

RETURN OF THE PURPLE EMPEROR

This butterfly was thought extinct in Kent in the late 1980's but there have been new records recently from the south of Bromley Borough. Look for them before noon in July and August when the males descend from a tall Ash or Oak tree to visit animal dung from which they obtain vital mineral nutrients. After noon they fly high in the tree canopy. The distinctive caterpillars grow to 40mm and after hibernation can be found until the end of June feeding on Goat Willow (or sometimes on Grey or Crack Willow).



Left: Caterpillar on goat willow leaf



Close up of caterpillar head to show 'horns'



Right: Adult male.
Female is similar but lacks purple iridescence

Images reproduced with thanks to Peter Eeles and UK Butterflies <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/index.php>

New records are extremely valuable so if you see one of these butterflies or their caterpillars please e-mail the date, place (postcode or grid reference), number seen and if possible a photo to Bromley Biodiversity Partnership at: bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com Your information will enable the protection of any breeding colonies and the targeted management of the woodlands where they live to promote the recovery of this rare and beautiful butterfly.

Bromley Biodiversity Partnership is a partnership of local groups, organisations and individuals with specific expertise committed to protecting, enhancing and celebrating biodiversity within the London Borough of Bromley.