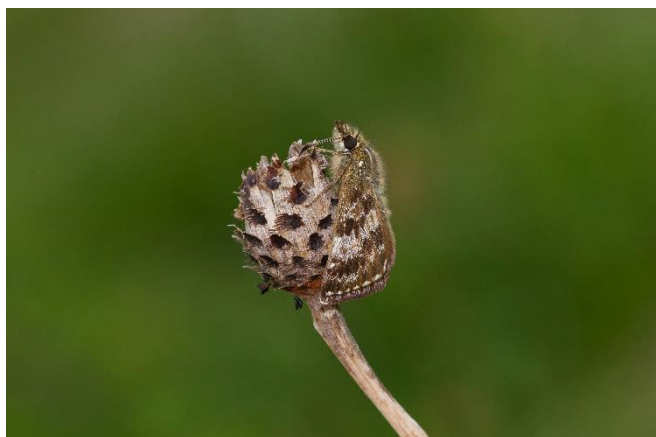
**Nathalie Hueber, NBRC Data Officer**

We love to hear from Northants naturalists, get in touch and send us your interesting finds & records [nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk](mailto:nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk)

## **A very remarkable year for Northamptonshire's Butterflies – 'one of the best on record' for many species!**

2018 has been a very exciting time in Northamptonshire! Not only was it a fantastic butterfly season, it also saw the start of two new nationally backed schemes with the Back from the Brink Project looking to reintroduce the Chequered Skipper into the Rockingham Forest area and Butterfly Conservation's Woodland Wings project being set up to help the Wood White and Black Hairstreak along the Yardley Whittlewood Ridge. Although all the records aren't in yet, one thing is becoming quite clear, 2018 was one of the best butterfly seasons we have on record for a number of species in Northamptonshire! It didn't look too promising at the start of the year though as just as the long cold winter looked to be drawing to a close the "Beast from the East 2" arrived which was then followed by a rather damp start to spring. Soon enough though the weather warmed up and the sun came out starting a long period of continuous sunny days and higher than average temperatures which pretty much lasted all summer. Here follows a brief account of the year by species.

### **The Skippers**



**Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* taken at Tywell Hills and Dales**

Although Large and Small Skippers had a good year the Essex Skipper seemed remarkably down on 2017. The heat made positive identification of the Essex Skipper from the very similar Small Skipper almost impossible so I think this is more of a result of under recording rather than a serious drop in numbers. The Dingy Skipper had a good year and so did the Grizzled Skipper and a rare 2nd brood Grizzled Skipper was discovered at Tywell Hills and Dales on the 17th of August which remained until the 21st making it the latest record ever for the county. Of course I can't conclude without

mentioning the fantastic work in the county by the Back from the Brink in a multiyear project to reintroduce the Chequered Skipper back into the Rockingham Forest area. With superb media coverage a number of Chequered Skippers were released so let's all wish the team involved every success so we can see this charismatic butterfly once again flying in our woodland rides in the future.

### **The Whites**

The Wood White had a good year with numbers roughly the same as 2017. The best sites to see the species remains Salcey Forest and Bucknell Wood where they fly in good numbers. We also had 2nd brood Wood Whites at a number of sites this year. The Large White was about the same as last year but the Small White had an exceptional season with some big numbers being reported at a number of sites and the Green-veined Whites were also up by around 60% too. The Clouded Yellow also put on a good show this year after a slow start with a trickle of sightings through the summer which amazingly led to confirmed breeding in the county at one site (Sywell Country Park) and possible breeding at another two sites (Salcey Forest and Ring Haw) with sudden concentrated populations being discovered. The Sywell Country Park population was very special as not only was it one of the largest gatherings of Clouded Yellows in the county on record (a peak count of 24 counted in a single day) the site also produced several helice females and quite a few mating pairs were also observed.



**Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus* form helice taken at Sywell Country Park**

### **The Hairstreaks**

One of the biggest success stories to come out of 2018 was the Black Hairstreak season, which is one I think will be talked about for years to come! Staggering numbers were observed at their strongholds and in one day alone in Glapthorn Cow Pastures more Black



Hairstreaks were recorded than the whole of the county in 2017. Treble figure counts came from Glapthorn Cow Pastures, Fineshade Wood and Fermyn Country Park! Salcey Forest became an increasingly popular site to see the species with the majority on the Blackthorn stands south of the Horsebox car park.



**Black Hairstreak *Satyrium pruni* taken at Glapthorn Cow Pastures**

The White-letter Hairstreak records also came in thick and fast as a call for recorders to check local Elm trees proved very productive and new sites were discovered. The Purple Hairstreak also had a superb year and while big numbers were seen in our woodlands they also turned up in lots of new locations around the county with one lucky observer even finding one on their garden fence in the middle of Kettering. The Purple Hairstreak season will also be remembered for the unusually high amount of "groundings" this year with lots being recorded on low lying vegetation or on the paths in woodland rides allowing much closer observation of a butterfly that normally spends much of its time up in the canopy. The Green Hairstreak unfortunately didn't do so well this year, no doubt a victim of the cool and damp spring their numbers were down by approx. 40% from 2017.

### The Blues

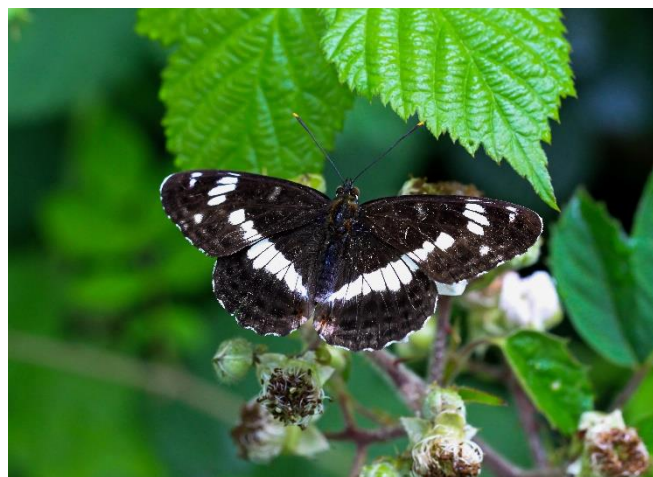
The Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper had one of the best years on record with some incredible numbers being recorded particularly in the latter part of the season. The Common Blues hit treble figures at a couple of sites while Brown Argus and Small Coppers were well into double figures. The Holly Blue also had a good year with lots of records received during their flight time. Historically we've had sporadic Chalkhill Blue records most years in the north of the county but unfortunately no records have been received this year. The discovery last year by Brian Laney of a large population of Chalkhill Blues at the private Spanhoe airfield site does suggest these records may have come

from butterflies drifting from there as since then the site has been turned into a quarry and none have been seen in the county since.

### The Aristocrats



**Purple Emperor *Apature iris* taken at Fermyn Woods**



**White Admiral *Limenitis camilla* taken at Fermyn Woods**

While many of the other butterfly families did well in 2018 at the time of writing the Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma are very much down from last year and the Peacock still remains a real cause for concern. As these butterflies overwinter as adults perhaps the long cold winter and the damp chilly spring had a serious effect on numbers. I also noticed while I was out recording that nearly all the Nettles I was encountering were wilting in the heat so maybe finding suitable habitats for egg laying was a challenge for the butterflies too during the summer heatwave.

