



Female Brimstone homing in on Alder Buckthorn



Egg laying female, in Spring



Brimstone eggs. Blue-green when laid, turn yellow



Well camouflaged Brimstone caterpillar, erect on leaf.



Brimstone chrysalis



Summer brood, male Brimstone, nectaring on Lavender

Photos courtesy Julian Dowding



# Brimstones & Buckthorn Campaign



## The Initiative

In 2006 the Wildlife Trusts launched their Living Landscapes initiative ([www.wildlifetrusts.org/living-landscape](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/living-landscape)) to restore damaged and fragmented blocks of wildlife rich habitats by recreating natural corridors in the landscape and linking them to the green space in our towns and villages. This allows isolated wildlife populations to become reconnected, ensuring more resilient communities. Essex Wildlife Trust is championing this programme in our county.

A key Living Landscape in Essex is the Blackwater Estuary with Maldon at its core. Through this Living Landscape and in partnership with Maldon District Council and Butterfly Conservation, Essex Wildlife Trust is taking forwards the ***Brimstones and Buckthorn Campaign***. This aims to create “corridors” through strategic planting of Buckthorn plants, to allow existing Brimstone populations to expand into the District’s gardens, parks, and allotments. Buckthorn shrubs are the sole food plant of the Brimstone butterfly which is legendary in its ability to find the bush upon which to lay its eggs. In 2013 the partnership launched Phase I of the Campaign, planting 200 shrubs throughout Maldon District, mainly on community owned land. A more extensive Phase II is planned for this winter which will be making free Buckthorn plants available to interested private householders and landowners.

## Keeping in Touch

We are keen to track Brimstones throughout 2015 and beyond in order to establish where corridor links are required and thereby monitor the success of the Campaign and also guide any future planting programmes. Therefore, if you see Brimstones on your bushes, or find eggs or caterpillars, please register these sightings at [www.essexwtrecords.org.uk](http://www.essexwtrecords.org.uk).

If you are interested in obtaining free plants as part of Phase II then please register your interest with Emma Brogden, Living Landscapes Coordinator at [emmab@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:emmab@essexwt.org.uk).

## Buckthorns

The 2 types of buckthorns which Brimstones utilise for egg-laying, are the Alder Buckthorn and the Common Buckthorn. In the wild, Alder Buckthorn grows in damp acid soils, like damp woodlands, and also beside streams, and on wet heaths. Common Buckthorn is more prevalent on the neutral to alkaline soils more commonly found in the Maldon area. In most garden

soils, the bushes grow well, providing there is a reasonable amount of organic matter present.

## Five Fascinating Facts

1. Brimstones are probably the longest lived of all the British butterflies since adults can survive over a year.
2. It is one of the earliest butterflies to be seen each year. The newly hatched summer adult will feed, then hibernate in dense Ivy, Bramble or other dense cover, and often emerge in February or March.
3. The caterpillars are remarkably well camouflaged among buckthorn leaves - adaptation to their environment.
4. Possibly where the word butterfly originated from, “butter-coloured fly”, due to its yellow colouration.
5. Buckthorn was once used to make fine charcoal for gunpowder.

## The Partners

**Essex Wildlife** is the county’s leading conservation charity. It has more than 33,000 members, manages and protects over 8,200 acres of land on 87 nature reserves, 2 nature parks and runs 9 visitor centres. The aim of Essex Wildlife Trust is to Protect Wildlife for the Future and for the people of Essex. It is supported financially by members, local businesses and grant making organisations. It is one of the largest of the 47 county wildlife trusts that work together throughout the British Isles as The Wildlife Trusts – [www.essexwt.org.uk](http://www.essexwt.org.uk)

**Butterfly Conservation** is the pre-eminent national charity helping threatened butterflies, moths and their habitats. If you would like to support them, why not become a member of the group? You can do this using the national BC website address here: <http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/>. Members receive informative seasonal branch newsletters, a programme of interesting events to attend such as visits to butterfly reserves, and the full colour national magazine ‘Butterfly’. The local branch is also actively involved in local conservation projects and participation is encouraged.

**Maldon District Council** is the local authority providing government services in the Maldon district and actively works with third sector groups such as EWT and BC to improve the local environment for wildlife and people.