

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group 7.12.17

Mel Mason: Butterflies Bounce Back on the Malverns

We are so fortunate to live in this area with the Malvern Hills nearby, which we can all enjoy any day of the year. Mel Mason, who runs the Malvern Butterfly Group and volunteers for Butterfly Conservation, gave us a wonderful overview of the butterfly and moth species to be found on the Hills, some of them common and some rare. He had done fascinating research into the species which used to be found in the 19th century, including Small Blue and Duke of Burgundy, and six other species which became extinct in the region more recently. However one new species arrived here in 2001, the Essex Skipper, which is to be found in good numbers on Malvern Common.

There are huge fluctuations in numbers for many species from year to year, largely due to weather conditions, but other factors like predation and habitat loss play a part. 2016 was a terrible year and 26 of our 33 local species declined dramatically. However there were many surprises in 2017 and there was a total abundance increase of 74%! Our commonest butterflies did well – the Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Gatekeepers. Red Admirals appeared surprisingly early in the year (March) and have been seen in good numbers right through to November. Marbled Whites are flourishing and there were 50 sightings of White Letter Hairstreaks. The saddest story however is the decline of the Peacock butterfly, which has always been a great favourite in our gardens.

Mel Mason and a team of volunteers have been doing vital conservation work on North Hill to save the Grayling butterfly, which has become extinct in neighbouring counties. Work parties have been clearing scrub and exposing rocks, which are essential for successful breeding of this beautiful insect. In 2017 there were significantly more sightings, so let's hope this success continues into 2018.

A Red Admiral on North Hill, Malvern



Hills