



## UKBMS eNewsletter Spring 2026

### Welcome!

Welcome to the new format of our quarterly eNewsletter. We hope you enjoy it, the extra space will allow us to highlight your sightings and survey stories.

We've already had some warm, dry spring days, bringing sightings of Brimstones, Peacocks, Tortoiseshells and even a few Red Admirals. The first butterflies of the year are always a lovely sign the season is starting and a gentle reminder to get ready for monitoring.

#### In this newsletter you will find:

- Some reminders for the start of the season
- An invitation to the UK Butterfly Recorders Meeting 2026
- Opportunities to help monitor priority species
- Dayflying moth ID resource



Peacock: Tim Melling

### Get ready for the start.....

Transect monitoring begins as usual on 1 April, which falls on a Wednesday this year. Each monitoring week therefore runs Wednesday to Tuesday: Week 1 is Weds 1 April – Tues 7 April, Week 2 is Weds 8 – Tues 14, and so on. It's worth keeping this in mind so that survey visits take place at least once within each monitoring week. The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) starts as usual on 1 July.



- **Health and safety:** Read the risk assessment and Health & Safety guidance to keep yourself safe and comfortable during surveys. <https://ukbms.org/health-safety>.
- **Survey conditions:** Check the guidance on minimum temperatures, sunshine levels, wind speeds and time of day so your surveys are valid and can be used fully.
- **Check your site:** If you haven't visited recently, check nothing has changed and remind yourself of the sections. If surveying as a team, walk the route together to ensure a consistent approach.
- **Admin:** Everyone who walks a butterfly transect or WCBS square must be registered on our portal, Assemble. See the end of this newsletter for details on how to register.

# For the early birds and keen beans...

If the spring is warm and you're keen, you can get out for some early surveys.

You can start transect survey visits early if there are good conditions and you're keen to get out surveying. Remember, the temperature need to be at least 13°C and there needs to be at least 60% sunshine during the walk to to make it valid. The data entry form on the UKBMS website can accept survey visits from week -3, so from early March.

Likewise, you can continue to survey past the final week of September if you want to and the weather is suitable. These extra weeks are useful for phenology and research, but doesn't affect the standard population abundance analysis.

| Week Number |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|             |     | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue |
| -3          | Mar | 4 🍀 | 5 🍀 | 6 🍀 | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  |
| -2          | Mar | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  |
| -1          | Mar | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  | 24  |
| 0           | Mar | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  | 29  | 30  | 31  |
| 1           | Apr | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 2           | Apr | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |

## Need a refresher..?

It's six months since the end of the last UKBMS season, so take a moment to remind yourself of the survey method with our resources. This ensures that all the data you collect is valid and can be used to produce reliable population trends.

There are some excellent resources on the UKBMS [Guidance pages](#) to help you refresh your knowledge of the survey method and weather criteria. There's also a helpful [video](#) that walks through the method step by step. It's ideal for new surveyors, but also a great refresher for experienced volunteers to make sure all the survey criteria are being followed.

Wise words to remember from Rachael our former Butterfly Monitoring Officer "....the survey method is a bit like baking a cake. If you don't follow the method, you don't get a very good cake, and if you don't follow the survey method, you don't get very good data".

We would like everyone to enjoy plenty good of cake and to collect good data.



Brimstone: Iain H Leach

# UK Butterfly Recorders Meeting 2026

We are pleased to invite you to the UK Butterfly Recorders Meeting on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March online. Bookings are open now!



Our annual UK Butterfly Recorders meeting is taking place via Zoom on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March. The event is free to attend and you can book your place [here](#).

There are lots of interesting talks as well as the first look at the official 2025 results from the UKBMS. The recording of the meeting will be available shortly afterwards on Butterfly Conservation's YouTube channel here - <https://www.youtube.com/@savebutterflies> where you'll also find recordings from previous meetings, along with the recent UK Moth Recorders meeting.

## Sort the admin before the surveys start

### Assemble registration

Everyone who carries out a survey and submits data to the UKBMS needs to be registered with Butterfly Conservation as a volunteer via the Assemble portal. This ensures we are meeting our legal obligations to you, enables your local Coordinator to communicate with you and ensures your activities are covered by Butterfly Conservation's insurance.

