



No. 39

NEWSLETTER

Spring 1998

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Chairman's Message

Butterfly Conservation - what's it all about?

From time to time it's a good idea to step back and take a look at what we are doing and where we are going. To try and see the wood and the trees.

This train of thought was triggered off by a comment I read in a Newsletter from one of

the other branches, it said "Butterfly Conservation is not a butterfly appreciation society". Well, I thought, we do appreciate butterflies, but they are quite right, appreciation is merely a passive response and a Conservation Society clearly implies an active response. So just how active are our responses?

We all share in one active response, we all pay our subscriptions. Surely that is a major contribution to active conservation? In actual fact the Branch subscription just covers the cost of the Newsletters and Branch "office expenses", the vast bulk of our Branch conservation expenditure is funded by grants from outside organisations like English Nature. Similarly our National subscriptions cover the cost of Butterfly News and HQ office expenses. The salaries of nearly all our professionals are funded by various outside charities and sponsors.

So would it be true to say that our subscriptions merely pay for what we receive in the way of literature? No not quite, they also fund the H.Q. organisation which enables the conservation part of the Society to do its job, and this is vital.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that, to fulfil the active role that membership of a conservation organisation implies, some other sort of participation is at least highly desirable.

May I make a suggestion? How about a "one for one" deal? What does that mean? Well, when the better weather comes, one of the things we all like to do is to get out to one of our favourite sites to see our favourite species - down to Gloucestershire to see the Dukes or Small Blues, to the Wyre for the Pearl Bordered Fritillaries or to the Malverns to see

the High Browns. How about, for every hour spent in "appreciating" we spend an hour "contributing" - one for one.

How can you contribute? Easy! Visit some of the unrecorded parts of your area and record them for the Millennium Atlas. Richard Southwell will tell you where in Worcestershire, for other counties go to your county meeting in Herefordshire, Shropshire or Staffordshire. See the notice in this Newsletter. Volunteer to represent your county on the Branch Committee (only two meetings a year); organise the Branch sales stall (it's become a much simpler job now that goods are available from Butterfly Conservation on a sale-or-return basis); or simply join one of the many winter work parties and contribute in the most direct way possible.

It is quite amazing what the West Midlands Branch achieves each year through the activities of significantly less than 20 per cent of its membership. Just think what could be done if 50 per cent of our members became active instead of passive. What is more, experience shows that those who do put more into the Society get more out of it.

That's what it's all about.

Digby Wood

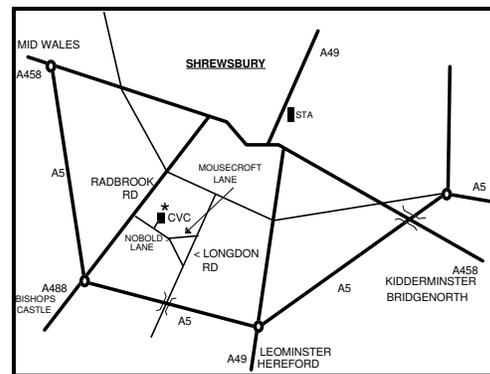
County Meetings and other Events

A chance for you to meet up with members from your own county to raise local butterfly issues and to plan the recording of the unfrequented areas.

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, we have arranged the following county meetings:

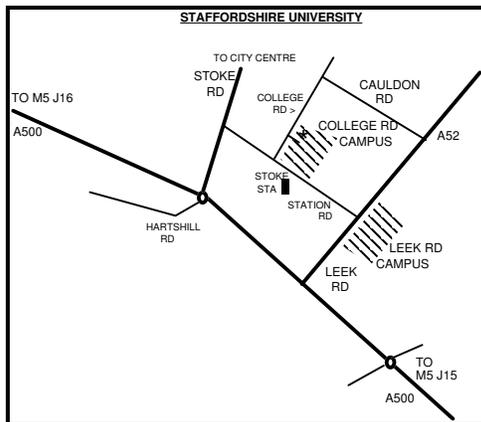
Shropshire

The Shropshire meeting is on Thursday 16 April at 8.00 pm in the Countryside Volunteer Centre off Nobold Lane. See map opposite.



