

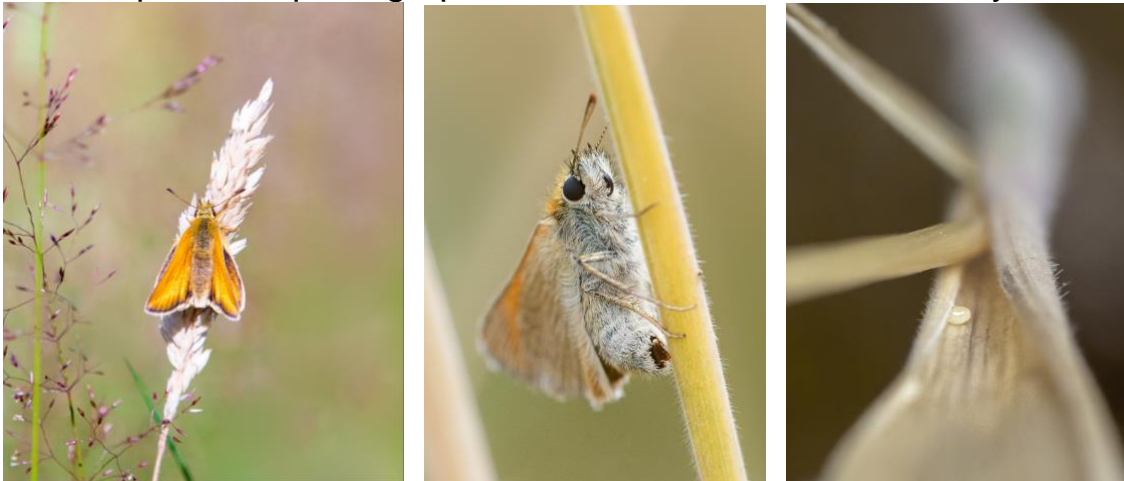
# Bealeswood Common, Wildlife Records

## July 2022

### Grassland Butterflies (AP and PH)

July is one of the best months to see grassland butterflies which rely on the native grasses as larval food. While butterflies may have preferred nectar sources, their larvae need a specific food and cannot thrive and develop unless it is available.

One of the butterfly larvae that has particular needs is the Small Skipper which, almost exclusively, lays its eggs in the sheaths of the Yorkshire Fog grass. The sheath is where the leaf of a grass wraps around and branches off the stem. The female alights on the stem, moves slowly downwards, revolving as she goes & probes the sheath with her abdomen until she finds a suitable spot. Once she has chosen the spot, she lays 5 to 8 eggs in a row inside the sheath. The eggs hatch in about 3 weeks and immediately spin a cocoon within which they hibernate together till the next spring. This egg laying has been captured in photographs from Bealeswood Common by Alex Potts.



Small Skipper within grasses    Probing the stem of Yorkshire Fog and egg laid in sheath

There are 2 other species of Skippers that can be seen on the common. The Essex Skipper (wingspan 26-30 mm) is almost identical to the Small Skipper (27-34 mm) but can be distinguished by the black tips on the underside of the antennae. The Large Skipper is, as its name suggests larger than the Small & Essex Skippers, has a wingspan of 31-36 mm and more patterning on its wings.



Essex Skipper viewed from below

Large Skipper showing patterned wings

Including the Skippers, there are 9 grassland butterflies, commonly found on Bealeswood Common and the remaining 6 are pictured below. Although some butterflies seek out particular grasses, others, such as the Marbled White & Ringlet, fly low over the common scattering the eggs in flight. These eggs may end up on different plants and while some can change their food as they grow – using the softer grasses initially and changing to coarser grasses later – others keep to the same food plant. The different heights of the grasses also play a part with some species preferring to lay their eggs close to the ground while a few choose the fresher parts higher up the stem.



Marbled White on Sorrel



Ringlet on grass blade



Meadow Brown on Knapweed



Small Heath on Sorrel



Speckled Wood



Gatekeeper on Bramble

The butterflies pictured below use different food plants but still make use of grasses as roosts at night, for shelter in the rain or as a perch from which to drive off competing males.



Brown Argus



Small Copper on Bracken



Common Blue on Knapweed

### Wildlife Walks and Talks

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August. 20.30 - 22.00. Meet at Bealeswood Common noticeboard. Listening and watching bats at sunset, walking to Frensham Mill and back; good paths. Steve Luckett: 07530 044278. Call if weather looks doubtful.

*Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall, Clare Jackson, Steve Luckett, Phil Nangle, Alex Potts, Christina Rasmussen, Anne Tutt, and Raf & Karen Wane. 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2022.*