The Purple Emperor on the other hand had a good season with the species increasing its range even further. The species even reached Rushmills Industrial Estate in Northampton this summer with one lucky observer finding one near his place of work and another amazing record of a Purple Emperor seen flying over a garden in Brackley! The White Admiral

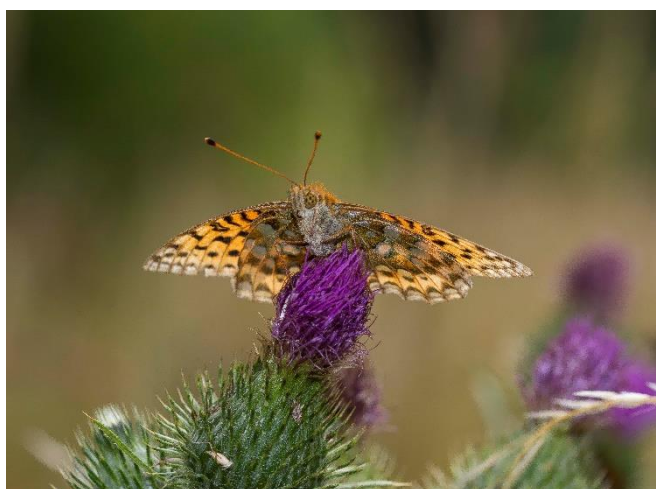
also had a great year and were seen flying in good numbers in our woodlands and we had a good spread of records for the migrant Painted Lady which was seen all around the county.

### The Fritillaries



**Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* form *valenzina* taken at Bucknell Wood**

The Silver-washed Fritillary had another bumper year and an increase in the form *valezina* being seen at several sites made a popular prize spot for our recorders. We normally receive a small handful of Dark Green Fritillary records each year and this year there seemed to be a push by the species to colonise Northamptonshire. While still concentrated in the north east the Dark Green Fritillary records received suggest they're moving further south and egg laying behaviour observed at Fineshade Wood hopefully confirms breeding in the county.



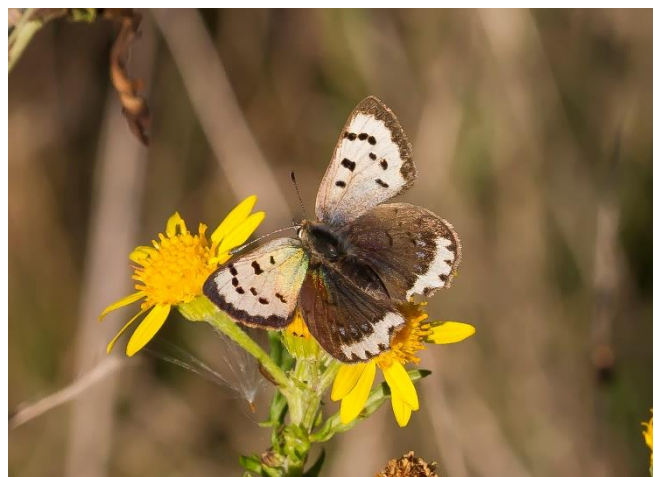
**Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja* taken at Fineshade Wood**

### The Browns

The Meadow Brown year has been good and the Ringlet season has been exceptional with the abundance of both species being almost uncountable

at some of our sites in the peak season. The Marbled White has also had a much better season this year with more locations being found and the Small Heath has also had a very encouraging season with records being received in good numbers and at new sites.

So that concludes a rather brief description of the butterfly season in Northamptonshire in 2018 and as I'm sure you can appreciate it will be a season that will be talked about for quite a while to come. I also can't leave this account without mentioning a stunning and very rare Small Copper aberration found by Doug Goddard. It's called the Small Copper *ab.schmidtii+caeruleopunctata* (ground colour of upperwings white as oppose to orange and also a row of blue spots along the bottom edge of the upper hindwing) and I've included a photo so you can enjoy this stunning insect. On a more serious note the long hot summer could have easily led to a disaster if larval plants succumbed to the heat but we seem to have escaped the worst. The ideal conditions and abundance of butterflies also meant that our summer walks were not just well attended but also very successful in finding the target butterflies so if you fancy a day out looking for butterflies next year why not come along and meet us? Details of next year's walks will be published on the Beds and Northants Branch of Butterfly Conservation's website early in 2019 and in the branch newsletter too.



**Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas* *ab.schmidtii+caeruleopunctata***

**David James, County Recorder**

Keep an eye out for next year's walks  
<https://butterfly-conservation.org/in-your-area/bedfordshire-and-northamptonshire-branch>



## Comb-horned Craneflies, 'more records than ever' received

There are six species of comb-horned craneflies in Britain and only two of these have been recorded in Northants. These are the Twin-mark Comb-horn *Dictenidia bimaculata* and the Orange-sided Comb-horn *Ctenophora pectinicornis*. The comb-horns are considered to be our most primitive flies and their common name refers to the comb-like projections on the male antennae. The comb-horns' larvae are all saproxylic, feeding on dead wood. This is often in branches high in the canopy and therefore they are often overlooked. They tend to use trees that produce a soft porridge-like rot so birch, beech and ash are favoured. Because of their dependence on rotting wood they tend to be found in areas of continuous woodland such as ancient forests and parklands.

Normally I receive one or two records a year of these species. The records usually come from photos taken by general naturalists who come across them by chance in the Spring. They are spectacular, if elusive, insects and so photographers will snap them if they get the opportunity. However, this Spring I received more records of these species than I probably have had since I became county fly recorder. I mentioned this to John Kramer who helps run the National Cranefly Recording Scheme and he said that there was a suspicion that hot weather increased emergence rates. This would certainly have applied in the latter half of the Spring this year.

This year I have received records of *Ctenophora pectinicornis* from Fineshade Woods, the Nene Valley near the Castle Ashby Estate, the North end of Hollowell Reservoir and from several parts of the Yardley Chase MoD area. This latter site produced records from parkland, birch woodland, lime coppice, field maple and even one record from a Scots Pine plantation. *Dictenidia bimaculata* was recorded from Old Sulehay Forest, Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase MoD. In the latter site on 13th June at least 10 individuals were seen together at an old oak trunk where they were disturbed from vegetation surrounding it. I would certainly like to receive all records of these species, including historical ones as they are indicators of continuous mature woodland and may indicate areas where other scarce saproxylic species may occur.

**John Showers, County Recorder**

Follow John's blog and join the dipterists in their field trips <http://northantsdiptera.blogspot.com/>

## Never say never! Recovering rare plant register Sheepsbit (*Jasione montana*) rosettes

As a friend of mine once said to me, "never say never". When plant recording, especially in recent years, this seems truer and truer. For the past 8 years I have been recording over several days for a client in his fields to support his stewardship scheme. Some of these fields cover Newnham Hill near Daventry here in Northants vc32. One plant last seen in the 1800s at both Newnham Hill and nearby Borough Hill was Sheepsbit (*Jasione montana*). I have been trying to re-find the species for Northants (Vice county 32) as it was thought extinct. The changes over the years due to various circumstances on both locations I thought had put any chance of me re-finding the species pretty slim.



**Sheepsbit rosette as I found them on day of rediscovery for the vice county**

However, I couldn't have been be more wrong! In two particular fields there are a number of crumbling banks exposing the soil due to a combination of factors such as animals like sheep, badgers and rabbits as well as the appropriate grazing methods. To my sheer delight one of these crumbling bits of the slope had Sheepsbit growing on the vertical part of it. In all, on the 3rd May 2017, there was 11 plants and two of these plants were producing flowering heads. Since I've seen Sheepsbit in other parts of the UK I always noted and looked at non flowering rosettes. I am very glad that this knowledge has stuck in my head ever since! This major re-find will be added to the updated version of the Northants rare plant register.

The following year in 2018 I created a large enclosure around this colony of Sheepsbit so it got a chance to flower and set seed. Some seed was collected and myself and a fellow botanist are growing back up stock in cultivation. So far neither of us had anything germinating but I'm expecting that to happen in Spring 2019 if the seed of course is viable.



