

**Berwick Wildlife Group's Butterfly Walk at Cocklawburn.**  
**Saturday 1st September 2007.**  
**Organiser - Malcolm Hutcheson.**

A dozen Berwick Wildlife Group members joined Malcolm Hutcheson for a butterfly walk at Cocklawburn Dunes on September first, a bright day but with a strong cool breeze which might have kept all the butterflies down in the grass. However butterflies and bees were still on show in the sheltered hollows, which was where the group concentrated their search.

First to show were two Meadow Browns, a male and a female (the male is a dark brown butterfly only faintly marked with orange, the female is usually brighter). Both specimens were faded and battered, it is unusual to see this species which is normally on the wing in July so late in the year. They survive the winter as a larva (caterpillar), feeding at night on grass on warmer days before pupating in spring. An empty pupal case from last spring was seen suspended from a piece of dead grass by the path.



Next to appear were two Peacock butterflies, often around late in the year as they hibernate in Britain as adults. If you find one in the garden shed or behind the curtains in the spare

room leave it undisturbed and cold until the spring flowers appear, then let it out to feed. Two Painted Lady butterflies were spotted in sheltered areas, individuals hatched on British thistle leaves and now flying south, maybe to reach the Mediterranean where they can overwinter before their descendents make the journey north again to our shores. A single Red Admiral flew past, probably also making its way south, as they can hibernate in southern England. As the climate changes they may soon be able to survive a Berwick winter – look out for them early in the year (March or April) when you just might see an unusual local survivor. Small Whites and Large Whites were also present in the dunes, where the caterpillars have been feeding on wild plants of the cabbage

family. These butterflies have several generations in one year and this is the last generation of the summer, laying eggs which will hatch to caterpillars which pupate in late autumn and emerge in spring as adults.

Although this was a butterfly walk, there were other creatures to see. Bumblebees were busy among the dune flowers, although not so many as earlier in the year. Several workers of Red-tailed Bumblebees were still assiduously collecting pollen and nectar for their colony, but a queen Red-tailed was also spotted – hatched this year and destined to hibernate and found a new colony by herself in the spring. A drone Buff-tailed Bumblebee was slowly crawling over a ragwort flower-head, behaving quite differently from the busy workers of summer, sipping nectar to gain energy to fly in search of a queen.

Birds were flying and diving beyond the beach - Gannets fishing close in shore together with a group of Sandwich Terns, a Shag, Oystercatchers, Goosanders, 3 Scoters, and Eider Ducks on the rocks. A Stonechat scolded from the top of a dune, and House Martins and Swallows were still hawking for insects above, although the last swifts left Berwick in the middle of August.

Bees and butterflies may not be easy to find in the months to come, but as the bird sightings showed overwintering residents and new migrants will soon be appearing here.

Fiona.