

My Wild Bedminster

Report on Butterflies and Moths for the BS3 Wildlife Group, 2018

Early in 2017 a few members of the BS3 Wildlife group asked themselves the question 'How many species of butterfly can we find in BS3?' For 2017, the answer turned out to be 16, or rather, 15 plus a mystery.

Figure 1. Holly Blue Butterfly.



The mystery was a Small Blue butterfly (*Cupido minimus*) found in Victoria Park. A photograph (see 2017 report) was taken, but it was not completely clear. Theories ranged from mistaken identity to blown in, to imported as an egg on kidney vetch (Small Blue caterpillars are very food specific!) planted by the Victoria Park

Action Group to 'we've discovered a secret colony of Small Blues'. The last explanation now looks less likely as no Small Blues have been reported in BS3 this year.

Despite this, the 2018 answer is 17 out of a UK total of c60 species. We had more observers this year, so many thanks to those who sent in butterfly and moth reports and also several references to hedgehogs, badgers, foxes and various birds and creepy crawlies.

This report deals with butterflies, as last year, but has much more to say about moths than in 2017.

Reports on butterflies and moths were of two kinds. Systematic, year-long surveys of particular spaces and occasional observations made as people moved about the area. Our specific sites went up this year from 3 to 5 gardens and from 2 to 4 larger spaces: nine sites. More in 2019?

The following butterfly species were claimed in both 2017 and 2018: Brimstone; Large White; Small White; Green-veined White; Orange Tip;

Holly Blue; Red Admiral; Painted Lady; Small Tortoiseshell; Comma; Speckled Wood; Gatekeeper; Meadow Brown; Ringlet. (14)

The following were claimed in 2017, but not 2018: Common Blue; Small Blue. (2)

The following were claimed in 2018, but not 2017: Small Skipper; Small Copper; Peacock. (3)

First butterfly of the year?

[Figure 2. Red Admiral Butterfly.](#)

Our first report was on January 22 when a Red Admiral was spotted in a garden on Winterstoke Road. Presumably, this had been hibernating and woke up.



A. The 2018 Butterfly List

Butterflies of domestic gardens

Species	Osborne Rd	Park Rd	Cotswold Rd	Paultow Rd	Beauley Rd
HESPERIIDAE					
Large Skipper					
Small Skipper					
PIERIDAE					
Clouded Yellow					
Brimstone *					
Large White *	☑	☑	☑	☑	
Small White *	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Green-veined White *	☑		☑		
Orangetip *			☑	☑	
LYCAENIDAE					
Small Copper			☑		
Common Blue *					
Holly Blue *	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Small Blue *					
NYMPHALIDAE					
Red Admiral *	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Painted Lady *			☑		
Small Tortoiseshell *			☑	☑	
Peacock			☑		
Comma *	☑	☑	☑	☑ ?	☑
SATYRIDAE					
Speckled Wood *	☑		☑	☑	☑
Marbled White					
Gatekeeper *			☑ ?		☑
Meadow Brown *				☑	
Small Heath					
Ringlet *	☑				
TOTAL Species	8 (7)	5	13 ?	9 ? (9)	6 (4)

* Claimed in 2017. 2017 figure in brackets. Uncertain identifications marked with ?

Butterflies of larger spaces

Species	WHCF	Dame Emily	Bower Ashton	AldMoores
HESPERIIDAE				
Large Skipper				
Small Skipper	☑			
PIERIDAE				
Clouded Yellow				
Brimstone *	☑	☑		
Large White *	☑		☑	☑
Small White *	☑	☑	☑	☑
Green-veined White *	☑			
Orangetip *	☑	☑		☑
LYCAENIDAE				
Small Copper				☑
Common Blue *				
Holly Blue *	☑			☑
Small Blue *				
NYMPHALIDAE				
Red Admiral *			☑	☑
Painted Lady *	☑		☑	
Small Tortoiseshell *		☑ ?	☑	☑
Peacock		☑		☑
Comma *	☑		☑	☑
SATYRIDAE				
Speckled Wood *	☑			☑
Marbled White				
Gatekeeper *			☑	☑
Meadow Brown *			☑	
Small Heath				
Ringlet *	☑			☑
TOTAL Species	11 (10)	5 ?	8	12 (10)

*Claimed in 2017. 2017 figure in brackets.

Sometimes more than one observer per space.

Steve C also saw a skipper at the Bower Ashton Allotments, but was unable to determine the species. It would be worth looking out for this in 2019.