**Sheepsbit rosettes were found on open bank of old badger sett (small slope is to right on edge of large looking hollow)**

During May 2018 when I surveyed the fields again the population of Sheepsbit had crashed from the rediscovery of 11 rosettes to 4 so alarm bells were ringing. In late Summer 2018 there was two plants in flower and one non flowering plant. Due to the long drought in summer 2018, some more of the small embankment was exposed and I scattered seed from the nearby plants onto the open slope. I'm hoping germination will occur in 2019 and will check when I resurvey the site. I've since been told where this population grows it was an old badger sett and that would explain the small part of exposed bank.

Sheepsbit was last recorded on decaying brickwork at a deserted station at Braunston in 1964. That site was developed and the population was not thought to be native while the populations that occurred at both Newnham Hill and Borough Hill were thought to be native. With all the botanical recording I've done over the years within the vice county this has to be the rarest species I've seen. So much so it could easily be classed as critically endangered in the vice county. I just hope we can keep the population going and not see it become extinct again for the vice county.

**Brian Laney, County Recorder**

Contact Vice County Recorders Allyson Freeman & Brian Laney to get involved with the Northants Flora Group. <https://bsbi.org/northamptonshire>

We are deeply saddened to report the passing of both Rob Wilson and Gill Gent, both known well by the NBRC team in their capacity as county recorders. They were incredible botanists who will be greatly missed by so many. They leave a legacy of a lifetime of natural history for Northamptonshire for which we will be forever grateful.

## **Rob Wilson**

**22<sup>nd</sup> March 1943 – 9<sup>th</sup> May 2018**



**Rob Wilson receiving the Three Counties Wildlife Trust 'Cliff Christie Award' in recognition for his Outstanding Contribution to Northamptonshire Wildlife Conservation in October 2013.**

It is with sadness that we remember Rob, his life, his love of flora and his lasting legacy. I first met Rob in the early eighties shortly after the formation of the then Desborough & Dingley Group of the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust. Rob and I became members of a team of four to oversee the management of the newly acquired Rothwell Gullett Reserve and he quickly put his fine skills as a Graphic Artist to use producing superb site plans. He also joined the Committee for the Group and added quality to the planning with his quiet enthusiasm and botanical knowledge. The standard of the Group's publicity radically improved when those



same graphic skills were applied to posters and hand-out leaflets. Over the following years, we became firm friends with Rob and Anna and sometimes enjoyed time together for coffee or a meal. It was always a pleasure to share in discussion over a range of topics, especially our joint concerns about environmental issues and conservation, threatened and declining native flora in particular.

Rob became increasingly involved in botanical recording for the County and with others, especially Gill Gent, the County Recorder for vascular plants, compiled the first "The Flora of Northamptonshire & the Soke of Peterborough" for The Kettering Natural History Society on the 90th anniversary of the Peterborough & District Natural History Society in 1995. This was followed in 2012 by an updated, beautifully illustrated edition again published by Rob Wilson Designs, and dedicated to Dr Franklyn Perring. He kindly presented me with a copy of each. Few people can fully appreciate the level of commitment and dedication and time spent at the computer to bring about these extensive and invaluable records, the first since the only other for the County by Dr G C Druce in 1930.

It was a great pleasure therefore to be with Rob when he received a well deserved accolade by being presented with the 3 Counties Wildlife Trust 'Cliff Christie Award' in recognition for his Outstanding Contribution to Northamptonshire Wildlife Conservation in October 2013 by Baroness Barbara Young, President of the Trust.

Always willing to share his knowledge and recording skills Rob could sometimes be encouraged away from the computer and into the field where we enjoyed surveying a Churchyard or other wildlife habitat together. He was for many years Co-County Recorder for Flora with Gill Gent, and more lately had taken on that role. His contribution to recording at Pitsford Reservoir Reserve, where he was held in particular regard, will be sadly missed.

Rob will be remembered for his talents and wide interests, his knowledge and dedication, but also for his kindness, humility, gentleness and courtesy. He was a gentleman and a good friend and will be greatly missed by many within wildlife recording and conservation and beyond.

