



Abdon District Community Wildlife Group – Annual Report 2020

Introduction

2020 was our group's fifth year. We have continued to steadily build up knowledge of the wildlife in "our patch". However it was of course a year no-one will forget, as the pandemic changed every aspect of our lives, our Wildlife



Wall Brown male

Photo : Miles Leach

Group included. We did hold two indoor meetings early in the year at which we put together the years programme (see **Appendix I**). Just in time for just about everything to be cancelled! However we did manage to carry out most of the curlew survey site visits, this being undertaken by individuals or pairs in open countryside, while doing their permitted exercise (see below for more details). In the lull in restrictions in late summer, we managed three field meetings, and these are reported on below. By good fortune we had chosen this year to ask members to record butterflies. This proved an ideal lockdown activity, members recording both in their gardens, and when out walking. In April we were notified by the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation fund that we had been successful in our bid for

£300 to purchase a bat detector and a number of FSC identification charts. We would like to thank The Shropshire Hills AONB for their generous support and Stephanie Hayes their Promotions Officer for her help with this.

Membership

We continue to collect new members, and by the end of the year our membership numbered over 60.

Logo and communications

At one of our early indoor meetings, several proposed logos designed by Ruby were on display, and a vote by members present resulted in the one at the top of this report being selected. Ruby has also spent time this year working on our website and liaising with the county website people. Thank you, Ruby, for all your efforts in this sphere.

Curlew Survey & Other Bird News

This report summarises a very successful third year for the Group. Members showed a high level of commitment in carrying out the surveys, particularly during their exercise periods in the lockdown, and some covered other people's Tetrads with full or casual visits.

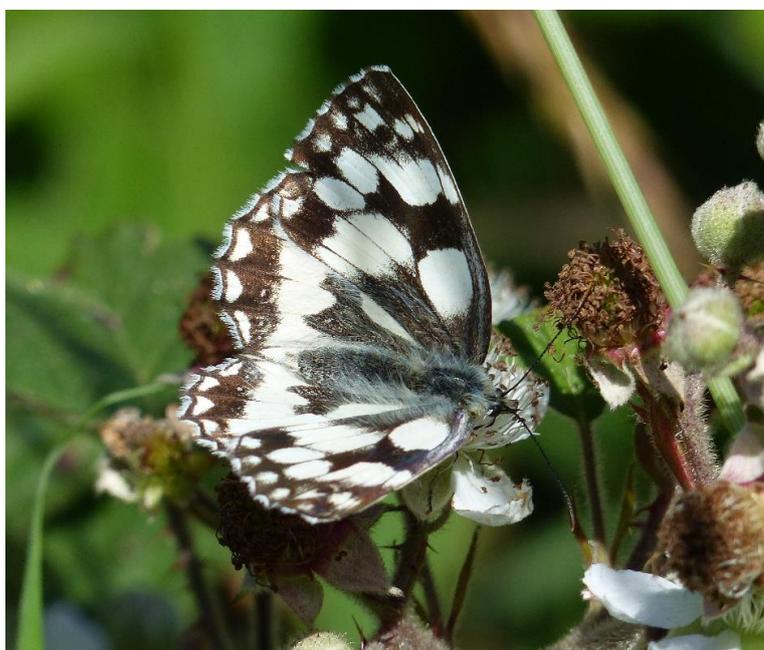
All 16 tetrads were surveyed, and we now have a better understanding of the population and distribution of Lapwing and Curlew, and the status of the Other Target Species.

The populations in the Abdon District CWG area are estimated at

- Curlew: 10 pairs, compared to 7-10 pairs in 2019
- Lapwing: 12 pairs of Lapwing, possibly as many as 17, rather better than the 7-11, probably 8, breeding pairs in 2019.

This is valuable information for the conservation of these birds. Further survey work in future years will add to this baseline, and establish population trends. Thank all who carried out survey visits despite being restricted access in some areas.

