

Backies News

NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF CLIFTON BACKIES



Small Copper



Wall Brown

Clifton Backies Butterfly Survey 2014 Results

Many of you will be aware that I have been carrying out a butterfly survey on Clifton Backies this year. With surveys also held from 2004–2006, it gives us a good indicator of how species are progressing on site. To the right is a list of butterflies in frequency order and how numbers compare to 2006.

The great news is that most species are present in higher numbers than 2006—this may be attributed to the good weather we had this summer, but has been helped significantly by the habitat improvement that has taken place in the past 10 years, including meadow management and planting selected larva foodplants such as Buckthorn (Brimstone).

Species with large improvements are Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Peacock and Small Copper. We were very concerned about the Small Tortoiseshell as it was decreasing rapidly, but this butterfly has recovered well.

The main species of concern is the Wall Brown, absent from the survey (but has been seen this year by Mike Walton) - this decline has been seen across the UK.

The complete survey will be published on our website soon.—Tony Fairburn (Chair)

Species	Count	Up/Down
Ringlet	1003	Up 602
Meadow Brown	454	Up 210
Small Skipper	370	Down 36
Speckled Wood	328	Up 151
Gatekeeper	187	Down 18
Peacock	134	Up 108
Green-Veined White	114	Up 62
Small White	107	Down 26
Large Skipper	86	Up 23
Small Copper	82	Up 66
Small Tortoiseshell	77	Up 59
Orange Tip	36	Up 12
Large White	26	Down 11
Comma	22	Up 1
Common Blue	21	Up 4
Holly Blue	19	Up 17
Brimstone	19	Up 18
Purple Hairstreak	11	New Species
Brown Argus	8	Up 5
Red Admiral	7	Down 5
Wall Brown	0	Down 27
Painted Lady	0	Down 10
Marbled White	0	Down 2

Tale of Two Walks

Butterfly Walk - 9th August

On a bright summer's day, a good turnout spent a very enjoyable afternoon seeking out the more colourful inhabitants of Clifton Backies for Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count. As you might expect from the survey results, we saw good numbers of 10 species of butterfly including the Holly Blue and Small Copper. The most common butterfly we saw was the Gatekeeper, tirelessly guarding their little patch of hedgerow! We were also lucky to see day flying moths including Six-Spot Burnet and Chimney Sweep, bugs of all shapes and sizes and the terrapins!

Art Walk - 13th September

Our friend Doug Heald kindly led an art walk last month, and although not a large turnout, everyone really enjoyed a new perspective on our nature reserve! The children especially enjoyed sketching some real masterpieces of the flowers and landscapes around the site, and we all improved our techniques with some help from Doug. As we walked, we all loved to hear some of the stories about living and playing on Clifton Backies and how the fields have evolved since the second world war. The Mulryne family enjoyed the walk so much that their children were inspired to try out their artistic skills at Fountains Abbey later the same day!

Upcoming events

Events and meetings planned for late Autumn / Winter are:

- 22nd November, 10:30am - Water Vole Habitat Improvement & Litter Pick
- 12th January, 7:30pm - Friends meeting - Venue to be confirmed—although we are hoping to hold future meetings at Burton Green Primary School.

Latest News

News from our September meeting

- We had our Annual General Meeting in September. Paul resigned from his Chairman role as he has moved out of York. Tony agreed to stand as Chair and Mike Walton kindly agreed to take over as Treasurer. Vanessa is continuing as Secretary.

- The current paid-up membership of the Friends group is 21 households, including 3 local primary schools – which is very encouraging. Tony has led walks on the Backies for some of the children and showed us some of the lovely thank-you letters and drawings he'd received.
- Jenny, the Council's Smarter York officer (previously Park Ranger) asked if the Friends would like to put together a long-term 'wish list' for work we'd like to see done on the Backies. The committee thought this was a really good idea and have started to compile a list, and we welcome any suggestions and comments from members.

Water vole latest

- We now have photographic evidence that there are water voles living in the banks of Bur Dyke. (Not an actual water vole but something it left behind!). Friends have also reported visual sightings.
- Jenny, the Council's Smarter York officer (previously Park Ranger), has arranged a session on 13th November for a group from Aviva to make a start on clearing one bank of Bur Dyke and plant new vegetation that water voles will eat. The Friends can also get involved on 22nd November (see upcoming events).

Management news

- Tony is the FOCB rep on the Backies Management Board. The Board is made up of local and Parish councillors and members of York Natural Environment Trust (YNET). It controls the fund set up for the management of the Backies and approves any work done. As mentioned before, they would like feedback from FOCB members on any issues, so please let any of the committee members know about anything you would like raising.

Also

If you have any ideas for events, information or sightings you would like to report for Clifton Backies, please pass them to Vanessa (Vanessagrants9@aol.com) or Tony Fairburn (antony.fairburn@gmail.com or 07714307709). We would be delighted to include them on our website or in our newsletter.

Please tell everyone about the great things we have planned at Clifton Backies and pass on a membership form - we always like to see new faces at meetings and events.

For further information regarding the Friends please see the Clifton Backies web pages : www.cliftonbackies.org.uk.