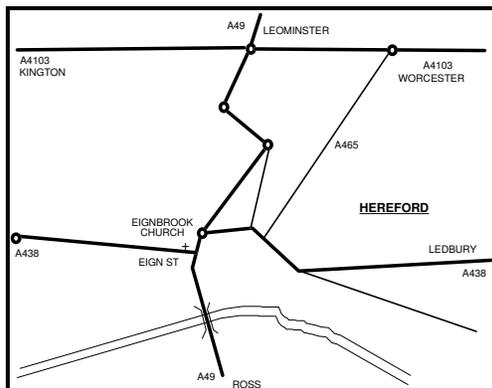
Staffordshire

The Staffordshire Meeting is on Tuesday 21 April at 7.30 pm in the College Road Campus of Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent. See map below. Enter from College Road (entrance No.1) and turn left immediately after passing the Security Lodge. The car park is on your left and the Mellor Building * is on your right. The meeting is on the 3rd floor of the Mellor Building in Room S/324. This is approximately in the middle of the building and can be accessed via the stairs or the lift.



Herefordshire

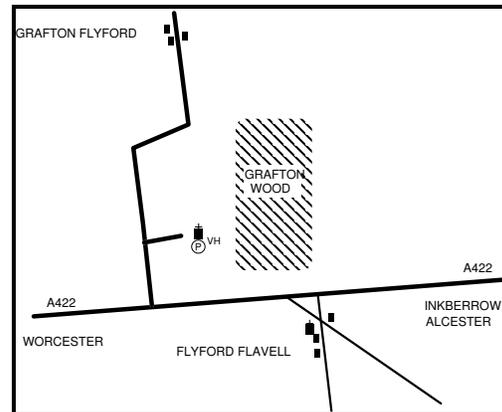
The Herefordshire meeting is on Tuesday 21 April at 7.30 pm in Eignbrook United Reform Church Hall, Eign Street, Hereford. See location map below.



Grafton Wood - Grand Opening

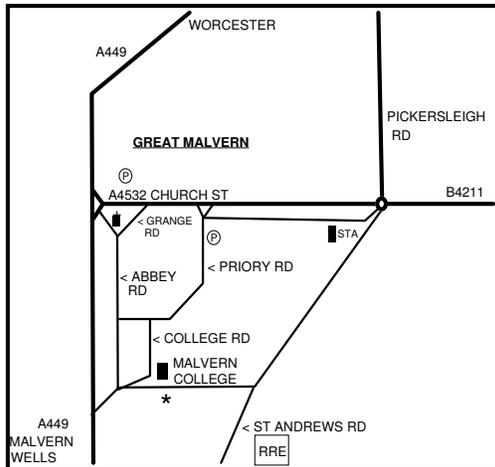
Butterfly Conservation President, Gordon Beningfield, the well-known wildlife artist, has agreed to perform the opening ceremony at Grafton Wood at 2.00 pm on Saturday 2 May, and in the evening, he will be giving a talk entitled "Wildlife in Art" amply illustrated with his own stunning wildlife pictures. This will be at 7.30pm in the Big School, Malvern College. Location maps for both events are given below.

The opening ceremony will be followed by guided walks around Grafton Wood to give members a chance to see our latest reserve, acquired jointly with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Cars may be parked in the Village Hall car park adjacent to Grafton church. Please note that as yet, no ride improvement has been carried out and the rides may be very wet and muddy. Do wear your wellies!



Tickets for the talk at Malvern College are available in advance from: Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester, WR3 8SZ. Price £3.50 (children under 14 £1.50) Tickets will also be available at the door on the night.

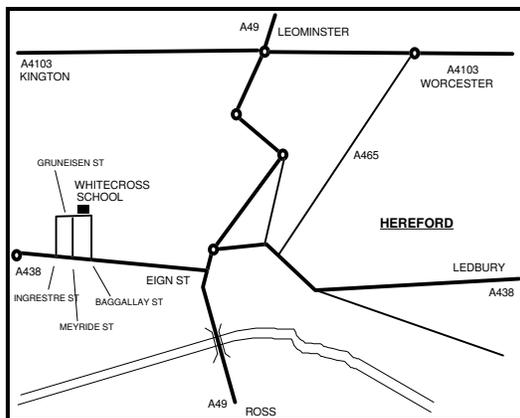
Parking at Malvern College is very limited, but there are a number of car parks signed off Church Street. See map.



Do make an effort to come to these events. Gordon Beningfield is a most interesting speaker with a deep love of wildlife in general and butterflies in particular.