Further reported birds of note 2 Ring Ouzel in Pole Gutter on Brown Clee on 3 April. A number of sightings of Goshawks including recently fledged young and a Peregrine being seen in the Abdon area. A male Whinchat with 7 Wheatear near Tugford on 18 April. On 2 July while 3 Curlew chicks from a nest that we protected with an electric fence at Tugford were being ringed a Quail was heard calling. Bramblings visited a garden near Abdon on 8 November.



Marbled White

Photo : Miles Leach

Butterfly Survey

In 2019 we started to record sightings of butterflies. Our aim for 2020 was to encourage more people to record sightings on a more regular basis.

Records were submitted either online, into a spreadsheet, or with good old-fashioned paper and pencil.

Due to the very unusual circumstances in 2020, giving many of us time to make local observations, a phenomenal 777 sightings were recorded! Didn't we do well?

Looking at the data collected the pattern seen in 2020 was quite different right from the beginning of the season.

Possibly due to the very mild winter, many Peacock butterflies were in evidence, along with Small tortoiseshell and Comma, which had obviously survived the winter in hibernation, whereas, Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone and Orange-tips were the first to be observed the previous year.

The big success story of the year is definitely that of the Marbled White, with sightings of up to 20 butterflies at a time, as well as being more widespread throughout the area. Four years ago the first Marbled White was recorded, this sighting was greeted with great enthusiasm by Entomologist Pete Boardman.

Probably the highlight of the year was two recordings of Dark Green Fritillaries, fortunately they were photographed on both occasions, which definitely aided identification. A first for our group!



Dark Green Fritillary male

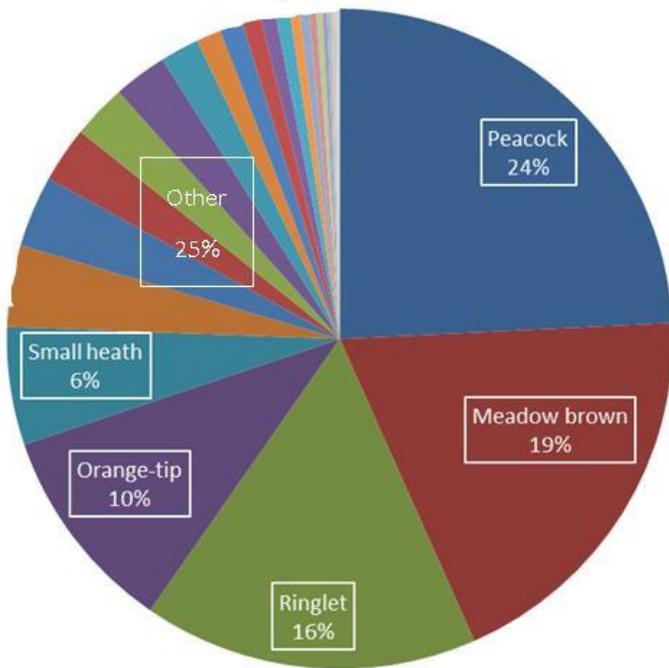
Photo : Miles Leach

The recorder of butterflies for the West Midlands, Mike Williams, was suitably excited by these finds and requested that they should be entered on record.

Another first for the group was a sighting of a Purple Hairstreak. One sighting of a Wall butterfly was made both this year and last, of particular interest due to it being in “rapid decline” in this area.

The most noticeable difference was the dramatic decline in sightings of Painted Lady butterflies, only 8 were seen this year. In 2019 they were observed throughout June, July, August and September with up to 30 butterflies in evidence at one time at the end of the season.

Thank you for gathering all of this information, also, a huge thank you to Ruby who has made light work of collating the vast quantities of data, a summary of which can be found in **Appendix II**.



Butterfly Survey : Relative proportions of records

(Chart by Ruby)

Bat Recording

As detailed above we now have a “group” bat detector and six FSC guides to British bats identification charts. The plan was to lend these out to interested members to use at home and in their local area as well as at “Bat evenings” that were set to become a new regular feature in the programme. Dee Snape took on learning how to use the new detector and Miles did the same with my own different detector.

