

## Nature Notes

### Butterflies in Bugbrooke.

Last year was quite a good year for butterflies in Bugbrooke. We saw and took photographs of 17 species in the village. There are 56 resident and regularly occurring British butterflies and about a third occur commonly. Some are regular visitors to our gardens, but a greater number can be seen in the marginal, uncultivated areas around the village. Smiths Lane, Charity Meadow, the area around the aqueduct and in the fields by the brook at the bottom of the Cornhill Road are all good places to see many of the more elusive species.

Already we have seen the Orange tip butterfly, Holly Blue, Brimstone, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies in the garden. To attract butterflies to your garden, you must provide food for them. Butterflies feed on nectar and honeydew, and while feeding they act as pollinators to many wild and cultivated flowers. The best cultivated nectar source is the Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*). You would expect to see some of our most colourful species feeding there, such as the Red Admiral, the Peacock and the Small Tortoiseshell butterflies, and in August, if we have a good summer, the migratory Painted Lady which flies in from the continent. Other favourite plants are the ice plant (*Sedum spectabile*), *Verbena bonariensis*, aubretia, Michaelmas daisies, holly, ivy, marjoram, thyme and lavender. Our hibernating species (including Red Admiral, Comma and Peacock) prepare for the winter by building up their reserves in autumn by feeding on inconspicuous ivy flowers, and even rotting fruit beneath apple and pear trees.

There is concern that our butterfly numbers are declining and Butterfly Conservation (the largest invertebrate charity in the world) has joined with Marks & Spencer to encourage gardeners to use butterfly-friendly plants. They say that the Small Tortoiseshell has diminished by 68% since 2000 and by putting some "lavender in a pot or a bit of *Buddleia* in your flowerbed...you can help make a difference". They are helping schools to create butterfly gardens and to participate in the Big Butterfly Count between 16<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July, but it isn't just for children. To find out more go to [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org) where there is a free identification chart for you to download. Then watch in your garden/countryside for 15 minutes and record what you see. I intend to take part, and if you do, I would be interested to hear how you get on.

Here is a list of butterflies we saw in Bugbrooke in 2010. Common blue, Speckled Wood, Brown Argus, Gatekeeper, Comma, Brimstone, Meadow Brown, Peacock, Green-veined White, Small White, Large White, Ringlet, Wall Brown, Small Copper, Orange Tip, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral. There are photographs of all of these at [www.bugbrookelink.co.uk/naturenotes](http://www.bugbrookelink.co.uk/naturenotes) and if you see anything not on the list please let me know.

Last year we had our first bat survey. It seems that bats are common throughout the village, and we intend to repeat the exercise in 2015, to see if there has been any change. The Bat Conservation Trust will be conducting a survey in July and August, and if you would like to take part their web address is [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk) but if you notice anything unexpected, such as a marked decline or increase in numbers of bats, please contact me.

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