Talk - "Gardens for Butterflies"

Martyn Davies will give a talk on "Gardens for Butterflies" at Whitecross High School, Gruneisen Street, Hereford on Thursday 2 July at 7.30 pm. See accompanying location map.



Malvern Hills High Brown Fritillaries

Special Summer Work Day for the Malvern Hills High Brown Fritillaries.

Remember what happened last year? Everybody was on holiday (except two) and the High Brown breeding site only got a minimal amount of bracken management, management designed to give the best possible chance for the females to find the violet plants required by their larvae. There was a good emergence (about 22 sightings on 15 June) but a week later the weather turned cold and wet with very low night time temperatures and the numbers seen for the rest of the flight period were about half of those seen in the previous year. So this year we really must be certain to do all the bracken management we can to ensure that all the High Browns that emerge have the best possible chance to breed successfully. The date is SUNDAY 14 June; make a note in your diary. We meet at 10.30 am at the Gullet Quarry car park, at the end of the minor road running west across Castlemorton Common. OS map 150, grid ref. 762381.

Spring Meeting - 25 April

There will be a meeting on 25 April at Bishops Wood Environmental Centre (see Winter Newsletter for map). Millennium Atlas display; Essex Skipper identification. Members may bring their own slides (up to 20). Quiz organised by Richard Lamb

1998 - The Year of "Gardens for Butterflies"

Butterfly Conservation have been thinking deeply about the best way to make a significant increase in membership and have concluded that the country's millions of gardeners are the best group to target. People who love flowers love butterflies. 1998 has been declared the year of "Gardens for

Butterflies" and a major effort will be made to recruit gardeners into Butterfly Conservation. By this means it is hoped to increase the awareness of the general public to the plight of butterflies and what can be done to help. It is also hoped to increase the number of gardens that are "butterfly friendly".



Gardens for Butterflies logo

Butterfly Conservation is putting up a lot of money to get the campaign started and there is much that we can do to make sure it is a success. More members means more money for conservation and more "clout" with government.

‘Gardens for Butterflies’ - Display A major display is being prepared to take to all the leading garden shows in the country, including the Malvern Hills Spring Flower Show and we have been asked to "man" (or more likely "woman") the display. Volunteers please for 8, 9, and 10 May, that is Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It is a splendid show and volunteers usually manage to get a bit of time off to see it! Phone Digby Wood.

‘Gardens for Butterflies’ - Slide Shows Butterfly Conservation chairman Harold Hughes has prepared a set of slides complete with a script for presentation to interested groups such as Garden Societies, Womens' Institutes etc. West Midlands Branch has bought a set for Branch use, so how about giving a talk to your local Garden Club? We can provide slides, script, membership leaflets, recording forms etc. and our Honorary Treasurer will be glad to accept any fee you may be paid! Please ask Digby Wood for details if you think you can help.

Sponsored Butterfly Count - Ask your friends to sponsor you for a butterfly count in your garden - so much for each species recorded. We've included a sponsorship form in with this Newsletter. Send the completed form and any cash to Jan Smith (Honorary Treasurer).

Coffee Morning / Plant Sale / Open Gardens - Ron Hunt has kindly offered to

open his 3 acre butterfly garden on Sunday 9 August, 2.30 - 5.30pm. The garden is at Barton's Cottage, Far Forest, just north of the A4117, Bewdley to Cleobury Mortimer road (SO 7275). There will be guided tours, teas etc. Admission £1.00.

Can you raise some money by organising one of these to help defray the costs of the campaign? Small handbills and plant labels with the campaign name and logo will be available by early March. Please phone Terry Smith.

‘Gardens for Butterflies’ Booklet - All the research work put in by Margaret Vickery in her garden butterflies project has been encapsulated in this new book, written by Margaret and produced by David Dunbar. Its predecessor was a best seller and it will be too. Available soon.

Schools Competition - As part of Butterfly Conservation's year of Gardens for Butterflies, which recognises the important and growing impact of gardens on Butterflies and Moths; we are pleased to announce a **free** competition for schools.

All pupils whose work is entered will receive a certificate. In addition, **winning** schools will receive framed Prize Winners certificates ; a framed photograph of an endangered butterfly; and individual Prize Winners certificates for all the pupils involved; and prizes up to £100.

Full details are given on the "Schools Competition" leaflet enclosed in this Newsletter.

‘Gardens for Butterflies’ Adult/Family Competition - Full details of the competitions for adults and children, members and non-members, are given in the "Competitions" leaflet enclosed in this Newsletter.