Because of the pandemic we only managed the one bat evening. Five members met at Karl’s wood, Ashfield Coppice on a cold 30th August evening. Three species were identified: Noctule, Pipistrelle, and Soprano Pipistrelle. These were also the species that Dee and Miles had identified in their local patches. These records have been sent to the county bat recorder John Morgan who has been very helpful. He had hoped to meet up with us one evening to help us get to grips with bat detecting and identification but due to the pandemic couldn’t; hopefully it will happen in 2021. If anyone would like to borrow a copy of the FSC guide and the detector please let Miles Leach know.

Mammal Recording

This year we started to record mammal sightings. Pam Thom very kindly took on the task of maintaining a spreadsheet of all submitted records. Quite a lot of records were submitted but by only a small number of recorders – more this year please! We now have 6 of each of the FSC guide charts for land mammals of Britain and British mammal tracks and signs. These are available for loan by group members please contact Miles Leach if you would like to borrow one. We also have a Deer Identification guide that Miles can copy to you. These guides would be a great way of getting children and young people interested in their local wildlife. Records can be reported to Pam at pambolathom@hotmail.com. Pam can give the details that we need to record.

Of particular interest this year were records of Dormice at 2 locations. Some bat records were also submitted that we will try to follow up on this year with our bat detectors as Covid regulations allow. The records received have been passed on to the county mammal recorder.

Moth Mornings



Mother Shipton Moth

Photo : Miles Leach

species, 1 of which is described as “local” and a “really nice record as they are much less common than they used to be”. If you are interested in a quick introduction to micro-moth recording contact Miles who has a brief document Micro-moth Recording in Shropshire he can send you.

No moth mornings were held due to the coronavirus but Miles Leach continued moth trapping at his home identifying a total of 124 species of which 36 were first time records. Since 2017 to date we have identified 199 species of macro moths in our area. 2 reports of Small Egger webs with a number of caterpillars were made one between Derrington and Netchwood the other at Tugford where they were found last year. This is a nationally scarce moth. These records have been submitted to the county recorder.

Miles had a go at identifying and recording micro-moths this year. They are generally much harder to identify accurately than the larger macro moths. With quite a lot of help and guidance from the county recorder Mike Shurmer he submitted 24 records covering 18

Dragonflies



Beautiful Demoiselle Damselfly male

Photo : Miles Leach

Unfortunately no dragonfly walks took place this year. Miles Leach visited various sites and recorded a total 14 species which have been reported to the county recorder. New for our area was Broad-bodied Chaser which brings our area total to 15 species. A number of his sightings were not close to water so it is worth keeping a look out for dragonflies when out walking between May and September.



Four-spotted Chaser dragonfly male

Photo : Miles Leach

Butterfly Walk – Clee Liberty – 12th September

Three members did a short socially distanced walk on Nurdy Bank looking for butterflies. The only sightings were of 2 rather tatty Small Coppers and a female Green-veined White showing the more extensive black markings on the upper side of the fore-wing than the males.

Fungi on Clee Liberty – 18th October

Because of the restrictions in place (“rule of six”) we introduced a booking procedure. People’s eagerness to meet up, and get out was reflected in us having 14 people wanting to attend! In the event, two groups of five spent a most productive morning discovering the many fungi found in this “waxcap grassland”. We came away with almost 50 species recorded. Although we admit that our id with some of these fungi might not be 100%, the exercise opened members’ eyes to the extraordinary array of fungi to be found on what at first sight looks like “just short turf”. It also demonstrated that the value of old grassland is not limited to flowers.

Plant Report



Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*) was recorded at a location near Tugford, bringing to four, the number of sites where we have found this unusual parasitic plant.

In Ashfield Coppice, Karl has found Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), taking the number of Ancient Woodland indicators to 22.

At Abdon, Mariel was delighted to report the appearance of a Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) in one of her meadows. Over the past five years Mariel has been managing 6 acres of semi-improved grassland in such a way as to increase the biodiversity. This included “innoculating” the field with yellow rattle and eyebright which would parasitise grasses, and later, scattering green hay from local flower-rich meadows. The appearance of this axiophyte, rarely recorded in “our patch”, is a wonderful reward for all the hard work. We look forward to the numbers increasing.