**Nigel Lingley**

## **Gill Gent**

**7<sup>th</sup> July 1927 – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018**



Gill was keen naturalist from her schooldays. She learnt quickly and well. She was Botanical Society of the British Isles County Recorder for the Plants of Northamptonshire for no less than 45 years; a post she acquired before the Northants Trust for Nature Conservation was formed. She and her husband Peter, (an entomologist), were founding members of the Trust. I think that she was probably the last surviving founder member of the Trust. She built up an exceptional knowledge of the County flora.

As an active member of the Kettering and District Natural History Society she was involved with their early attempts to create a new County Flora. The previous Flora, by G.C.Druce 1930 was badly out of date by then. After some false starts this plan got underway in earnest in the 1970's. Many members were involved in this of course, but always Gill was at the forefront of the work, always ready to check any records and help us with our identifications, as well as collecting thousands of "ticks" herself. She fielded any dodgy reports, but always in a friendly helpful manner. It was finally published in 1995, with Rob Wilson adding his knowledge about publishing matters as well as his own botanical expertise. Ten years later they had us doing it all over again, culminating with a second edition in 2012.

Farther afield Gill led field trips studying wildflowers in Devon, where one of her daughters had settled, and Botanical Tours in Turkey. She and Peter also enjoyed trips to Kuwait when her other daughter lived there, and got to see the very different flora of the desert.

Gill was also an active member of the Northants Natural History Society, and did a spell as their President in addition to many talks and walks. She was also a member for many years of the Wildflower Society. How she fitted it all in with raising four

children, drawing many beautiful pictures of wildflowers, playing the violin in the Wellingborough Orchestra, and feeding many of us at numerous 'do-s' in her own house was a wonder. And always with a friendly smile and a laugh with everyone!

Gill was a close observer of Nature, an excellent Botanist, and a good Friend.

#### **Sean Karley**

We were so sorry to hear about the death of Gill Gent in October. Gill was the plant recorder for Northamptonshire for decades. Her death came very close to that of Rob Wilson, who had taken on the recorder's role when Gill stepped down. Losing the two of them in such a short space of time has left a huge hole in the natural history community of the county. Gill's botanical skills were incredible, but the most amazing thing about Gill was just how universally liked she was. She was the most incredibly patient teacher and advisor, and gave up so much of her time to helping others develop an interest in wildlife, particularly botany of course.

By the early nineties, when I first started working at the Wildlife Trust in Northamptonshire, Gill was well established as the county's most eminent botanist. Work was well underway on the first of the two floras she and Rob produced together for the county, but despite the huge amount of work involved in pulling the flora together, Gill always found time to help run courses and provide advice on the plants found on the Trust's nature reserves. She was remarkably tolerant of young botanists turning up on her doorstep clutching moth-eaten specimens, often without the vital characteristic for identifying them properly. If she wasn't in when we called, she was equally polite about finding specimens lying on her doorstep pressed between sheets of whatever paper we'd been able to find floating around in the car or van we were passing by in. No matter how easy the plant should have been to identify, or how impossible it was given the state in which it had arrived, there would always be a polite phone call the following day. Gill would either tell us what it was (and how interesting it was, what habitat it should have been in, and how to look after it) or carefully to explain what we needed to look for to be able to properly identify it next time.

Gill's encouragement of Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers over the years was unceasing. Until a few months before her death, she was still finding the energy to join the Pitsford Nature Reserve recording group, giving her always sound advice on the botanical interest of the site where she had provided so much

input into developing our understanding of its importance and ecology.



**Gill Gent cutting the cake as guest of honour of the Wildlife Trust BCN's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary event**

I was lucky enough to know Gill a little outside the conservation world, thanks to a shared love of music. Her enthusiasm on that front was on a par with her love of plants, and she had a way of spreading the joy she felt to those around her. She will be terribly missed, but she will be remembered not only for her amazing patience but also for the legacy of her work on understanding and communicating the wild flowers of Northamptonshire, not least through the revised flora, an invaluable contribution to conservation work in the county.