‘Gardens for Butterflies’ Shelf Talkers These clip on to the front of seed display racks etc. and will advertise the campaign. They will be available shortly. Please ask if you think you can get some displayed at your local Garden Centre. Phone Terry Smith.

‘Gardens for Butterflies’ Information

Line - Butterfly Conservation has set up a special information line which will have details of all Gardens for Butterflies events nation wide. The number is 0891 884 504. It is charged at 50p per minute, all profits going to Butterfly Conservation.

Dedham will issue information packs giving details of all relevant events and a poster for distribution to garden centres, libraries etc. is available. If you can get one into your local Garden Centre please phone Terry Smith.

‘Gardens for Butterflies’ - Ludlow

Festival - Of special interest to West Midlands Branch is a programme being organised by Butterfly Conservation chairman, Harold Hughes, at the Ludlow Festival. This will take place at the Assembly Rooms in Ludlow at 7.30pm on Tuesday 23 June and as well as Harold's famous talk on Butterfly Gardens, it will include a Butterfly Gardeners' Question Time. We are busy assembling a

panel of experts for this occasion - any offers? Tickets will be available at the door on the night.

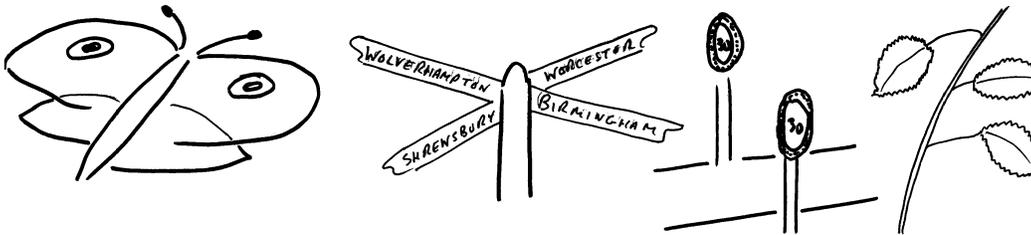
Harold has asked us to put on a display and to have a Sales Stall (with the new Gardens book of course). Offers of help please. Phone Digby Wood.

Situation(s) Vacant - Sales person or persons required to run the Branch Sales Stall. This will be a low-key operation, stocking only items supplied on a sale-or-return basis by Butterfly Conservation Sales. The stall holder would only be in attendance at those functions at which the Branch normally has a presence. Phone Digby Wood

Phone numbers:

Terry Smith - 0121 430 3945
Jan Smith - 0121 430 3945
Digby Wood - 01905 830391

The Urban Butterfly



I recently represented the branch in attending a seminar on planning and the voluntary sector, organised by Wolverhampton Borough Council.

In hindsight, this event made me realise that our branch partly consists of a very large urban area - the West Midlands Metropolitan area (stretching from Wolverhampton to Coventry and including: Birmingham, Sandwell and Walsall) - and that sometimes we concentrate too heavily on what is happening in the Shire counties.

Whilst we seem quite adept at defending sites and habitats in the countryside, we appear to be somewhat indifferent to what happens to the urban butterfly in our towns and cities. This is a little surprising, considering that a quarter of branch membership resides in urban areas.

Perhaps this apathy is underlined by the way we view what we observe, or don't observe, in our towns. Do we simply shrug our shoulders when a waste ground area in the middle of town is indiscriminately cleared to be built upon or tidied up - completely ignoring the wildlife value that may exist? Is it a case of - oh well, there's plenty of other derelict areas around and the species wiped out are all common species anyway?

Local Agenda 21 and Biodiversity equally have a place in an urban situation, (as it does in the countryside) - where, perhaps, striking a balance that includes wildlife and their related habitats, is even more important. I keep a watchful eye on a town centre derelict, wasteland site that currently holds many naturalised Buddleia bushes. The site

produced one of only two Painted Lady sightings I made in 1997 (with at least six other species besides).

Charles Jackson-Houlson of Wolverhampton M.B.C. spoke at the seminar of where nature conservation fits into the Unitary Development Plan for Wolverhampton, (as part of the Black Country Conservation Strategy). His key statement was: Education and Awareness equals Participation. Another element which I found really fascinating was the presentation made by Nigel Brown of the councils' Planning Department. He gave an outline of the planning process and participation and spoke effectively and interestingly on the criteria in assessing planning applications. There were

26 criteria involved and nature conservation featured amongst these.