Butterfly Junction

Figure 3. Common Blue Butterfly

Butterfly Junction is not in BS3, but close. It is a small patch of previously industrial land next to the Create Centre on the north side of the Avon New Cut. It was first surveyed in 2002 and since then, 20 species have been identified, at least once. This is around one-third of all the UK's butterfly species and demonstrates how a quite small space can support a rich wildlife, if the circumstances are right.



Because of its industrial past, it is not 'lush', so various grass species have found it hospitable without being swamped by bigger plants. The Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC) have a management plan designed to protect the grass from the growth of shrubs. This range

of grasses has encouraged several butterfly species to breed on site.

At the most, this has probably been Large and Small Skippers and Browns such as Gatekeeper, Marbled White and Ringlet all of which lay their eggs on different grasses. The Common Blue seems also to have bred there on bird's foot trefoil.

In recent years, the site has been threatened by developments associated with the Metrobus route. When work started, FrANC urged the construction company to take care to preserve as much of the site as possible. The area has been reduced in size, but we are now beginning to see what has survived.

From 20 July to 12 August, 7 observers from FrANC visited Butterfly Junction on 14 occasions as part of Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count. They claim 9 species, but would probably have missed earlier 'spring butterflies'.

The nine sightings were Adonis Blue (1); Common Blue (38); Small Blue (3); Comma (1); Large Skipper (1); Speckled Wood (3); Small

Tortoiseshell (1); Large White (38) and Small White (41). The figures in brackets are the number of observations, but may include seeing the same individual more than once.

The Adonis and Small Blue are a surprise and may be a mis-identification.

The book called Butterflies of the Bristol Region (2003) say of the Adonis Blue, 'always a very rare butterfly and now extinct in the region'. The Small Blue view is 'rare , but a few remaining sites' (mostly in the Mendips) and 'there is every possibility that this species will shortly become extinct in our region or indeed is already now extinct'.

It looks as if the Common Blue colony may still be functioning, but what about the Large and Small Skipper communities? The Ringlet and Marbled White colonies seem to have disappeared, although FrANC observers did see a Ringlet in 2017. The Marbled White loss is very sad. These were the rarest breeder at Butterfly Junction and seem to have been eliminated.

No doubt, FrANC members will monitor the site again in 2019. Hopefully, now that the main construction phase for Metrobus is over, the site will regain its diversity. Of course, as well as butterflies, Butterfly Junction has many other invertebrates and they too will, perhaps, recover after several years of industrial assault.

A Comment on Blue Butterflies

The most frequently seen blue butterfly in BS3 is easily the Holly Blue, reported in all five gardens and two of the four larger spaces. Its larva feeds on holly and ivy and there's lots of that about. In contrast the Common Blue was not reported at all in BS3 this year, but is to be found at Butterfly Junction. In contrast, no Holly Blues were seen at Butterfly Junction and, indeed, it has never been seen there since surveys began in 2002. You are likely to find Small Whites, Speckled Woods, Commas and Red Admirals almost everywhere. They are rovers, always on the move. By contrast Blues (and others like Skippers and Ringlets) tend to stick close to their food plant and prefer particular 'special' environments. Often these are quite small spaces, say a couple of gardens or the corner of an allotment. This means that key features of the space (plant mix, light and shade, often dug up or 'abandoned') can make a difference to the type of butterflies that visit and breed there.

The National Picture

As well as FrANC members, I know that others joined in Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count. This has the advantage of concentrating public attention with over 100,000 people reporting on butterflies and moths, but because it focuses on three weeks in the summer, it probably misses species that come out earlier or later.

Anyway, in this very warm period, the national top ten butterflies were Small Whites; Large White; Gatekeeper*; Peacock; Meadow Brown*; Common Blue; Green-veined White; Speckled Wood; Red Admiral* and Small Tortoiseshell*. Most were up on last year, apart from the ones marked*.

B. The 2018 Moth List

Figure 5. Lime Hawk Moth.

As far as we know, only one person in BS3 undertook a systematic



survey of moths in 2018. This was Duncan of Southville Place who used a moth trap, ie a light to attract passing insects. Others spotted odd moths and sent in their observations.



Figure 6. Large Album Wainscot Moth.

We'd like to encourage group members to follow Duncan's example. Moth traps are fairly cheap and easy to use.

Duncan's list follows with the moths allocated to their family groups. Most moths fly at night, but a few families are day moths. Even night moths can be spotted in the daytime if they are disturbed.

During the year, Duncan only spotted one or two examples of some species. Others, such as Hart and Dart, Vine's Rustic and the Silver Y made at least 35 appearances in the trap and over 100 Large Yellow Underwings were reported.

