

Butterfly Conservation
Cambridgeshire & Essex Branch Newsletter

BROWN ARGUS with white halos - HELP needed

Occasionally a Brown Argus with white halos occurs in our region. Its black forewing spots have a white halo around them (see back cover). Although white halos are usually thought to be a trademark of the Northern Brown Argus, that is a different species which is definitely not found in East Anglia. But, over the years, occasional white-haloed Brown Argus have been seen here. They are described in the literature either as form *snelleni* ter Haar 1899, or as form *albiannulata* Harrison 1906. Although they were first recognised over a century ago, they are still thought to be relatively uncommon.

Last year I saw two in my garden in Ickleton and Keith Mays saw one in south Essex. As a result, I wrote a note in the Entomologist's Gazette. This has led to further occasional sightings being reported from Suffolk and Northants. But we are still very much in the dark about how often white-haloed Brown Argus occur, whether there are local hot spots, or whether they just occur occasionally anywhere due to some genetic abnormality.

Can members help solve this riddle by looking this summer. If you see a Brown Argus with white halos (and, if possible, photograph it) do please let me know. I am asking our neighbouring branches if they will do the same and, hopefully, I will be able to report the results of what we have found at the end of the season.

By the way, it seems that females are more prone than males to have white halos. You can distinguish between the sexes because females have orange lunules that go right along their forewing edges. With males, the lunules become less distinct towards the top corner of their wings.

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Images for rear cover



Brown Argus (female) with white halos



Brown Argus (male) in its usual form