Perhaps now that we are aware that both Local Agenda 21/Biodiversity plans and the local urban planning department can be positive allies especially where voluntary groups like Butterfly Conservation are concerned, members living in towns will take a more positive and active interest in their urban lepidoptera populations and their habitats.

If anyone needs more information on how to tackle threats to urban butterflies or moths then I would be happy to provide this.

Philip Hopson

Millennium Matters

A Worcester thank you

Well I had intended to award the worst recorded area of the county "**Birmingham Free Refuse Dump Status**" to put the fear of god into local members as an incentive to record for the Millennium Atlas. Come on now folks you don't want awful smells, traffic and fly tipping at the bottom of your garden.

Anyway it would be churlish granting such a citation given the superb efforts of both experienced and novice members who recorded in 1997. No I'm not ducking the issue and it's got nothing to do with the fact that the species count for Stourbridge went up from 3 to 10 after a visit to the Municipal Tip! Maybe zero butterfly zones should be given "**Proposed Newtown Development**" planning permission. However, on reflection most Redditch tetrads show over 20 species, so that won't do either. Any ideas for the most appropriate award? Submissions to the Summer Newsletter please.

Worcester's success was down to you and I would like to share some of our lesser known enthusiasts' experiences with the whole Branch.

Rev. Edward Cox - We have grown quite fond of our square even if we were crop sprayed on one occasion but it is a bit distant being on the wrong side of the river. We could do more if the need exists near our home in the southern part of the Malvern Hills.

Paddy Harrison - I must admit to being a relative beginner..... However I feel I have made some contribution with plenty of room for improvement in future years. I should like to say how much I enjoyed the whole exercise. I got to know parts of our local countryside previously unexplored and my skill at recognising butterflies has definitely improved. I also managed a bit of PR for butterflies - quite a number of people showed more than a polite interest in what I was doing.

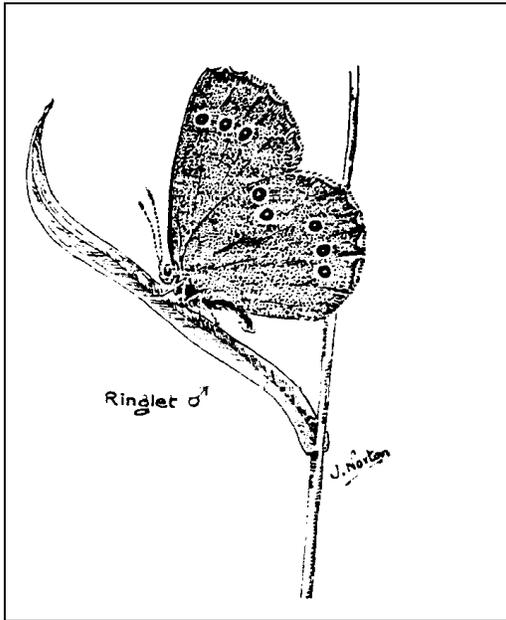
Phyllis Staines - Anyway I asked my friend about helping with the mapping, and She was enthusiastic straight away - though He thinks they belong to too many things already! She lives on the east side of Tenbury and might well be happy to cover an area over there - we could join forces, we often go that way. She would also be happy to become a full member of Butterfly Conservation.

W. T. Gay - I regret that aged 87 I could not undertake the amount of required walking but will endeavour to keep a record of my garden and surroundings where in recent years I have recorded 16 named species.

Claire Turner - I have made an absolute shambles of recording three squares after losing some of my results whilst undertaking a major decorating project . (Claire don't worry they were brilliant).

Nicholas Grazebrook - recording whilst

walking the dog by the canal was a great stress reliever. I didn't know Ringlets were so common.



Tony Baker - I have managed to do some walks, albeit nothing like as many as I intended. It seemed often that when I decided to go out was the signal for a downpour... Walking some of the tracks I was struck by how secretive and guarded were the few local residents I saw. I got the evil eye several times from people who seem to think they own the whole countryside.

Ian Duncan - on returning to the UK and being asked to cover these tetrads I discovered two nature reserves good for butterflies, birds (nightingales singing) and dragonflies which would have remained unknown. More next year please, who knows what's out there.

Andrew Santer - I hope my late returns are not a problem - no I haven't been hanging around Hunthouse hoping to see a Purple Emperor or waiting hope against hope for a White Admiral in the garden!