Southern Marsh Orchid Photo : Mariel Lubman

Appendix I

Abdon District Community Wildlife Group 2020 Programme

Main Programme An event about once a month, when we have a field meeting, which will have a main aim, but is also an opportunity to simply “see what we find”! **Full details will come to you by email shortly before each event.** Weather sometimes causes a late change of date. You can also keep an eye on our own website <https://abdonwildlife.weebly.com/>

Sunday 22nd March 1pm-4pm – Mosses Our first “field” meeting is indoors! A communal self-help effort at learning about this much ignored group of plants. At Bank House, Abdon, SY7 9HU. Bring along samples of moss, (note location, habitat, and what the moss is growing on), x10 or stronger hand lens, any relevant books/guides and your phone/laptop if you want to access online guides. Let Mariel know if you intend to come: dmdelubman@hotmail.co.uk

Sat 25th April – Dawn Chorus Walk Meet at “Picnic Area” parking area, to start at 5.00a.m. (We hope to finish up at the Willows Café in Ditton for breakfast – to be confirmed)

Wed 10th June – Butterfly Walk on Clee Liberty, in particular looking for Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. This walk be led by Mike Williams of Butterfly Conservation. 11am start at Heatham Gate. Bring packed lunch if you want to stay for long day.

Sun 14th June – Upland Grassland Walk We shall use John Handley’s botanical survey of Clee Liberty as the basis for this walk, familiarising ourselves with the various Upland Grassland communities that are found on Brown Clee Hill, and looking out for certain plants that have been recorded up there. Meet Heatham Gate. Bring picnic lunch. (It is hoped to do a mini get-to-know your grasses session shortly before this date).

Late June – The Gore Guided visit to this SWT site at Wheathill. Further details nearer the time.

Sat 4th July – Ruthall Walk A walk in the Ruthall/Ashfield area on public footpaths, looking at butterflies, flowers of damp pastures and anything else we find.

Late July – Dragonfly walk A visit to the pools around the summit of Abdon Burf, looking for dragonflies, and examining the plant life too. (As last year) date will be announced at short notice according to weather.

August – freshwater life – Brickyard Farm, Wheathill Discovering both the animal and plant life of a pond.

October – Waxcap grassland on Clee Liberty Seeking out this colourful group of little fungi.

Ongoing Recording

Butterfly Records We started to record butterflies last year. Based on that experience we are working on a monthly recording sheet in the hope that we might encourage more members to participate! This will be circulated shortly.

Mammal Records We are going to start collecting records of sightings of all mammals and sending them to the County Recorder. Further details will be sent out in another email.

Curlew, Lapwing & Other Birds Survey Meeting at Abdon Village Hall, **Thursday 12th March**, 7.30pm start. We are privileged to have Leo Smith, Shropshire’s No. 1 ornithologist, joining us for this evening. Leo is the co-ordinator for this county-wide effort by scores of volunteers. He will explain the findings made by ourselves in 2019, and go on to present the full picture for Shropshire. The evening will also include planning our 2020 Curlew survey. (Miles will be contacting those who have previously helped).

Pop-up Events These will “pop up” from time to time. You will receive an email as and when they come along.

Moth Mornings Miles would like to set up his moth trap at different locations, and at different seasons. Can you offer a venue? Must have an electricity supply. Fix a date with Miles, milesleach712@gmail.com which will be circulated to all members, who can arrive early morning to view and identify trap contents, and drink coffee!

Bat Evenings Can you host a bat evening? Miles now has a bat detector, and we also have an application in for a grant to purchase a group bat detector, and bat id information. If you have bats flying on your property, and would like a visit by the Wildlife Group, contact Miles milesleach712@gmail.com

Appendix II

Summary of some of the Butterfly Survey Data (by Ruby)

The **earliest** butterflies recorded in March were

Peacocks, Small tortoiseshells and Commas.