The UK list of moths is around 2500 species, so even Duncan has a long way to go. Pictures of all of the species listed below can be seen on the internet. I found, when I looked them up, that some were animals that I had seen around, but could not name. Many were dull, but others, especially the day moths, were at least as bright and beautiful as butterflies.



Figure 7. Box Tree Moth.

Duncan's Moth List by Family

Figure 8. Blood Vein Moth.



SPHINGIDAE (Hawk Moths)		
Privet Hawk Moth	Lime Hawk Moth	Elephant Hawk Moth
Eyed Hawk Moth		

GEOMETRIDAE		
Lime Speck Pug	Green Pug	Common Marbled Carpet
Riband Wave	Small Wave Umber	Common Carpet
Garden Carpet	Peppered Moth	Barred Yellow

Scalloped Oak	Mottled Beauty	Swallow-tailed Moth
Willow Beauty	August Thorn	Small Phoenix
Brimstone Moth	Dusky Thorn	Copper Underwing
Canary-shouldered Thorn	Yellow Shell	Small Dusky Wave
Cypress Pug	Light Emerald	July Highflier

NOCTUIDAE		
Heart and Dart	Knot Grass	Marbled Minor agg
Miller Moth	Dark Arches	Large Yellow Underwing
Flame Shoulder	Lesser Yellow Underwing	Angle Shades
L-album Wainscot	Middle-barred Minor	Silver Y Moth
Smoky Wainscot	Poplar Gray	Old Lady Moth
Buff-tip	Coronet	Dun-bar
Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing		Dot Moth
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing		Common Rustic
The Spectacle	Small Ranunculus	Square-spotted Rustic
Setaceous Hebrew Character Moth		Broad-barred White
Vines's Rustic	Cabbage Moth	Turnip Moth
Large Ranunculus	Least Yellow Underwing	Straw Underwing
Lunar Underwing	Feathered Ranunculus	Black Rustic
Bright-line Browneye	Heart and Club	The Snout
Marbled Beauty	The Flame	Marbled Green
Light Arches	The Clay	Shuttle-shaped Dart
The Crescent	Pale Mottled Willow	Grey / Dark Dagger *
Uncertain / The Rustic **		

*It's very difficult to tell the Grey Dagger from the Dark Dagger. You need to check their genitalia with a good magnifying glass. We don't know which Duncan caught. Perhaps both?

**Similarly, there were several examples of The Rustic and appropriately named Uncertain Moth. These are also difficult to tell apart except at the genital level. But, as long as they can work it out, they'll be OK.

ERIBIDAE (Tiger Moths etc.)		
Straw Dot	Buff Ermine	Scarlet Tiger
Ruby Tiger	Jersey Tiger	Blackneck
Vapourer	Buff Footman	Yellow Tail
Red Underwing		

DREPANIDAE

Buff Archers

COSSIDAE

Leopard Moth

CRAMBIDAE

Mother of Pearl

Small Magpie

Box Tree Moth *

*The Box Tree Moth is a new addition to the British list. It is from South East Asia and was first spotted in South East England in 2008. It is believed to have been imported on box trees which is the caterpillars' preferred food source. Duncan trapped up to 9 individuals on 6 nights in August and September. Jane S also spotted one in BS3, so it seems to be becoming well established in Bemmy.

TORTRICIDAE

Light Brown Apple Moth

HEPIALIDAE

Orange Swift

YPONOMEUTILIDAE

Bird-cherry Ermine

NOLIDAE

Scarce Silver-lines

Other Moth Observations

Bower Ashton Allotments: Scarlet Tiger and Silver Y.

WHCF: Cinnabar moth (Erebidae); Scarlet Tiger; Mint Moth (Crambidae)*; Privet Hawkmoth caterpillar; Knot Grass caterpillar.

*Probably *Pyrausta aurata*, but could have been the similar looking *P.purpuralis*. Check in 2019?

Cotswold Road Garden: Mint Moth; Garden Tiger; Cinnabar Moth; Mother of Pearl Moth.

Hamilton Road Garden: Cinnabar Moth caterpillars.

Paultow Road Garden: Cinnabar Moth.

Stanley Terrace Garden: Garden Tiger; Cinnabar Moth.

Alderman Moore's Allotment: Mint Moth.

Beauley Road Garden: Box Tree Moth.

Ashton Vale: Blood-vein Moth (Geometridae).

Moths not on Duncan's list are.....

Cinnabar Moth

Mint Moth

Garden Tiger

Blood-vein Moth

Figure 9. Yellow Underwing Moth.