Christina Alvin - We have found some of the footpaths you suggested no longer open, but other areas such as lanes have quite good verges so we covered a large area of each tetrad.

John Wheeler - ...anyway it's been good fun - I hope useful for the Millennium Atlas - and I look forward to next year - I'll try to avoid looking for butterflies in the gardens of those

two lovely pubs in Elmley as much as I did this year.

Acknowledgements:

Patrick Taylor and his **Redditch Recording Group** for plugging the gaps and Patrick in particular for giving me the confidence to undertake this project.

Warwickshire Branch for showing us all the "Art of the Possible"

Worcester Wildlife Trust for allowing me direct access to all their wardens and giving general positive co-operation.

Saltwells Nature Reserve for consistent records and support. They are located adjacent to "Merry Hell " Shopping Centre. It is a wildlife treasure. Do visit, their leaflets are some of the most informative I've seen.

Edgar Powell and Nunnery Wood Primary School for attempts to record which were too often thwarted by rain. No problem in '98 I'm reliably informed.

Margaret Vickery - for providing us with her relevant garden records, not just for Worcester.

Mike Southall a farmer who can show many of his colleagues how to run a successful enterprise that also takes account of biodiversity - 24 species of butterfly in his case in one year!

Thank all of you who responded positively to my request to survey specific tetrads. Do check that your name occurs in the Recorders' List.

Richard Southwell

Local Group initiative - South Worcestershire

Encouraged by the Millennium Atlas coordinator a number of people in South Worcestershire agreed to survey tetrads in the Malvern Hills area. It seemed sensible that these people should meet and distribute the tetrads amongst themselves. Accordingly 7 members met (a further 2 could not attend the meeting) and allocated 66 tetrads covering South Worcestershire, North Gloucestershire and East Herefordshire. Members selected tetrads convenient to themselves to keep

travelling to a minimum. The meeting thus achieved its main objective but in addition it also allowed members to get to know each other and to share their knowledge of the area. All agreed it was a very worth while way of tackling the Millennium Atlas mapping in their area.

Ian Duncan

Note from Richard Southwell (coordinator) - I hope this very successful meeting will inspire others to take the plunge!

Travel expenses for recorders



To encourage members to venture into the less accessible parts of the region, the Conservation Committee have authorised the use of Regional Action Plan Funds to pay the car mileage expenses of recorders, subject to the following conditions:-

1. The car must take at least four recorders
2. The area to be recorded must be agreed *in advance* with Mike Williams

Millennium Atlas Recording Form

At the A.G.M. there was a request for some form of authorisation for recorders to carry. A short note confirming that the bearer is engaged in a national butterfly survey has been incorporated into a standard recording form and is enclosed with the Newsletter for your convenience and use.

All Records are Welcome

Wherever you are, look over a field gate, wander up a bridle path for 5 minutes and note what you see on the form. Don't forget to

photocopy the form if you are going to need more than one!

For maximum recording efficiency, go where the records are scarcest. For Worcestershire, Richard Southwell will tell you where. For Herefordshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire go to your county meeting (see notice in this Newsletter) where the priority areas will be determined.

Digby Wood

Shropshire Butterflies

I would like to make a special appeal to all Shropshire members to try to fill in the recording leaflet enclosed with this newsletter. We had a good response to the leaflet launch last year and now hope to increase the amount of recording effort in 1998. We have been fortunate in being able to collaborate with Shropshire County Council, the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Biological Records Centre at the Ludlow Museum over the leaflet and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them very much for their support. Shropshire County Council has also been generous enough to print another 5000 leaflets which will enable us to re-launch this project again in 1998. Let us hope we can reward them by filling in many more squares!

It should also be noted that the map given below has only been made possible by the hard work of Andy Nicholls who has input all these extra Shropshire records onto the computer - many thanks Andy.

On a different note - one of the targets of the West Midlands Regional Action Plan is to increase the level of monitoring of the Silver-studded Blue population at Prees Heath at least to the level of a species transect. Although I have been carrying out a peak flight count of Silver-studded Blues since 1991, I cannot at present increase my commitment to a species transect (mainly due to my increasingly large young family!). I therefore appeal to all BC members in the Whitchurch area to consider taking this on. We are ideally looking for somebody to do the count (along a pre-determined route) for 4-6 weeks/year.

Jenny Joy

(01952 245684) for further details.