If you're not already registered, please follow the appropriate link below:

- [Transect Surveyors](#)
- [WCBS Recorders](#)

### Insurance

Boring, but essential! If you would like further details on the insurance cover provided by Butterfly Conservation for all its volunteers, there is a useful summary of the cover on the Assemble Document Hub here – [K. Health & Safety Policies & Forms > Insurance Guidance for Volunteers](#)

To be covered by the policy a volunteer must be registered on Assemble, if you have any queries please contact the volunteering team via [volunteering@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:volunteering@butterfly-conservation.org)



Speckled Wood: Matt Berry



Green-veined White: Iain H Leach

New guidance has been published to help groups and projects wanting to monitor butterflies in their local area.



If you missed it, take a look at our new Guidance for Local Monitoring. It's designed for groups, local councils, landowner partnerships and community projects that are keen to monitor butterflies but aren't sure where to start.

The guidance explains how to set up monitoring at a local scale and outlines the different survey methods available. It also helps you think about your objectives. Whether you want to understand butterfly abundance, distribution or species richness, and talks through the available methods and the pros and cons of each approach.

The guidance is available to download from the [UKBMS website](https://www.ukbms.org/) and [Butterfly Conservation website](https://www.butterflyconservation.org/).

## Priority species monitoring

As well as monitoring butterflies through standard transects and WCBS squares, the UKBMS incorporates data for several priority species that are monitoring using other monitoring methods.

Thanks to everyone who helped with Brown Hairstreak egg counts this winter, getting out in the cold to search for tiny eggs amongst spiky Blackthorn hedgerows is a challenging task, but it's a brilliant contribution to our understanding of the distribution and abundance of this tricky to monitor species.

This winter, record numbers of Brown Hairstreak eggs were recorded in Carmarthenshire. <https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/rare-butterfly-egg-numbers-are-best-ever-after-hedges-grow-wild>

There's opportunities to get involved in monitoring some of the other priority species this year through the [Making Peatlands work for Lepidoptera project](#), [Large Heath surveying](#) in north Wales, [Wood White surveying](#) in Sussex and Surrey and [Marsh Fritillary surveying](#) in Argyll. BC Branches also carry out lots more surveying so do find your local one [here](#) to see if you can get involved.



Brown Hairstreak egg: Peter Eeles



Marsh Fritillary larvae: Savannah Jones

# Add more lepidoptera to your surveys!

You can record day-flying moths while surveying your transect or WCBS square. Recording them provides valuable additional data and helps us better monitor the distribution of these species.

### Moths Matter! – How to identify day-flying moths

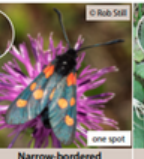
by Rob Still, Princeton WildGuides

**ID FEATURE**

Here we look at some of the most commonly recorded day-flying moths from WCBS surveys. We look at the essential ID features to help you get to grips with this large group of lepidoptera, and perhaps start recording them on your square. You can add your day-flying moth sightings to the data entry page when you enter your butterfly data.

**The 'Black-and-reds' (Burnets and Cinnabar)**

Burnet moths have clubbed antennae; (left inset) Cinnabar has thin antennae (right inset). Separating burnet moths from each other can be tricky. The number of wing spots helps, but the width of the rear black border on the hindwing needs to be seen to distinguish the Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet from the rarer Five-spot Burnet which has a broader border.


**Noctuids**

Noctuid moths typically rest with their wings closed but at an angle. 20 or so of the 400 British and Irish species are regarded as day-flyers and most of these are best identified by their upperside markings.

**Geometrids (carpets and allies) and Mother Shipton**

Geometrid moths usually have flat wings at rest. Their background colours and patterns, although variable, are key to identification and the carpet moths usually need close attention.











You can record any day-flying moths that you see whilst carrying out your transects or WCBS visits.

If you use the paper field recording form, you can use the blank rows at the bottom to record which species of day-flying moth you see.

The data entry page on the UKBMS website allows you to add moth (or dragonfly and damselfly) species. Use the blue toggles above the form to toggle between different species groups. Once you have recorded a species on your site, it will automatically show up in your default view of 'Species recorded at this site'.

If you want to learn more about the day-flying moths you are likely to see and how to identify them, then there's a great ID resource in the [2024 WCBS Annual Newsletter](#).

## 'New' species to look out for

It's not often we get to talk about 'new' species that you may encounter on your surveys, but for those in the South or East there are two species you may want to keep an eye out for.

### Southern Small White – *Pieris mannii*

This species has expanded rapidly from its stronghold in the Mediterranean and made it across the North Sea from the Netherlands in July and August last year. It was recorded at a few locations in the East of England last summer. If we experience another good year we can expect further sightings.