19 March 2020	Peacock
23 March 2020	Peacock
23 March 2020	Peacock
24 March 2020	Peacock
24 March 2020	Small Tortoiseshell
25 March 2020	Comma
25 March 2020	Small Tortoiseshell
25 March 2020	Small Tortoiseshell
25 March 2020	Small tortoiseshell
26 March 2020	Comma
26 March 2020	Comma
26 March 2020	Peacock
26 March 2020	Peacock
26 March 2020	Small Tortoiseshell
26 March 2020	Small Tortoiseshell

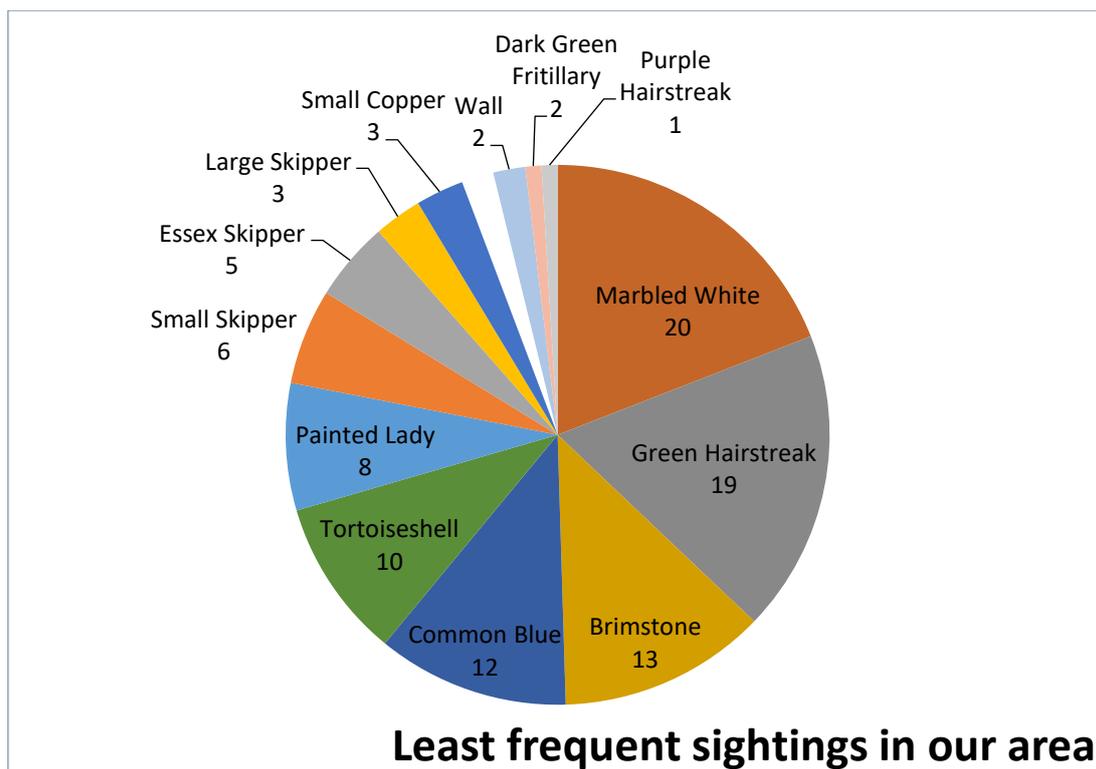
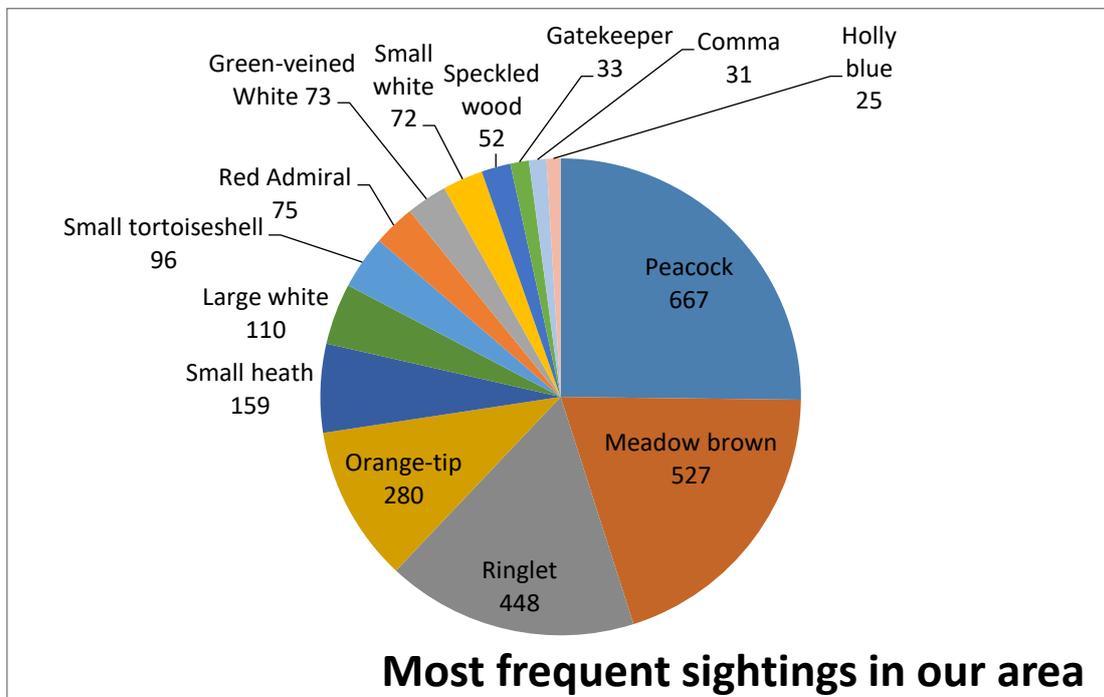
The **latest** butterflies, recorded on 11th October were:

