

RETURN OF THE PURPLE EMPEROR

This most majestic of all our butterflies was thought extinct within Kent in the late 1980's but recently there have been exciting new records from the south of Bromley Borough. Look for them in woodland 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, look up as they will be flying high in the tree canopy. Caterpillars can be found feeding from the end of July. Search for the distinctive feeding signs at the leaf tip of Sallow or Willow.



Young caterpillar with feeding signs



Full grown caterpillar on Sallow Adult Male. Females lack purple iridescence

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.

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