**Matt Jackson, Conservation Manager  
(Bedfordshire & Northamptonshire),  
Wildlife Trust BCN**

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## **New Vice County Recorder for Bees, Wasps and Ants**

My name is Ryan Clark and most of you will know me as the project coordinator for the WILDside project. In my spare time I am an avid biological recorder and since starting in 2010, aged 17, I've recorded just under 3000 species in Britain, amassing to over 25000 records so far. I love recording all wildlife but my real passion is for bees, wasps and ants. This group of 590 or so species are incredibly important and contain pollinators, pest controllers and nutrient recyclers.

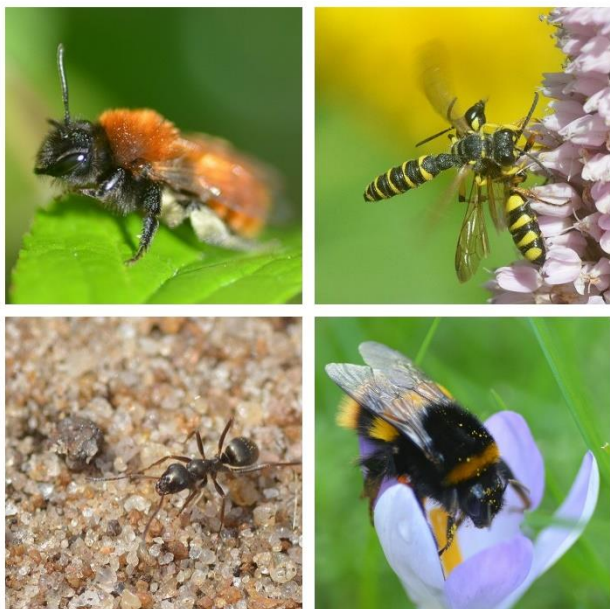




**Ryan recording bees in Cornwall, “I am holding one of Britain’s most declined bees, the long-horned mining bee (*Eucera longicornis*)”**

We need to know how these species are faring if we are to have a chance of conserving them. I truly believe that good conservation is based on good science and this involves knowing which species are found where and what they are doing.

In Northamptonshire, this group is very much under recorded and the records centre does not currently share data with the national scheme, the Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society (BWARS). The records that we do have are mainly focused around the north of the vice county around the Soke of Peterborough.



**The Tawny Mining Bee, *Andrena fulva*, the Solitary Wasp, *Cerceris arenaria*, the Ant *Formica fusca*, and the Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* are just some of the species that are likely to be found in Northamptonshire.**

I have taken on the role as Bees, Wasps and Ants county recorder for VC32 to encourage the identification and recording of this amazing group. I will be working alongside BWARS to exchange data

with them and produce maps of where species are found in the county. I will be verifying the data that the records centre currently holds and making sure that it is as reliable and useful as possible!

It is an exciting time to study these groups with new species arriving in Britain and spreading into the county and a wide variety of species can be found in your own back garden!

**Ryan Clark, County Recorder**

I am happy to help people record bees, wasps and ants in Northamptonshire and can be contacted at [ryanclarkeecology@gmail.com](mailto:ryanclarkeecology@gmail.com) or on Twitter at @RyanClarkNature

## County recorders wanted

Northamptonshire’s recording base is growing, some taxon groups are really well supported by country recorders and others, including fungi & birds would really benefit from this support. We would love to have a fuller coverage of species supported by you. If have an interest in a particular species group, and are keen to move to the next stage of inspiring and supporting others to get involved with recording, then do consider putting yourself forward. There are various national schemes and societies to support you and be part of the wider recording community. We can provide full details on request.

## 2017 Northamptonshire Bird Report



Keen birder? Northants Bird Group have produced their latest annual list including breeding Barn Owls, Migrant arrivals and departures and accounts of the first record of Cory’s Shearwater.