11th October 2020	Comma
11th October 2020	Comma
11th October 2020	Large white
11th October 2020	Large white
11th October 2020	Painted Lady
11th October 2020	Painted Lady
11th October 2020	Peacock
11th October 2020	Peacock
11th October 2020	Red Admiral
11th October 2020	Red Admiral
11th October 2020	Small tortoiseshell
11th October 2020	Small tortoiseshell

The Peacock had the longest season lasting from 19th March to 11th October

Numbers of sightings in our area

Important note : The numbers in the charts on the next page are of *sightings*. As members were asked to record any butterflies, anywhere, anytime, these numbers cannot be regarded as true measures of relative population size. There was no systematic coverage of our area. For example, there is a bias towards gardens. Certain habitats were probably not visited at all, and some only on odd occasions, whereas some gardens may have been “visited” almost daily. The numbers can be regarded as an indication of which species might be more common in our area, and which species might have been more numerous in 2020.



There were 2 butterflies where only one example was observed – the dark green fritillary and the purple hairstreak

Dark Green Fritillary	1	Adult	Roadside verge	SO 573857	Abdon	
Purple Hairstreak	1	Adult	Oak Tree	SO573857	Abdon	
Wall	1	Adult	Arable field margin	SO573857	Abdon	
Wall	1	Adult	Garden	SO573857	Abdon	In the orchard
Lesser yellow underwing	1	Caterpillar	garden	SO573857	Abdon	
Lesser yellow underwing	1	Caterpillar	garden	SO607872	Picnic area east side Brown Clee hill	
Small Copper	1	Adult	Garden	SO585867	Gorse field	lower edge under trees
Small Copper	1	Adult	Grass field (cow)	SO 573857	Abdon	
Small Copper	1	Adult	Grass field	SO573857	Abdon	
Large Skipper	2	Adult	Rough Grass	SO573857	Abdon	Weather warming up they're back again.
Large Skipper	1	Adult	Arable field margin	SO560854	Marsh Gate, Clee St Margaret	
Essex Skipper	5	Adult	Rough grass/brambles	SO573857	Abdon	

Butterflies of significant conservation status found on our patch include:

Wall – NT status (near threatened)

Contributors

Thank you to the following for contributions to this Annual report: Miles Leach, Karl Liebscher, Mariel Lubman, Ruby Reseigh, and Dee Snape.

February 2021