Unfortunately for us recorders, it is very difficult to tell apart from the common and widespread Small White, *Pieris rapae*. There are some resources to help [here](#).

As the species is difficult to identify, a clear photo showing the distinguishing features will be required to confirm ID by expert review.

### Large Tortoiseshell – *Nymphalis polychloros*

Large Tortoiseshell was last recorded as a breeding species in the UK in the 1980's, although it has been recorded on and off since then.

This spring, overwintered adults were recorded from Kent, Hampshire, Sussex, Dorset and Cornwall. Sightings over the last year or two have become more consistent, indicating that it is re-establishing breeding populations in these areas.

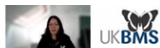
Large Tortoiseshell has been recorded on a couple of transects and a WCBS square in recent years, this may increase if we have a favourable year.

There are lots of resources available on the [UKBMS website](#) to help with your surveys. There are written instructions and video demos for most tasks. Find some of the most handy resources linked below.



## What to record and how

- Count only those butterflies you see inside the survey 'box'
- Keep a tally and complete the total at the end of each section if numbers are high
- Any butterfly species of interest outside of the survey box can be noted and submitted to another recording scheme
- You can record moths, dragonflies and other wildlife and submit online at the UKBMS
- **Keep focused on the transect survey**



## Transect Resources

- **Method** – Find written instructions [here](#), or a video walk through [here](#).
- **Forms** – Weekly recording forms are [here](#). There are also [regional adaptations](#) forms and [Transect Details](#) forms.
- **FAQ's** – Got a question? Check out the [FAQ's](#) to find the answer, or contact your [Regional Coordinator](#) for more help.

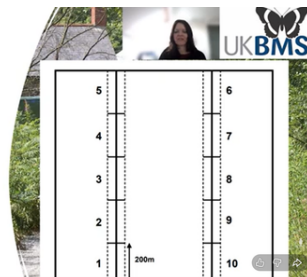
## WCBS Resources

- **Method** – Find written instructions [here](#), or a video walk through [here](#).
- **Forms** – The WCBS Recording form is [here](#), along with a [landowner letter](#) to use when sorting out permissions.
- **FAQ's** – Got a question? Check out the [FAQ's](#) to find the answer, or contact your [WCBS Champion](#) for more help.

WCBS Methodology Training

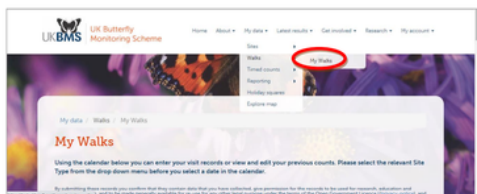
## The survey

- The WCBS is broadly based on the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
- Conducted at randomly generated 1- km squares
- Two parallel 1-km long transects subdivided into 10 sections,
- The core recording period is in July and August.
- Results must be submitted before 31<sup>st</sup> October



## Entering the results of a transect walk

1. Go to 'My Walks' to see a calendar, showing all the walks that you have entered so far. You can find 'My Walks' by going to the main drop-down menu of 'My data' and expanding 'Walks' as shown below.



2. If your sites include WCBS squares, you will need to select the relevant option from the 'Site Type' drop-down menu to see or enter walks for these squares.

## Using the UKBMS website

- **Data entry** – You can follow the written Instructions [here](#), or find a video demo [here](#).
- **View your data** – There are demos to help you view [all the data](#) for you site, and to produce some handy [summary charts](#).
- **Map your site** – When you set up a new transect or WCBS square, you'll need to map your route. To help, we have [written instructions](#) and a [video demo](#).

## Your Regional Coordinator

- **Transect Coordinators** – These volunteers help oversee the transects in their region. They are great contacts for any help, find your local one [here](#).
- **VWCBS Champions** – These volunteers support the WCBS Recorders in their area. Find how to contact your local Champion [here](#).

## Assemble Registration

Assemble is the portal we use to manage our volunteers. Registration is required to take part in the UKBMS and ensures you are covered by our insurance. Please use the link below to register:

- [Transect Surveyors Assemble registration](#)
- [WCBS Recorders Assemble registration](#)

More info can be found on Assemble [here](#). Got questions about Assemble? Please contact [volunteering@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:volunteering@butterfly-conservation.org)

The UKBMS is a partnership organised and funded by Butterfly Conservation, the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, British Trust for Ornithology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.