Figure 10, Knot Grass Moth Caterpillar.



C. The 2018 Humans List

Duncan's thoughts on his first year with a moth trap:

'After a little deliberation, I bought a moth trap in Spring 2018 and started trapping in my garden from early June. The trap is a 40w Actinic Heath trap which cost about £130. I would have liked to have made my own, but I just don't have the time at present. I have been putting the trap out sporadically since June as weather, work and family allow. Some weeks that results in almost every night, other weeks I may only get it out once. I position it close to the back wall of the house as some species don't seem to go into the trap but like to rest on things nearby, ie the wall. I have only focused on 'macro moths' this year, leaving the more numerous and complex 'micro moths' as a project for another day. However despite this, I have so far in 2018 recorded 96 species of moth in my garden, far more than I expected and more surprising given the absence of any-semi-natural habitat nearby. It goes without saying that all moths are released unharmed into garden bushes the following morning.

I was rewarded on only my 4th night of trapping in June with a Privet Hawk-moth. As well as privet, the larval stage of this species can also feed on Forsythia. There is plenty of both plant species in the local area, so this species could well be a breeding resident locally*. Over the year I have recorded three further species of hawk-moth in the garden, Lime, Elephant and Eyed**.

Other notable/interesting species include L-album Wainscot, twice in June and October. This species has two broods during the year and these are probably first and second brood. This is known as an immigrant species and while it may also breed in southern England, these individuals may have flown across from the continent. Small, Large and Feathered Ranunculus are three similar species with subtle green, brown and grey markings. All three are species with a localised distribution in the UK. The Jersey Tiger is a striking moth closely related to the fairly common Scarlet Tiger moth. The Jersey Tiger is a very recent colonist of the local area spreading north from its strongholds in Devon and Somerset.'

*Yes. Privet Hawk-moth caterpillar identified at Windmill Hill City Farm.

**Not reported this year, but a Humming-bird Hawkmoth was reported in 2017 in a garden in Osborne Road.

Stef's thoughts on patience:

'It's taken 9 years! When we moved to the very un-green side of West Street, we were pleased that we only had a small back garden to care for in our retirement, following 25 years of maintaining a lovely but large plot in Long Ashton. However, we were unprepared for the complete lack of garden birds. Bird feeders didn't deliver. We planted lots of climbing shrubs, a couple of small trees and built a pond. But, still they didn't come. Gradually, pigeons and magpies found us. Then, two years ago, a pair of blackbirds and an occasional robin. But now, wow, we have at least 12 sparrows nesting in a shrub-covered old stone wall at the end of the garden. We've bought a new bird feeder and they spend most of the day flocking around that and splashing about in the pond. Not very exciting for those of you who live in the leafier parts of our neighbourhood*, but a real delight for us. Worth waiting for'.

*A few years ago, BCC identified Greater Bedminster as the Neighbourhood Partnership area with the least tree cover: 14th out of 14!! Planting trees in gardens, streets, parks etc is a Good Thing for promoting bio-diversity, and not just for birds.

Ben and Windmill Hill City Farm:

'I made 18 visits to WHCF from April until September for my second year surveying butterflies there. You can imagine how hard that was. I had to wait until I was at a loose end and the sun was out and then walk all of 10 minutes to the farm carrying a butterfly net. Sometimes the strain was so great that I had to pop into the farm café for an ice cream. Fortunately, children were curious about my activities and I was often able to pass the burden and the net to one of them and just watch them rushing around. Apparently, I am known as 'the butterfly man'. I've been called worse!

D. BS3 Wildlife Group

Many thanks to people who have sent in observations about a very wide range of creatures. All of this helps with our My Wild Bedminster project and contributes to our aims of raising local people's awareness of the wildlife that lives and visits us in BS3 and, secondly, finding ways of making our gardens, parks, allotments, roofs etc more and more hospitable for a range of interesting creatures.

A special thank you to Paul Breedon who edits the South Bristol Voice which has carried several articles on local wildlife this year and to Alex Morss who wrote most of them.

There are several ways in which you can help, including:

1. Encouraging people to join the BS3 Wildlife Group;
2. Undertaking your own monitoring of gardens, allotments or other spaces whether that's for birds, spiders, butterflies, snails or whatever and send your observations to the BS3 Wildlife Group;
3. Thinking about how you can make your little patch more attractive to the birds and the bees and then do it in 2019.

And thanks to John Hargreaves for laying out this report.

Ben Barker (Secretary, BS3 Wildlife Group).

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