

Butterflies, not just a few days on the wing Thursday 24th June 2021

We had the pleasure of hosting David and Karen Nicholls who have been bitten by the butterfly bug and have been volunteering with Gloucestershire's Butterfly Conservation group for the last few years and have been putting their experience to good practice in their own garden. Their enthusiasm was infectious and their knowledge impressive.

Butterflies represent the essence of nature and are important indicators of biodiversity and for research.

They explained that the art of identification involves when they are on the wing, where they are seen, how they fly and their markings, including the fact that marked variation in colour often add to the challenge of a positive ID.

The importance of nectar providing plants to feed on, each species having a favourite but Buddleia, Red valerian, Verbena, Sedums, Hebe, Wild marjoram, Common knapweed and Hemp-agrimony are all good. Holly and especially Ivy provide late season food source and are havens for all sorts of wildlife.

Think of creating a wildflower meadow (there is plenty of advice on line), using yellow rattle to suppress grass growth is a good start but leaving areas uncut helps eggs and larvae survive overwinter, the bonus being you can leave the mower in the garage! An area containing nettle, Cuckoo flower, Sorrel, Birds foot trefoil, thistle and ragwort are very attractive to butterflies. The best regime is to cut perhaps a third or a quarter every year (a scythe is useful <http://www.thescytheshop.co.uk/>)

For those who want to know more try:

Britain's Butterflies A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland - Fully Revised and Updated Fourth Edition - WILDGuides

David Newland, Robert Still, Andy Swash, David Tomlinson, Julie Williams (foreword)

<https://www.field-studies-council.org/shop/publications/butterflies-guide/>

<http://www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk/hamearis/walks-booklet/>

For such beautiful creatures we need everyone to help preserve them for future generations, and they come free into your garden!

Stuart Galey