Order your copy

<https://northantsbirds.com/publications/>

## Big Butterfly Count results are in!

The Big Butterfly Count ran from the 20th July – 12th August this year. This nationwide survey ran by Butterfly Conservation was launched in 2010 and has rapidly become the world’s biggest survey of butterflies. Quite incredibly, over 100,000 people took part in 2018, counting almost a million individual butterflies and day-flying moths across the UK. Whites

were the stand out winners with Blues also fairing particularly well, although some species did show declines from the previous year. This included Small Tortoiseshell, which had their worst count on record.

Read the full report

<https://www.bigbutterflycount.org/2018mainresults>

## RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch 26th- 28th January – join in!

Having started in 1979, the Big Garden Birdwatch will be in its 40th year in 2019. During this time over 130 million birds have been counted with an amazing 8 million counted last year alone.

Over 3 days people are encouraged to spend one hour watching and recording the birds in their garden or other local space. With over half a million people regularly taking part, do get involved if you've not done so before.

Sign up <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/packrequest/#sign-up-button>

## Wildlife Trust BCN Ecology Group – help conserve & monitor local species



**Dormouse**  
*Muscardinus avellanarius* Photo  
Credit: Stuart Elson

The Wildlife Trust's monitoring team are looking for more volunteers to join our teams of surveyors up in the

Rockingham Forest area between Corby and Peterborough with the focus around our Old Sulehay Nature Reserve. In particular, we need help with our ongoing small mammal surveys - focusing on bat and dormouse monitoring projects. These projects are suitable for beginners and experts alike, all you need is the time and enthusiasm to join us!

Volunteers would be expected to be able to volunteer on an annual basis to carry out surveys on fixed dates, up to six each year, including evenings (bats) and/or weekends. Training will be provided ad hoc through participation in surveys as well as the opportunity to attend out Wildlife Training Workshops.

## Gwen Hitchcock, Monitoring & Research Officer Wildlife Trust BCN

If you are interested please contact Gwen at [EcologyGroups@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:EcologyGroups@wildlifebcn.org)

## Identification Training Courses



WTBCN's 2019 programme is now out and places are already filling up – don't miss out! Courses this year include identification of stoneworts, plant galls, leaf beetles, woodland bird song, as well as the WILDside workshops on urban plants and, as led by Ryan, on Bumblebees. Courses are also available on

practical skills such as camera trapping and charcoal making. As well as, ecological skill in habitat classification and a WILDside workshop introducing biological recording.

<https://www.wildlifebcn.org/get-involved/training-workshops>



## NBRC Contact Details

### Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre

c/o The Wildlife Trust BCN  
Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE  
Tel: 01604 400448, Fax: 01604 784835  
Email: [nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk](mailto:nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk)  
Website: [www.northantsbrc.org.uk](http://www.northantsbrc.org.uk)

NBRC's staff members are Rosalind Johnston, Nathalie Hueber, Rachel Tate, James Skinner and Ryan Clark

If you would like to sign up to, update your details or be removed from our mailing list – please get in touch. For further details, please see our privacy policy.



# Merry Christmas from the NBRC

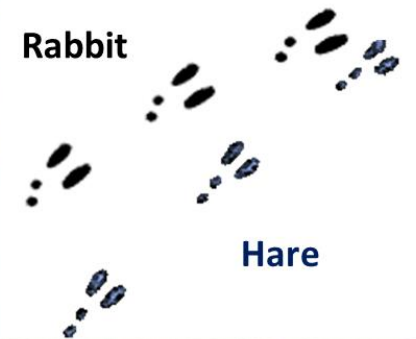
## Look out for ...Rabbits!

Planning on heading out for a festive winter wonderland walk? Look out for distinctive long straight tracks in the mud and snow and you could help us with rabbit and hare records. Our map (left) is remarkably scarce for such a well known and common species – help us change that! Send and share your records, spread the word & help us keep filling the gaps in the maps.

<http://www.northantsbrc.org.uk/Wildside/LookOutForRabbits>



Rabbit



Hare

Photo Credits: Rabbit - Amy Lewis & Rabbit Tracks - Linda Colquhoun